

Bullying?

Mean Behaviour ?

Peer Conflict, Mean Behaviour and Bullying

– What's the Difference?

Peer conflict?

Peer Conflict

- Conflict between and among peers is a natural part of growing up;
- Children **disagree and cannot solve their own problems**;
- **Frustration** that leads to saying mean things or act out physically by hitting, kicking or trying to hurt.

If it is peer conflict you will be aware that these children:

- usually **choose to play or hang out** together;
- have **equal power** (similar age, size, social status, etc.);
- are **equally upset**;
- are both **interested in the outcome**; and
- will be able to **work things out with adult help** (after calming down).

Adults can respond by:

- Conflict resolution: helping the children talk it out, and see each other's perspective.

Mean Behaviour

- Children may try out behaviours to assert themselves by
 - **saying or doing mean things** – (i.e. making fun of others, using a hurtful name, taking something without permission, leaving a child out, or “budging” in line).

If it is mean behavior, usually:

- it is **not planned** and seems to happen by chance, spontaneously;
- it may be **aimed at any** child nearby;
- the child being mean **may feel badly** when an adult points out the harm they have caused.

When adults see mean behavior:

- **do not ignore**;
- **respond quickly**, firmly and respectfully;
- **let kids know** that their actions are hurtful and to re-direct children to more positive behaviour.

Bullying Behaviour

Bullying is serious behavior that has three key features – *all three must be present for the situation to be considered bullying:*

1. **Power imbalance** -- One child clearly has power over the other(s), which may be due to age, size, social status, and so on.
2. **Intention to harm** -- The purpose of the bullying behaviour is to harm or hurt other(s) – it is intended to be mean and is clearly not accidental.

3. **Repeated over time** -- bullying behaviour continues over time, and gets worse with repetition.
 - There is a **real or implied threat** that the behaviour will not stop, and in fact will become even more serious.

Students must tell an adult as soon as possible of the situation.

The effect on the child who is being bullied is:

- increased fear, apprehension, and distress;
- Often by the time adults find out about what is happening, the child has tried many ways to stop the bullying but cannot do so on their own.

Adults must stop the bullying behaviour:

- **ensure the safety** of the student who has been targeted;
- **reassure the children** who may have witnessed the behaviour that adults are taking care of it;
- When schools respond to bullying, staff will also **help the child who has been bullying** others to take responsibility for their actions, and change their behaviour. They will monitor the situation to ensure the bullying stops, and will support the child who has been bullied to regain confidence and a sense of safety;
- The “**conflict resolution**” style of bringing the children together is **not recommended** in bullying situations, until considerable time has gone by and all children are feeling safe enough to talk about what happened.

Strategies to deal with peer conflict and mean behaviour

WITS

Walk away

Ignore

Talk it out

Seek help

