’Like father, like son’

Parental education and Augmented Reality to prevent bullying among children

PR2 - The Father Learning Material

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Introduction to " The Father Learning Material"

Children usually do not misbehave when felt monitored and understood by their parents: the parent-son relationship can influence the child's self-esteem and induce to bully or being bullied. Parenting style and education could make a difference in whether a child becomes aggressive, bullied, victimized or not. Family relationships build child's expectations about how relationships in general should feel, what helps relationships to work well, and how to constructively manage the problems that arise in interpersonal relationships. Although parents cannot completely control what difficulties children will face, they can exert some influence over the paths they take and how they respond and react to social situations.

As anticipated by the previous 'Like father, like son' PR1 – Syllabus, the following pages will help parents and guardians of children between 10 and 15 years old to get to know several aspects of the phenomenon of bullying, and cyberbullying, and get practical advice on prevention and intervention of such type of abuse. Through 'The Father Learning Material', the project consortium offers a European non-formal training on parental skills, including media literacy and emotional intelligence as ways to avoid risk factors in the family and school environment. Physical and psychological impact that bullying has on a child can be reduced by empathy and resilience, and the acknowledgement of diversity, and the practice of respect.

Finally, the purpose of the learning material is to lead parents and guardians of children throughout the usage of 'The Son AR Game', as second part of the overall European project 'Like father, like son' PR2. The Augmented Reality Game will provide to the parents and their children with a digital tool that set abusive scenarios and possible resolutions for those, aiming at prevent bullying incidents from one of the main causes of bullying itself: the usage of technology and digital devices.

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Unit 1 “Introduction to bullying”

1. Definitions

Learning Objectives of the subunit

- Each parent will know in detail the internationally recognized definitions of bullying
- Each parent will be able to distinguish on a theoretical level the different forms of bullying
- Each parent will be able to understand what different roles can be played in an act of bullying

What is bullying? A definition

From an early age, peers play an important role in a person’s socio-emotional development. In this way, social skills, positive attitudes, adapted behaviours and an important source of social support can be developed in interaction with peers. Thus, socializing with peers often includes certain undesirable outcomes, including violent behaviour among children. Actually, bullying is a phenomenon of ancient origin, widely spread in school settings, which since the 1980s only has become a structured subject of study.

The definition that is commonly used internationally is due to Dan Olweus, a Danish psychologist who was among the first scholars to take an interest in bullying. According to Olweus, “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus 1993, p.9). Before we delve into the different characteristics described here, let us immediately note that Olweus talks about “students”. **School** is without a doubt the place where the most happens violence among children, although, as we shall see, it is not the only one. Perhaps it is the place where it is relatively easier to take note of it and deal with it. In any case, the proposed definition clearly shows that in order to speak of bullying, at least three components must be intertwined:

- **Intentionality**: the bully wants intentionally, and not accidentally, cause harm to his victim
- **Persistence**: these are not isolated incidents but systematic actions by the bully, always against the same peer

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- **Power imbalance**: there is an imbalance of both power and prestige between the bully and his victim

Indeed, it sometimes happens that parents mistake some incidents, admittedly unpleasant, for bullying, but which do not have all three of these characteristics. An unintentional act, no matter how bad it may be, is not bullying. An act of violence that happens only once is not bullying. A violent confrontation between two rival groups or persons, which are on the same level in terms of popularity or ability, is not bullying.

In other words, we can say that "Bullying is about relationships in which one individual is repeatedly abused by peers with more power" (Olweus 2016). In this other definition, emphasis is placed on two other interesting aspects: **relationship** and **abuse**. Firstly, there is no bullying without a relationship. The victim usually has at least some superficial knowledge of the perpetrator, they meet in a setting frequented by both of them on a regular basis (at school, at a sport club, in the neighbourhood, etc.), and this allows the bully to somehow pick out the victim, perceive some of his characteristics that make him the object of his bullying. The relational dimension refers us back to two categories already seen: intentionality (the bully choses his victim) and persistence (the bully knows him and harasses him over time). Secondly, the word "abuse" again refers to the concept of "power imbalance": there is a power difference in this relationship and the weaker part is more or less abused by the strongest one.

The characteristics described so far are undoubtedly those most recurrent in the international literature and most widely shared. Some scholars, however, add some details that can help in bringing a bullying phenomenon into sharper focus (Arcari and Provantini 2019), such as:

- The intention to harm. the presence of a will to strike or injure the other person. Indeed, it is possible for a kid to perform an intentional act without, however, foreseeing the negative consequences. In bullying, the negative consequences are instead purposely sought;
- The systematic organization of prevarications;
- The insistence against one and the same victim;
- The rigidity of roles between bully(s) and victim(s);
- The existence of accomplices;
- Fear of response in the victim and bystanders;

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- The dehumanization of the victim

Knowing how to recognize all these components is not merely a theoretical exercise, but is important in order to be able to organize an educational response appropriate to the magnitude of the problem. For example, if a fellow student is excluded by some students at social times, it cannot be called bullying and can be intervened simply by encouraging discussion among the students on the topic of interpersonal relationships. From the other side, violent behavior involving weapons, sexual assault, or serious threats is not bullying, but criminal acts that should be reported.

Different types of bullying

A first distinction that can be made between the different types of bullying is that between **direct and indirect bullying**. Originally, direct bullying was understood as any kind of physical bullying, and indirect bullying as verbal assaults and backbiting. In recent years, however, the term direct refers to actions, both physical and verbal, that occur in person, while the term indirect refers to actions in which the people involved do not face each other. The systematic exclusion of a person from a group can be considered an indirect but physical action, while an example of indirect verbal action is defamation. (Arcari and Provantini 2019) As a general rule, direct physical bullying is the easiest to detect and most often succeeds in provoking a reaction, both in the victims and in the target adults. Conversely, direct verbal bullying and indirect bullying are more likely to be minimized or unrecognized by adults, that's why it's very important to talk about it. **Cyberbullying** is an indirect form of bullying, but it has such a broad dimension that it deserves to be treated separately. Therefore, we will not dwell on its characteristics now but the entire next didactic unit will be devoted to it.

As a general awareness of the problems associated with bullying has spread, definitions of the phenomenon have begun to be more differentiated. The following are the main ones, which differ in the nature of the victims (Menesini 2017):

- **Ethnic bullying**: based on ethnic and cultural prejudgment and geared toward derision of the victim by virtue of certain characteristics such as skin colour, traditions, culture, ethnic, religion, nationality, and language.

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- **Homophobic bullying**: based on negative stereotypes related to sexual orientation that may lead to insults and threats toward peers
- **Sexist bullying**: based on negative stereotypes linked to gender
- **Sexual bullying**: Referred to sexual harassment or inappropriate and unwanted sexual contact by the victim
- **Bullying toward disability**: consisting of marginalization or derision of peers with temporary or permanent physical disabilities, or with problems in the learning sphere
- **Bullying of more gifted peers**: that is, a form of ostracism and negative pressure by the peer group against a victim who is particularly gifted and talented both in and out of school. (Menesini 2017)

Research shows that, in fact, in most cases the physical differences emphasized in these categories are not much relevant causes of bullying per se. Much more important are the psychological elements that we will describe later. Anyway, most of these categories started to be used mainly in journalistic language and assume significant symbolic importance as they are linked to issues of social and political relevance.

Different roles

Investigations in social and developmental psychology have highlighted and defined the different profiles of actors involved in bullying, which can be summarized as follows (Arcari and Provantini 2019).

The bully: The one who perpetuates aggressive behaviours. According to Olweus, bullies usually have some of the following characteristics: " they have strong needs to dominate and subdue other students and to get their own way; they are impulsive and easily angered; they show little empathy toward students who are victimized; they are often defiant and aggressive toward adults, including parents and teachers; they are often involved in other antisocial or rule-breaking activities such as vandalism, delinquency, and drug use; if they are boys, they are often physically stronger than boys in general and their victims in particular" (Olweus 2016)

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The victim: The one receiving the aggressive behaviours. Olweus describes the victims detailing the following characteristics: “they are usually cautious, sensitive, quiet, withdrawn and shy; they are anxious, insecure, unhappy, and have low self-esteem; they can be depressed and engage in suicidal ideation much more often than their peers; they often do not have a single good friend and may relate better to adults than to peers; if they are boys, they are often physically weaker than their peers” (Olweus 2016)

These two main protagonists are often not alone, as bullying often occurs in the presence of others. Researches show that most of the indirectly involved students state that they disagree with the observed violence. Possible emotional reactions are certainly pity toward the victim and anger toward the bully, but also fear of involvement and uncertainty about what is the right thing to do. Some immediately step in to defend the victim, others prefer to report the incident later to friends or teachers, more rarely to parents. Others decide to do nothing, often out of fear of repercussions, but also often out of indifference (. A small proportion state that they sympathize with the bully and are amused, in some cases they go so far as to help him concretely. Olweus describes this role in a schema, that he names “the bullying circle”, summarising this way the different students’ mode of reaction in an acute bullying situation:

- **follower henchman**: take an active part but do not start the bullying
- **supporter, passive bully**: support the bully but do not take an active part
- **passive supporter**: like the bullying but do not display open support
- **disengaged onlooker**: watch what happens without engaging
- **possible defender**: dislike the bullying and think they ought to help (but don’t do it)
- **defender of the victim**: dislike the bullying and help or try to help

Social psychology research shows how being in a group can accentuate de-responsibility and conformity. The extremely important group-related theories will be explored in the unit on cyberbullying.

Suggested resources

- Cosa è il bullismo? Video in Italian https://www.forum-p.it/it/cosa-e-il-bullismo--1-1975.html

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- What is bullying? Video in English https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/understanding-bullying/definition

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Menesini E., Nocentini Annalaura, Palladino Benedetta (2017), *Prevenire e contrastare il bullismo e il cyberbullismo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Olweus D. (1993),

Olweus D. (2016), ' School bullying: basic facts, intervention, and long-term effects', conference presentation https://cyfs.unl.edu/cyfsprojects/videoPPT/4be692cfe65fcc54603331b9a484208c/160613-BPC-Olweus.pdf

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2. *Legal framework*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

- Each parent will be aware of the legislative framework in which bullying incidents are framed, nationally and at the European level
- Each parent will understand legal risks their children may face, their rights and their responsibilities.

What does a bully risk?

There is no European legislation specifically dedicated to bullying among children, son in general terms it primarily falls under the jurisdiction of individual member states. In any case, the European Union has adopted measures to help protect the rights of children.

First of all, the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2021: this strategy focused on promoting and protecting the rights of children, including measures to prevent and address bullying. The strategy encourages member states to adopt comprehensive and multidimensional approaches to tackle bullying and foster safe learning environments.

In more general terms, child bullying is addressed within the broader context of human rights protections in the EU. The European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union emphasize the right to dignity, respect for private and family life, and protection from violence, which are relevant to combatting bullying.

Since bullying often involves minors, many countries have set up educational policies and programs aimed at preventing and addressing bullying, especially in schools. These initiatives may include awareness campaigns, teacher training, the establishment of reporting mechanisms, and the promotion of positive school climates.

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Policies and the law in partner countries

- **Croatia**

In Croatia there is a number of laws, regulations, policies, plans and other that are regulating bullying in every form as well as violence committed among children or on children. These are all measures that are trying to impact bullying and bullying prevention but there are no concrete laws and punishments for this kind of offence. The **Juvenile Courts Act** regulates participation of children and minors (up to the age of 23) in court proceedings in cases when they have committed a criminal offence. (https://www.zakon.hr/z/180/Zakon-o-sudovima-za-mlade%C5%BE)

In addition to this, there is an **action plan for school bullying prevention** (2020-2024): "The most widespread form of violence in schools is peer violence, and when we look at what is happening in our schools, we cannot say that it is out of context compared to the previous period or other countries, but it is certain that the situation is such that it requires a comprehensive approach that should foresee various measures, goals and financial resources in order to achieve a school that has a zero tolerance rate for any violence and that successfully fights against any form of violence." (Ministry of Science and education) - https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/StrucnaTijela//Akcijski%20plan%20za%20prevenciju%20nasilja%20u%20skolama%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202020.%20do%202024.%20godine.pdf

- **Spain**

Bullying in Spain has become one of the priorities to be eradicated in schools. To this end, laws have been enacted to contribute to the eradication of bullying. The first of these is the Organic Law 8/2021 of June 4 for "Comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence. The relevant aspect of this law for the project is Title III, Chapter II (family environment) and Chapter III (educational environment) (pg. 28 to 31) and Chapter VIII (new technologies) https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2021/BOE-A-2021-9347-consolidado.pdf

In the criminal field, bullying can constitute a crime, such as injury (article 147), threats (article 169), coercion (article 172), insults (article 205), slander (article 208), sexual aggression or abuse of minors under 16 years of age (article 178 and 183.ter) and, if necessary, even homicide (article 138 or 142). All these conducts are typified in the Penal Code.

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Another noteworthy aspect is the creation of a **National Strategic Plan for School Convictiveness**. This national plan coordinates all the ministries involved and is in the process of creating official protocols for school coexistence, guides for parents, or the creation of a State Observatory of School Coexistence that coordinates and assists in the implementation of the measures.

https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/documents/2016/refc20160122e_1.pdf

Through the civil action, reparation of the damage and compensation for the damages caused are pursued. This civil liability can be caused by the fault or negligence of the teacher, when the responsible teachers did not adopt the necessary measures to avoid the situation of harassment; or also of the parents of the harassing minor, claiming damages for the illicit acts of their children. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1995/11/23/10

- **Italy**

There is no specific law on bullying in Italy. As we will see, there is a law on cyberbullying which is often applied also to bullying in itself. The offence of bullying is not regulated under criminal law, but the behaviour associated with it violates the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution and can be considered a criminal offence. The Penal Code, in fact, provides incrimination for certain behaviors that can be traced back to bullying such as beatings (art.581) or injury, if they leave more or less serious traces-consequences (art. 582 et seq.); damage to property, damage (art. 635 Penal Code); insults or defamation (arts. 594 and 595); threats (art. 612); teasing = (possible) harassment or disturbance of persons (art.).

A child under the age of 14 is never criminally chargeable. If he or she is recognised as 'socially dangerous', however, security measures may be envisaged. In addition to that, parents, teachers and the educational institution can be indicted for his actions.

Between the ages of 14 and 18, the child is chargeable if his or her capacity is demonstrated.

Italy is working mostly on the side of prevention in schools. The Italian Ministry of Education created the platform Elisa in order to equip schools with tools to work on countering bullying and cyberbullying.

- **Greece**

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Greece started to formulate relevant policies against bullying quite late compared to other countries of the European Union (EU). In 2012, the **Observatory for the Prevention of School Violence and Bullying** was formed by the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs to plan and coordinate the anti-bullying prevention strategy.

The most recent legislation on bullying is **Law 5029 "We live together in harmony – We break the Silence"** and was published on the 10th of March 2023. The legislation includes certain definitions of the concept and types of bullying, actions and programs for the training of teachers, parents and students on identifying incidents of domestic violence and bullying, as well the description of a special digital platform where students and parents may report bullying incidents.

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-international/article/

- **Cyprus**

In regards to the legal framework about bullying in Cyprus, until recently there was not a specific legislation directed to bullying, but it was addressed as a form of psychological and physical violence. However, due to the rise in incidents the parliament is considering to deal with bullying in all its forms, as a separate criminal offence, which will be punished with up to a year in prison and/or a fine up to 2000 EUROS depending on the severity of the case. Additionally, such cases will be directed to courts dealing only with incidents involving minors. It is worth to note here that the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Cyprus is 14 years old (CY Law, 2022).

Moreover, various national, European and International guidelines are related to the protection of children and youth against bullying. As part of the Cypriot society, minors are protected and are subjected to constitutional rights such as *'right to life and physical integrity, to not being treated harshly or in a degrading way, and the right to freedom and personal security'* (CYLaw, 2022). At an international and European level, the *International Convention on Children's Rights (UNCRC, 1989)* and the *European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)* which provide various measures in order to safeguard the rights and the protection of children and youth from any form of abuse and violence.

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https://cyprus-mail.com/2022/05/11/house-seeking-to-criminalise-bullying/

http://www.cylaw.org/

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3. *Risk factors*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

- Each parent will be able to recognize the risk factors that facilitate the emergence of bullying incidents
- Each parent will be able to reflect on how to create a family environment that prevents the emergence of bullying in his children

Risk factors for becoming a bully

What promotes the emergence of bullying in a child? International data show that in general the average percentage of bullies is about 30%. **Gender** is a considerable risk factor: most of the bullies are male. Males are more likely to engage in direct bullying behaviours and females in indirect bullying, although the number of girls engaging in aggressive behaviours is also increasing. The profile of the bully appears as **heterogeneous and multifaceted.**

Bullies are often described in literature according to their **behaviour and psychological profile**. Researches describe bullies as **impulsive kids** who tend to react aggressively whenever they perceive certain behaviours as attacks or disrespect. These kids don't tolerate frustration, are irritable, hyperactive, difficult to engage in activities, uncooperative and disorganized, and therefore risk being poorly tolerated by students and teachers. (Arcari 2019)

Sometimes bullies can be described as individuals who have a **deficit in social skills**, have low self-esteem and low social status in the peer group. Other times bullying is seen as an **opportunistic behaviour**, that is functional to pursue certain purposes in the group and to gain specific benefits. (Menesini 2017)

Not all bullies therefore have poor social skills, but there are also **popular bullies** with adequate cognitive and social skills, which they use to influence and manipulate others. It is not always easy to distinguish between these profiles. (Arcari 2019)

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Additionally, research highlights that the risk of engaging in bullying behaviours is greater in those children who have **poor relationships with other students** and bad **performance at school**. In these cases, the aggressive behaviors can be a form of defence or reaction in a situation where the bullies, in the role of students, feel weak and in danger. (Arcari 2019)

Risk factors for becoming a victim

Regarding **family risk factors**, bullies tend to perceive their parents as authoritarian, repressive, and unsupportive and report less family cohesion than other children (Menesini 2017).

Research outlines a relatively clear **psychological profile of victims:** children with social difficulties, externalizing problems and low levels of prosocial behaviour are more likely to be victimized. An important environmental factor is the characteristics of victims' friends: the weaker/excluded the victims' friends are, the less protective they will be (Menesini 2017).

Other risk factors that emerge are age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Age. Preadolescents are the most at-risk group. The majority of victims, in varying % depending on the country, is between 11 and 14 years old. As age increases, there is a shift from physical bullying to indirect forms (Menesini 2017)

Nationality. Nationality and ethnicity are important risk factors. In general, foreign or non-white children are more likely to be bullied. Males are more at risk than females: for all school orders, foreign males, compared to their peers, highlight a higher disadvantage than that between foreign and local girls. This is particularly true in those countries that experience higher immigration rate.

Gender. Girls have a higher rate of victimization than boys, especially in the 11-17 age group. It is important to note, however., that boys are more likely to be involved in physical forms of victimization, while bullying among girls is more likely to take the form of relational or verbal attacks. (Menesini 2017)

Sexual orientation. Data on homophobic bullying are very sparse but worrisome. In Italy, for example, a research conducted in 2013 on 25 high schools in the province of Rome showed that 35% of boys and girls with non-heterosexual orientation experienced homophobic bullying. 8% of all students has experienced homophobic bullying at least once, regardless of their sexual orientation.

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Disability. International research findings show that people with disabilities, even very mild, are 4 times more likely to be bullied (Menesini 2017). In general, children considered to be weaker some way are privileged victims, because they have fewer opportunities to defend themselves.

Context and class group can greatly influence the emergence or non-emergence of bullying at school. Studies show that group dynamics and teacher characteristics are more relevant than class size or demographic factors such as the proportion of males or the proportion of foreign students. As also emerged from the field research of this project, having a strong group of friends is an important form of protection. They can intervene by defending the victim, or even prevent bullying by their very existence.

Geographically and socially speaking, bullying is more common in medium and big cities, and among children living in deprived neighbourhoods. This aspect highlights the social marginalization caused by bullying: it most often goes to those who are least included, creating a climate of isolation around her or him. An isolation that exacerbates a pre-existing disadvantage. (Openpolis 2021)

Between protective factors for bullying and cyberbullying, UNICEF insists on the role of parents and family. In particular it is important to:

- Promote positive, confrontation-based parenting models
- Maintain open empathic communication
- Actively participate in their children's online environment
- Adopt monitoring strategies and rules on appropriate times of technology use
- Teaching children responsible use of new media

Family social support, parental warmth and open communication with children represent some of the main factors of protection that can also moderate the negative effects of being a victim.

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It is important to emphasize that the risk factors we will analyze are statistical trends, but bullying can happen anywhere and to anyone. The ones we list are therefore more frequent indicators, but not necessarily exhaustive.

Suggested resources

- https://www.stompoutbullying.org/parents-page: site with other resources for parents

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4. *Impact on children*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

- Each parent will be aware of what signs to look out for when his/her child is involved in bullying
- Each parent will be aware of the long-term risks of bullying for both bullies and victims

What happens to a child if he or she is a victim or perpetrator of bullying?

Bullying carries physical, psychological, and relational health consequences for both bullies and victims, and can also have a negative impact on observers. In this learning unit we will try to understand what warning signs to look out for when our child is involved in bullying, either as a victim or perpetrator. Once again, it is important to underline that signs are indicative.

We will then review the long-term risks of bullying, risks that are often unknown or underestimated and of which it is therefore important to become aware.

Warning signs

Talking about the victims, parents must be alert to these warning signs:

- a sharp rejection of the school environment: he/she seems afraid to go to school and he/she makes up excuses not to go to school
- sudden difficulties in performance: he/she has lost interest in school work, he/she suddenly starts getting bad grades
- greater loneliness: the victim has few friends, or not at all
- sudden mood swings: he/she appears sad or moody; he/she suffers from reduced self-esteem; he/she has anxiety crises;
- manifestations of physical somatisation: he/she may experience palpitations, abdominal pain, constipation, and even diarrhoea
- poorer health conditions: he/she has sleep disorders, he/she experiences a loss of appetite.

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There are also signs that can help you understand if your child is a bully, although they are more difficult to recognise. More in detail:

- He/she often has aggressive behaviour, even towards adults
- He/she often express a need to control and dominate others and situation
- He/she often tests limits, boundaries and breaks rules
- He/she shows little sympathy towards others who are bullied
- Boy bullies tend to be physically stronger than their peers
- Girl bullies are extremely competitive and tend to be really dramatic

Signs are indicative and may coexist. In general terms, it is important that parents observe for patterns or sudden changes to their children behaviour. If you are worried about your child behaviour, it is always worth seeking professional advice.

Long term consequences

Over the long term, kids who have been bullied have a higher risk of being exposed in adulthood to smoking, psychiatric illness, chronic inflammatory states, and anxiety. At work they are more likely to have low wages and low performance. Finally, at the relationship level they have higher risks of suffering from loneliness and having few relationships. (Menesini 2017)

Bullies can also have important psychological outcomes, which can affect a number of areas even in adult life, such as physical health, risky or illegal behaviours, academic and/or professional success, and social relationships. International research show that those involved as bullies have a higher chance of developing psychiatric disorders, conduct disorders, risk behaviours, substance abuse, propensity for illegal actions, physical discomfort, greater school and professional failures relationships centred on power dynamics (Menesini 2017)

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Suggested resources

- https://www.stompoutbullying.org/parents-page: sites with other resources for parents
- https://www.weareteachers.com/14-must-read-anti-bullying-books-for-kids/ : site with a list of books parents can read with their children to talk about bullying
- https://www.menshealth.com/entertainment/g36448623/movies-about-bullying/ : site with a list of movies about bullying, for different age groups

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Unit 2 “Cyberbullying”

1. *Introduction to Cyberbullying*

Learning Objectives

•To be able to identify the differences between Cyberbullying and Bullying.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to bullying that takes place over digital-communication tools (i.e. laptops, smartphones) with the intention to cause harm to another person by making them feel angry, sad or scared (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). Cyberbullying can take place in social media, chat rooms, online gaming etc.

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying, and despite that they share similarities such as the have intention to cause harm, they also present some differences as can be seen below:

Table 1: *Bullying VS Cyberbullying – Differences*

Bullying	**Cyberbullying**
Abusing the person verbally, emotionally and physically	Abusing the person verbally and emotionally
Face-to-Face taking place in school or other public places	The abuse takes place any time and everywhere
Smaller audience (bystanders etc.)	Very large audience and happens rapidly
The abuse stops when the abuser is not presence	Longer range and more damaging impact
Abuser identity is known in most cases	Abuser might be anonymous

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Anyone can be a victim of cyberbullying!

However, some groups of people are at higher risk.

- Children between the **ages 13-15 years old** are at higher risk of victimization (European Commision, 2016).
- **Girls** are more likely than boys to be victims of cyberbullying (European Commision, 2016).
- **Foreign national students** are at higher risk compare to their locally-national counterparts (UNESCO,2018).
- **LGBT teens** are more likely to be bullied than heterosexual teens (GLSEN, 2015).

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2. *Theoretical Analysis of Cyberbullying*

Learning Objectives

•To understand key theories and concepts around the issue of cyberbullying.

Routine – Activity – Theory (RAT)

Cohen and Felson (1976) argue that crime/ anti-social behaviour occurs when **a)** a motivated offender is seeking power or dominance, **b)** when there is a lack of capable guardianship and **c)** when there is an opportunity to converge with a suitable target (online anonymity, social media, access to information etc.). Based on this theory, online communication promotes all these factors that make cyberbullying a leading issue of new generations.

Group Process Theory

Salmivalli et.al, (1996) investigated bullying as a social phenomenon and a group behavior.

Instead of the traditional view of bullying where there is a 'victim' and a 'bully', the reality is much more complicated involving multiple roles, that are continuously shifting from minute to minute. Specifically, they are five roles in a cyberbullying situation: **1. Bully** – offender who initiates the bullying**, 2. Assistant** - actively involved in doing the bullying, but not lead it, **3. Victim** – one who receives the bullying, **4. Defender** - Stands up for someone being bullied. They might talk to a third person about it, **5. Outsider** - ignores or does not see the bullying and does not want to get involved.

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Parenting Style Theory

According to the Baumrind parenting style theory, parenting styles can vary along two specific dimensions: parent responsiveness, which refers to how attentive and supportive parents are to their children's needs, and parent demandingness, which refers to how much parental control there is over their behavior (see Figure 2 for more information) (Baumrind, 1991).

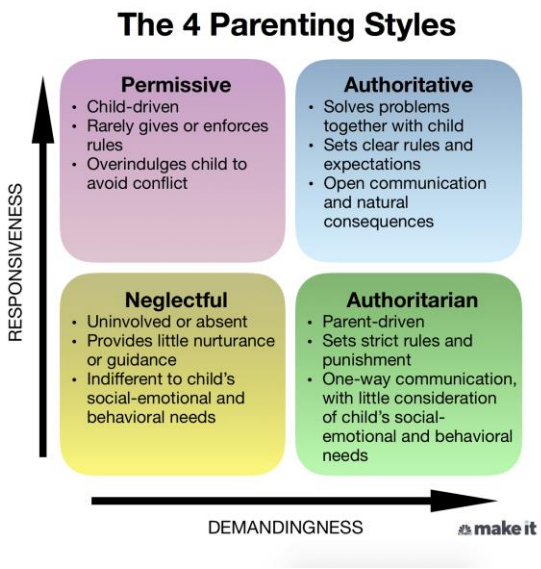

Figure 2: *The four Parenting Styles of Baumrind's Theory and their Characteristics*

Numerous studies have examined the association between parenting styles and cyberbullying and they found that how a parent interacts with his or her child influences how the child interacts with others. For instance, if parents engage with their children in an aggressive and uncaring manner, their children will behave similarly towards others. This has a negative impact on the child's socialization, and as a result it is more likely to become a cyberbullying perpetrator/bully (Pontzer, 2010).

Additionally, other reasons to engage in Cyberbullying include:

- Narcissism, low level of empathy (Skilbred et.al, 2020)
- Loneliness and Isolation (McLoughlin and Hermens, 2018)
- Victims of Bullying (Slonje et.al, 2013)
- Result of a Conflict or a Breakup (Konig et.al, 2010)
- Boredom (Varjas et.al, 2010)

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3. *Cyberbullying and the Law*

Learning Objectives

•To be aware of the legal framework and challenges in relation to cyberbullying.

The Law

On an EU level, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child was adopted in March 2021 and aims to protect and promote the rights of children and build the best possible life for them in the EU and across the world. The strategy's main thematic areas are: a. Protect children from violence, b. Ensuring children's right to child-friendly justice, c. Providing tools for children to navigate safely in the digital world, d. Ensuring children's rights across the world, e. Enabling children to actively participate in civic and democratic life.

There is an apparent lack of progress in combating and legislating cyberbullying due to the fact that there is still no consensus on a clear and workable definition of cyberbullying in either a scholarly or a criminal context (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Therefore, in the absence of a specific criminal offence for cyberbullying in all the EU member states, the issue of cyberbullying when serious would have been addressed under the legal framework of other offences such as:

- Violence
- Anti-discrimination/ Hate Crimes
- Pornography/ Revenge Porn
- Other computer-related crimes

Policies and the law in partner countries

- **Croatia**

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All previously mentioned laws in the Bullying module, regulations, measures and plans are in some way tackling all forms of bullying and violence which means they include also the cyberbullying in its area of activity. The ones that are maybe more than other tackling this topic would be National plan for children's **rights in The Republic of Croatia for the period 2022. - 2026.** and **Action plan for school bullying prevention (2020. - 2024.).**

Other than that, there is also a **Act on cybernetic security of key service operators and digital service providers.** The aim of this Act is to ensure the implementation of measures to achieve a high common level of cyber security in the provision of services that are of particular importance for the development of key social and economic activities, including the functioning of the digital market. It is a general law/act that regulates the digital environment.

- **Spain**

There are not specific regulations other than for the ones foreseen for bullying, and the European regulations on cyberbullying and data protection.

Chapter IV of the Organic Law 8/2021, of June 4, on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence develops various **measures for the prevention and early detection of violence** in educational centers that are considered essential if it is it takes into account that it is a central socialization environment in the lives of children and adolescents. The proposed regulation deepens and completes the framework established in article 124 of the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education, by establishing, together with the coexistence plan included in said article, the **need for action protocols** against indications of abuse and mistreatment, bullying, cyberbullying, sexual harassment, gender violence, domestic violence, suicide, self-harm and any other form of violence. https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2021/BOE-A-2021-9347-consolidado.pdf

- **Italy**

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Italy was the first country in Europe to introduce into its legislation the term “cyberbullying”. Cyberbullying in Italy was not well defined at a legal level until 2017. The law n. 71 of the 29 of May 2017 (Provisions for the protection of minors for preventing and combating the phenomenon of cyberbullying.) fills this legal gap.

This law outlines an action strategy that combines three goals:

- To prevent cyberbullying with education and sensitisation activities addressed to children, teenagers, and more, in general, the community and with specific training addressed to the operators
- To investigate and punish the offences committed
- To protect the victims through new procedures and institutions to increase the level of protection of children and teenager.

- **Greece**

Currently, the term “cyber-bullying” is not identified distinctively in the penal code of Greece; thus, the same policies that apply for bullying also apply for cyberbullying.

In the recent Law 5029 “We live together in harmony – We break the Silence” published on 10 March 2023, there is a reference to the bullying definition that includes “*any form of…electronic, online or other violence and misconduct, which affects the school community and disrupts the educational process*”.

https://www.esos.gr/sites/default/files/articles-legacy/fek-2023-tefxos_a-00055-downloaded_-10_03_2023.pdf

- **Cyprus**

The main laws in the field of cybercrime in Cyprus are:

- The Law ratifying the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), L.22(III)/2004. This legislation covers hacking, child pornography and fraud committed via electronic communication and the Internet.

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- The Law that revises the legal framework on the prevention and combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, L 91(I)/2014. This legislation ratifies the EU Directive 2011/93/EE and covers child pornography, grooming and notice and takedown.
- The Law ratifying the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the Criminalization of Racist and Xenophobic acts, L.26(III)/2004. This legislation covers racism and xenophobia via computer systems and the Internet.
- The Law on the Processing of Personal Data, L.138(I)/2001.
- The Law on the Retention of Telecommunication data for the investigation of serious offences, L. 183(I)/2007. This legislation transposed Directive 2006/24/JHA. Although the Directive was invalidated by the Court of Justice of the EU, the national law is still valid. The national law is founded on a constitutional provision and it includes specific safeguards for the protection of privacy; for example, communication data are released only following a court order. A case was recently filed with the Supreme Court on the impact of the annulment of the EU Directive on Law 183(I)/2007 and the Supreme Court found that it complied with the European Convention of Human Rights.
- Law 112(I)/2004 Regulating Electronic Communication and Postal Services.
- Law implementing Directive 2013/40/EU on attacks against information system, 147(i)/2015.

The National Cybersecurity Strategy was adopted by the Ministerial Council. The Office of the Commissioner of Electronic Communications and Postal Regulations is responsible for its monitoring and implementation. The National Cybersecurity Strategy is the instrument for steering the efforts made by Cyprus to prevent and combat cybercrime. It has provided the structures for the cooperation between all competent authorities, including public, private and non- governmental agencies especially in the field of awareness-raising, to which Cyprus devotes much effort in order to combat this form of crime.

https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/All/671EB91BDCAA303EC22584000041D696?OpenDocument

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4. *Types and Form of Cyberbullying*

Learning Objectives

•To be able to define the various forms and types of cyberbullying.

The umbrella term

Cyberbullying is an umbrella term and can take many forms:

- **Cyberstalking**

This form of cyberbullying can extend to the offender posing actual physical threats to one's physical well-being and/or safety. Adults using the Internet to contact and attempt to meet with young people for sexual purposes is referred to as cyberstalking.

Cyberstalking Example

- **Harassment**

Harassment is a persistent, ongoing, and deliberate form of cyberbullying that involves sending a youngster abusive or threatening text that are typically cruel or spiteful.

Harassment Example

- **Denigration**

Denigration is the act of sending or posting derogatory information about another person online in order to harm their reputation or friendships with others. It can include material posted online such as photos, screenshots, or videos.

Denigration Example

- **Impersonation / Catfishing**

Impersonation is when another person steals one's online identity, usually photos and identifying information, re-create social networking profiles (personas) for deceptive purposes.

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Impersonation Example

- **Outing**

Outing is an intentional attempt to embarrass or publicly humiliate a child by posting sensitive, private, or upsetting information online without their consent.

Outing Example

- **Trickery**

Trickery is the act of gaining a child's trust in order for them to reveal secrets or embarrassing information, which the cyberbully then publicly shares online.

Trickery Example

- **Exclusion**

The deliberate act of leaving someone out is referred to as exclusion and it can happen in various ways such as: A child may be excluded from online activities of friends (e.g., playing games, group chats, pages), A child's friends may be having online conversations and tagging other friends but not them, A child who does not use social networking sites or does not own a smartphone is purposefully excluded from conversations by others.

Exclusion Example

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5. *Impact of Cyberbullying*

Learning Objectives

•To be able to define the impact of cyberbullying on children's health and wellbeing.

The impact

A. Impact on Victims - Physical Health Effects

- The feelings of overwhelm and stress can manifest physically in the form of (Nixon, 2014; Karanikola et.al, 2018)
- Gastrointestinal issues: upset stomach, abdominal pain, stomach ulcers (Nixon, 2014)
- Disordered Eating: changes in eating habits, skipping meals (Marco, 2018)
- Sleep Disturbances: Insomnia, Nightmares (Nixon, 2014)
- Self-Harm: self-cutting or burning (Karanikola et.al, 2018)

B. Impact on Victims - Emotional Health Effects

- Humiliation – feelings of embarrassment and overwhelmed
- Isolation – cyberbullying might cause kids to feel excluded and ostracized
- Powerless and Unsafe: especially when bullying is anonymous
- Depression and Anxiety – 41% of people who were cyberbullied developed social anxiety, 37% of them developed depression

C. Impact on Victims - Behavioral Effects

- Skipping School – it is one of the most common behavioral changes for victims to avoid going to school.
- Academic Issues: losing interest in school and education
- Unexpectedly stop Using Electronic Devices
- Using drugs and alcohol – 2.5 times more likely to engage in binge drinking.

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Suggested Resources for Unit 2

- What Kids Want Parents to Know About Cyberbullying
- Online Safety and Cyberbullying Awareness for Parents and Care Givers
- Parent Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyber-threats
- Cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying Theories and Concepts
- Why do People Cyberbully?
- Example of a Restorative Justice
- Responsible Use of Technology for Kids
- Cyber Bullying – Protect your Self
- Top 10 forms of cyberbullying

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Unit 3 “Prevention of Bullying Incidents”

1. *“Media Literacy Skills for Parents – online risks and personal data”*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

- Better knowledge about GDPR’s articles that protect children’s personal data and digital footprint
- Developing a positive attitude when communicating with children about their digital activity
- Being able to use preventive online tools and measures for a greater children's security

Introduction on personal data, GDPR, online risks, and digital footprint

Today’s children aged between 10 and 15 years old are considered *digital natives* since their abilities as online information seekers have grown with their physical development. Nevertheless, children's presence on the Internet, as it is known, is accompanied by a series of risks and threats that expose the underaged individuals’ personal data, as are defined to be information that allows identifying a person. In detail, following the definition provided by the EU’s **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** of the European Parliament and Council of 27 April 2016, as *Article 4* states, **personal data** can be “a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.” [1]

First, parents need to acknowledge that to protect their underaged children who use Internet, they need to know the legislation (GDPR) that has specific measures to stop or mitigate what companies do to make their services used by children, whenever those services are addressed to them. In fact, *Article 38* of the same legislation states: “Children merit specific protection with regard to their personal data, as they may be less aware of the risks, consequences, and safeguards concerned and their rights in relation to the processing of personal data.” [2] Among the specific protection, **parental control** over the online activity of

[1] Wolford, B. (2018) Art. 4 GDPR – Definitions. Available at: https://gdpr.eu/article-4-definitions/ .
[2] Recital 38 - Special Protection of Children’s Personal Data (2019). Available at: https://gdpr-info.eu/recitals/no-38/.

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children is contemplated. Moreover, as another measure, *Article 12* states that the media's controller should provide transparent communication and plain language while informing a child on the collection of personal data in the background of preventive or counseling services provided directly to children.

But exactly from which online risks should parents defend their children? The violation of their **digital footprint** is determined by the traces left by any digital activity, whether actively or passively done through the exploitation of someone's personal data. As a matter of fact, the most common risks that children are exposed to through their digital daily activity are:

- defamation and invasion of their privacy
- violation of consent on the sharing of personal data
- fraud, identity theft
- cyberbullying
- exposure of children to inappropriate content
- endanger the child's sense of autonomy
- developmental problems in children whose consent has been violated
- future discrimination at school, college or workplace.

Since these actions considered crimes are committed through digital devices, the same have the power of invalidating the **digital footprint**. It is important to be aware that the GDPR can prevent unlawful usage of abused sensible information of an individual, despite age. This *"right to be forgotten"*, is defended by *Article 17*, allowing victims of cyberbullying to delete unrightfully processed data.

Once clarified that the GDPR has a special part dedicated to the protection of children's online privacy, and acknowledged that detected cybercrimes can be reported to the *Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)*, here are some practical tips for parents to work on their children digital footprint safeguard:

make your children feel responsible for their online activity. Tell them that being behind a screen is not saving them from facing the consequences of what comment shared about a peer;

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explain to your children that every image, message, and video that they send can be forwarded, and manipulated with grave consequences on his/her reputation in the present moment, as well as in the future;

transmit your children the idea that becoming viral is not the objective of being online. Tell them that they shouldn't change what they are for a bunch of likes or followers on their social networks;

advise your children to be respectful, and think about what they share - including encouraging fact-checking to avoid fake news, and the content they create (netiquette rules);

propose them to have a look to the social networks setting they have on their privacy and help them understand what they've agreed or disagreed upon on the matter of their privacy;

have your children getting used to change their passwords using characters, numbers, symbols, along with lower and uppercase letters;

encourage your children to develop **digital empathy**, by standing up when a peer has been insulted, so as to report the improper behaviour.

Online prevention of bullying situations

The quick spread of the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to adopt an online learning approach. This situation revealed a series of concerns about the extended usage of technologies by children, who were spending hours behind digital devices screens, not all the time sufficiently supervised by parents and guardians. With the dramatic increase of cybercrimes in 2020 ahead, several preventive programs have come out in the school environment mainly, but parental-based prevention has a more key role in the child's behaviour, cognitive and relational development, with long-term effects. Specifically, parents and guardians can prevent online bullying situations through a few simple habits that can ameliorate the digital health of children:

- ask your children to freely talk about their online activity, whether it is for school-related purposes or leisure. Positive communication creates trust and safety for your children;
- explain to your children that there are some threats in the online environment and that they can always turn to you in case some disturbing content or some peer comment is shared with them;

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- create a habit of co-using the digital devices at home, so you have their online activity under control and also establish a sense of trust in your children, instead of fear of being controlled;
- try to set some logical limitations in digital devices usage, making sure that you as a parent provide a good example;
- make sure to get your children interested in more than just playing games and searching for information for their homework, for more educational, social and entertaining experiences.

Media literacy for better parental skills

Apart from the advice provided above for positive communication on the online experience of children, which is essential not to end up demonizing something that is the future of everyone's life, parents, and guardians can actively prevent online bullying situations and unsafe conduct by engaging in a series of actions that can protect the digital footprint, personal data, and accounts, as well as the used devices. Starting from the online security, as parents and guardians, you should:

- protect your account with a frequent change of passwords;
- protect your devices with the usage of anti-malware and virus software (for example, MacAfee, Avast, etc.);
- get the habit to do a frequent back-up of your files, as well as update regularly the operating system (Microsoft, Mac, Android, IOs, etc.);
- advise your children not to provide private information online, as well as not to open files from unknown addresses or accounts;
- install ad blockers (AdBlock Plus, uBlock, AdFender, etc.), and disable pop-ups from the browser in usage;
- remember to click on "forget network" when using a public Wi-Fi, and teach your children to do the very same;
- check on the privacy policies you are agreeing on when accessing a certain service. Create the habit in your children to ask you whenever they have to do the same by explaining that what they agree to share today can have effects tomorrow;
- block your devices' screens, and use a privacy screen protector to avoid other people to read on your messages and other information when in crowded public places;
- change your search engine from time to time to avoid the unrightful collection of data and preferences, as well as safely manage the cookies;

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- get to know the functionality of social networks, for you and the sake of your children. When using accounts, make sure to avoid sharing relevant personal data with unknown accounts, and teach your children to act the same, and report to you such incidents;
- acquire the custom of using the navigation in incognito, and avoid geolocating your shared contents on social network, in order to reduce your digital footprint;
- clear your browsing and searching history from your digital devices, and those used by your children;
- advice your children to be extra cautious when sending and receiving audiovisual content via disappearing messages. The degree of safety is higher, but they could still engage in threatening situations;
- be the first to denounce to responsible authorities (Europol, Police, etc.) websites or accounts that show misconduct and violent content;
- check on the permits provided for the usage of the *Internet of Things* devices of yours and your children (for example smartwatches). Some of those collect very personal information, such as biometrics.

As the tools specifically made up for parental control over children's online activity, parents and guardians should pick among those applications that might allow them to manage the options about:

- screen time limitations;
- age-appropriate content;
- navigation to websites;
- permission to purchases;
- passwords;
- geolocation.

Nonetheless, parental skills upon online risks and security are effectively relevant whenever the remote control over the children's online activities they are engaging in is accompanied by a conscious development and practice of digital empathy. The latter is better trained if the parent or the guardian shares time with the children in a joint online experience.

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Suggested resources

- To report detected online risks:
- https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-cybercrime-centre-ec3
- To better know about netiquettes rules: https://www.avast.com/c-netiquette
- To block pop-ups step by step tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGKk43X2Z_I
- To install a parental control successful App: https://families.google/
- To know better about the disappearing messages degree of safety: https://ineqe.com/2020/11/10/disappearing-messages-risks/

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2. *Cultivating Empathy and Respect – diversity*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

After going through this subunit, parents will be able:

- to understand key concepts of empathy in children,
- to be able to cultivate empathy and respect in children using different tools

ABOUT EMPATHY

Empathy is at the heart of what it means to be human. It's a foundation for acting ethically, for good relationships of many kinds, for loving well, and for professional success. And it's key to preventing bullying and many other forms of cruelty.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves recognizing and comprehending the emotions that someone else is experiencing, and being able to respond in a way that shows you understand and care. Empathy is different from sympathy, which is feeling sorry for someone, and from compassion, which is a desire to help someone who is suffering. Empathy is an important aspect of emotional intelligence, and is considered a key factor in building and maintaining healthy relationships with others.

Empathy is a key aspect of social and emotional development in children. It begins to develop in infancy as children learn to respond to the emotional cues of others, such as crying, smiling, and other expressions of emotion. Early emotional experiences between babies and their caregivers are crucial to the development of empathy. As caregivers nurture and care for infants, babies make crucial associations between positive human interactions, reward systems, and feelings of calm and safety. Children who feel safe, secure, and loved are eventually more sensitive to others' emotional needs. Psychologists call this connection between caregivers and babies "attachment" and research shows that quality of attachment is a predictor of empathy and compassion later in life. However, their ability to fully understand and share the feelings of others continues to grow and evolve as they grow older. There are several factors that can

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influence the development of empathy in children, including *genetics*, *environment*, and *experiences*. Children who grow up in supportive, caring environments, where their emotions are validated and respected, are more likely to develop strong empathy skills. On the other hand, children who grow up in environments where emotions are not recognized or validated may have a harder time developing empathy. It is also important for parents and caregivers to model empathetic behavior, and to provide opportunities for children to practice empathy. For example, they can encourage children to put themselves in someone else's shoes, or to think about how someone else might feel in a given situation. By providing opportunities for children to develop empathy, we can help them become more understanding, compassionate, and empathetic individuals.

Empathy means that children:

- Understands that they are a distinct person from those around them and that other people may have different feelings and perspective than their own.
- Can recognize feelings in themselves and others and name them.
- Can regulate their own emotional responses.
- Can put themselves in someone else's shoes and imagine how someone might feel.
- Can imagine what kind of action or response might help a person feel better.

If you feel like your child is lacking empathy and acting rude and disrespectful, you are not alone. Disrespectful behavior in children usually occurs because they haven't yet learned how to solve problems or express frustration in mature, healthy ways. In most cases, this rude behavior is temporary. While it can test your patience, there are ways you as a parent can deal with this phase of your child's development.

1. Try to understand the underlying cause of the behavior

Step into your child's shoes and try to get to the bottom of why they are behaving a certain way. It could be that they are upset by something that happened at school that day, or it could be simply because they

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are seeking your attention. Understanding the root cause of their behavior can help you address it more effectively.

2. Make it clear that their behavior is not acceptable

If your child is being rude or disrespectful, do not ignore it. Be clear and firm in making it clear to them that certain behaviors will not be tolerated. For example, if you are speaking to your neighbor and your child keeps interrupting your conversation, tell them to give you some time and that you will be available once you finish your conversation. This helps them understand that interrupting conversations is rude, and that instead of ignoring them you are simply asking them to wait until you can address their needs.

3. Explain the consequences to your child.

If your child continues to be rude and disrespectful even after you calmly set expectations for what they should and should not do, explain the consequences that will occur if they do not adjust their behavior.

4. Be consistent and follow through

Always be consistent in following through with enforcing both rules and consequences for misbehavior. If you only punish them sometimes for the same disrespectful behavior, your child will quickly learn that they can get away with certain actions and may not take your warnings seriously. However, avoid being too harsh or aggressive with your child when they misbehave.

5. Avoid the power struggle

Your job as a parent is to teach your child proper way of behaving and helping them grow into a respectful adult. Avoid allowing your child to engage you in a power struggle. Stay calm, avoid overreacting, and set clear limits about what will and will not be tolerated.

6. Model good behavior

Your child will imitate you, whether you are aware of it or not. So, it is important to model the respectful behavior and problem-solving skills you would like your child to develop. Set a good example for your child by treating others with respect. Your child will take cues from your behavior and learn how to interact with the world the way you do.

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TIPS FOR CULTIVATING EMPATHY AND RESPECT IN CHILDREN

Provide children with the support they need to develop strong self-regulation skills. Children will feel supported to develop self-regulation skills by parents practicing “positive parenting” — a sensitive, responsive approach to child-rearing that makes kids feel secure. The core idea might be summed up this way: positive parenting emphasizes warm, positive, family interactions, and guides children by rewarding and reinforcing their better impulses. The goal is to empathize with children, offer them affection and support, and create situations that make it easier for kids to behave cooperatively and constructively. We want kids to regulate themselves from the inside. And studies suggest that kids are more likely to develop an internal sense of right and wrong if their parents use inductive discipline — an approach that emphasizes rational explanations and moral consequences, not arbitrary rules and heavy-handed punishments.

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When children get overwhelmed by emotions, there are some calm down strategies parents can teach them to soothe and calm themselves.

To teach your children to breathe deeply when they're upset, practice when they're happy. Take about 10 minutes a few times a week to practice blowing out the candles on the pretend (or real) cake. Notice how, when the children want to blow all the candles out, they naturally take a very long inhale. Then, when the situation calls for it, remind your kids to "*blow the birthday cake candles out*" before they do anything else.

You can also teach them other calm down strategies such as removing themselves from the situation by walking to their room, counting backwards from 10 to 1, pushing against a wall or squeezing a pillow, taking a break and drinking a glass of water. Try thinking of a sentence with your child that makes them relax and know that they are safe. For example, "I got this" or "This will pass" etc. This can be their mantra they can use as a calm down strategy by repeating it a few times in hard times.

Now, as all of these skills are modeled to children, let's talk about self-regulating your emotions. Have you ever spent extensive time after a heated argument fuming over things you should have said? You are not alone. For most people, it's hard to come up with the optimal response during intense emotional arousal. However, instead of berating yourself or feeling sorry for yourself, you can choose to learn and grow from your experience. Think of this step as your chance to break the cycle of knee-jerk reactions, and shape your future response. One surprisingly simple strategy is to visualize a happy ending to the situation that brought about that big emotion. One rule, though, is

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that you can't change other people or aspects of the external environment. The only thing you have control over is your own response. Imagine yourself handling the situation well and controlling that big emotion. What could you have done or said to bring that happy ending about? Write down specific actions and words that will help you get the ending you want: How do you want to feel? What do you want to say or cause to happen? If you scream at your children and decide that you want to be cool next time they fight, rehearse going through your specific steps in your mind. This way, that conscious choice will be more readily available to you next time. Providing guidance to children should take place when they are calm. The most important first step of emotional regulation you can teach your children is to accept all emotions. You don't always like how you feel, but you can develop the courage to stay with whatever is. Don't try to control it. Run away from it. Or act on it. Just be with it. Once you have mastered this yourself, you can start teaching it to your children the same way.

Guilt and shame and their role in empathy?

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Guilt is different than shame. When we feel guilty, we reflect on our bad choices, and — most especially — we focus on the harm our mistakes have caused to others. As a result, feelings of guilt inspire us to respond constructively. We don't feel helpless. We don't feel resentful and angry. We feel sad for the suffering of others, and we want to make things better. So, if we want our kids to respond to these situations with empathy, we need to avoid feelings of shame. If a child seems unrepentant or unfeeling, we shouldn't denounce them as bad. We shouldn't confront them in a way that makes them feel threatened or humiliated. Instead, we should call their attention to the consequences of their behavior, talk with them about how their situation and how the other person is feeling, and help them find ways to make amends.

Help kids discover what they have in common with other people.

Adults tend to feel greater empathy for an individual when they perceive the individual to be similar to them. They also find it easier to empathize with someone who is familiar. And research suggests that

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children have similar biases (e.g., Zahn-Waxler et al 1984; Smith 1988). As a result, one of the best ways to encourage empathy is to make children conscious of what they have in common with others. For example, studies suggest that schools boost empathy in students when they foster multiculturalism — an inclusive, warm attitude about cultural diversity (Le et al 2009; Chang and Le 2011). To help children appreciate our diverse world, expose them to positive and meaningful experiences with people that look different from them and choose diverse media, movies, and books. Parents can facilitate this learning by pointing out kindness to others, injustice, and how to think critically about what they hear, read, and see. When racism shows up in our lives or in the media, ask your child "What does the neighbor, reporter, author, or filmmaker want us to believe?" and "What do you think is true?"

Talking openly and positively about differences can help children better understand themselves and those around them. Embracing diversity and inclusion empowers kids to engage their world with curiosity, confidence and kindness. Diversity and inclusion help children learn to empathize with people who are different from them. Diversity and inclusion make all kids better learners, allowing them to understand various subjects from multiple points of view.

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Questions to ask yourself as a parent:

- What is unique about our family culture? How do we celebrate that uniqueness? How do we respect and celebrate other cultures?
- What types of diversity do we have in our family?
- Who do we invite to our home for social time?
- Is our neighborhood diverse and inclusive? If not, what makes it that way?
- What types of diversity and inclusion are reflected in our religious or ethical community? How can we be more diverse and inclusive?
- Does my child see diverse people in positions of authority (e.g., teachers, coaches, health care providers, faith leaders, etc.)? If not, how can I change that?
- Do our extracurricular or leisure time activities include diverse groups of people? What opportunities exist to become more involved?
- Does the media we consume (e.g., books, shows, videos, games, etc.) feature diverse characters and storylines without stereotypes? Do we use media as an opportunity to talk about diversity and inclusion?

Ways you can involve your child in learning about diversity and respect:

- Acknowledge differences. Kids notice them, so there's no need to pretend they don't exist. Emphasize the positive aspects of differences and be honest about the ways people are mistreated for their differences (gender, sexual orientation, race etc.).
- Ask open-ended questions and listen without judgment. Encourage your child to keep asking questions by expressing your values for diversity and inclusion without shutting down the conversation.
- Take time when you need it. If you're unsure how to answer your child's question, tell them you'll think about it and set a time to talk when you're more prepared.
- Speak up when bias happens. Whether your child or someone else does or says something prejudiced, address it in the moment. Silence teaches children that it's OK.
- Read diverse books and watch diverse media together. Maybe even start a book club with friends.
- Discuss current events at an age-appropriate level with help from resources.
- Take action together. Brainstorm ideas with your child for how to promote diversity and inclusion in your neighborhood, school, and community. Involve others if possible.

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- Do not segregate yourselves from people based on gender, age, disability, race or ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Parents can provide their children with living examples of equality when interacting in a kind way with people who appear different from them.
- Use kind language. Refrain from using explicit remarks that categorize people. For example, there is a popular saying, “boys go to Jupiter to get more stupider, girls go to college to get more knowledge.” Even though this may seem harmless, it instills an idea in children that girls are smarter than boys, which could lead to segregation. As parents, it would be beneficial to be neutral or affirming of different groups.
- Have multicultural experiences. As a family, becoming engaged in multicultural experiences could be a fun learning experience for everyone. Diversity experiences lead to fewer stereotypes. Introduce your children to diverse groups, such as a new religious setting or cultural community events. The whole family will discover new things about themselves and others through participation in new cultural experiences.
- Redirect intolerant behavior. If you witness your child acting or speaking out in judgment of diverse groups, speak with him about it. Talk with him about why it is important to treat everyone with kindness and equality.

Suggested resources

Books:

- You, Me and Empathy: Teaching Children about Empathy, Feelings, Kindness, Compassion, Tolerance and Recognising Bullying Behaviours - Jayneen Sanders
- *The Power of Kindness: Why Empathy Is Essential in Everyday Life* – Brian Goldman
- Be the Difference: 40+ Ideas for Kids to Create Positive Change Using Empathy, Kindness, Equality and Environmental Awareness – Jayneen Sanders
- Kindness Starts With You – Jacquelyn Stagg
- Teaching Children Empathy, the Social Emotion: Lessons, Activities and Reproducible Worksheets (K-6) That Teach How to “Step Into Others’ Shoes” – Tonia Caselman
- The Kindness Curriculum: Stop Bullying Before It Starts – Judith Anne Rice

Articles:

- https://parentingscience.com/helpful-kids-and-rewards/
- https://www.all4kids.org/news/blog/how-to-teach-kids-about-diversity-and-acceptance/

Videos:

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3. *"Resilience and Self-esteem – Support children to cope with challenging situations"*

Learning Objectives of the subunit

After going through this subunit, parents will:

- understand the importance of developing self-esteem and resilience in children
- understand the effects of high and low self-esteem and resilience
- know how to help build their child's self-esteem and resilience through different methods
- understand how to help their children cope with challenging situations

RESILIENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

To be able to understand self-esteem and resilience as mutually related psychological concepts, one should first understand differences between the two. Even though they are, in some cases, closely related to each other, we are talking about two distinct psychological concepts that exist on their own, that appear in different ways and that have different impacts on an individual.

Self-esteem is widely used as a term and as a concept, not only in the field of Psychology by professionals but in popular language, on a daily basis as well. It refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself. The broadest and frequently cited definition of self-esteem within Psychology is Rosenberg's (1965) who described it simply as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self (Sharma, 2014).

Basically, the level of our self-esteem reflects our beliefs and attitudes about ourselves, it influences how we feel about ourselves. The self-esteem forms as a subjective evaluation of our own worth and values as a person, where we, on our own personal level, evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, and our abilities.

Even though it is a subjective evaluation that is coming from ourselves, self-esteem is strongly influenced by a number of external factors, such as personality, life experiences, achievements and accomplishments and comparison to others (Ackerman, 2018.).

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On the other hand, resilience is defined as the ability to bounce back after going through a difficult situation or period in life. If you sometimes wonder how some people are able to embrace difficult times, overcome tough challenges, pressure, etc. while other will fall down unable to put up a fight, the answer is simple – resilience. But extending on that, it's not only about surviving, overcoming tough periods and challenges thrown at us by life, it's also about emerging stronger, wiser, more adaptable, able (Sutton, 2019.).

As dr. Carole Pemberton suggest in her book *Resilience: A Practical Guide for Coaches (2015): "*Resilience is the capacity to remain flexible in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when faced by life disruption, or extended periods of pressure, so that we emerge from difficulty stronger, wiser, and more able".

EFFECTS OF HIGH AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND RESILIENCE

By now, you are probably starting to realize what the concepts mean by themselves and how they are, indeed, of different nature, but you can also slowly understand how they are, in some cases and more often than not, closely connected to each other. To put that into perspective, an individual with high levels of self-esteem will often be more resilient as well. Why? Because they have more belief in themselves, they have a positive image of their abilities and strengths and that gives them advantage in coping with difficult situations. On the contrary, individuals with lower levels of self-esteem and belief in themselves will have a tough time and be disadvantaged from the start.

Source: *www.verywellmind.com/*

Looking through different sources it can be found that self-esteem is buildup of various components but from all of that we derive the ones that are mostly mentioned and included in most of different interpretations: *self-confidence (including feeling of security), identity, sense of belonging, feeling of competence* (Cherry, 2022.).

On the other hand, contributing factors to resilience are the following: *personality, adversity, social support, genetics, positive adaptation, life experiences* (Sutton, 2019.).

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Ultimately, all the factors previously mentioned and many more will lead to a higher or lower level of self-esteem as well as make people more or less resilient in a given situation. In the next part we explore the effects that different levels of resilience and self-esteem have on an individual.

Let's first take a look at the self-esteem. Higher level which we can call a healthy level of self-esteem makes us more self-confident, gives us more belief in ourselves as well as makes us believe that we are equal members of the society and that we deserve the respect of others. With higher levels of self-esteem, we will be more open, express our needs, be able to say no when we want to and, most importantly, we will be aware of our strengths as well as our weaknesses and we will be able to accept them, accept ourselves as we are (Cherry, 2022.). Contrary to that, with low self-esteem, we will find expressing our thoughts, our needs, our opinions very difficult, we are at risk to frequently experience fear, self-doubt and worry, we have troubles setting boundaries and saying no when that is absolutely necessary. We will also struggle with confidence and more often put other people's needs before our own as we will also believe that they are better than us, know better than us and think more clearly. This might ultimately lead to focusing on our weaknesses and negatives in our life, and make us feel out of control and unable to deal with difficulties, solve problems and react to challenges that life throws our way (Cherry, 2022.).

With children, a situation is slightly different because, as we know, they are more sensitive and their reaction can differentiate from adults in the same or similar situation. Self-esteem can have significant effects on a child's development and well-being, both in the short and the long term. Higher self-esteem in children development promotes: resilience, a sense of control, independent activity, feeling respected, security in relationship building, the ability to make well-balanced decisions despite peer pressure. Contrary to that, low self-esteem might boost feelings of frustration, anger, sadness and/or anxiety, loss of interest in learning, difficulty making and keeping friends, increased likelihood to bend to peer pressure and in some cases, avoidance and early quitting, giving up to challenges (Sutton, 2020.).

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On the other hand, talking about resilience, resilient people are the ones who can cope with struggles, difficulties, challenges that are thrown at them at any stage in life. We have to acknowledge that this doesn't mean that resilient people don't experience negative emotions, that they are stress free and that resilience eliminated difficulties from their life. This just means that they understand that setbacks like these do happen and that sometimes this will be hard and painful, but their mental strength, mental outlook allows them to push through, fight, work through these feelings and recover. Less resilient people will go through difficult periods that can eventually lead to various disorders, they can get stuck on a much darker path without seeing or even looking for a way to get out of these situations.

Source: www.entrepreneur.com

If we look at children, resilience manifests almost in the same way but the consequences resilience or the lack of it can be more intense. Low level of resilience can lead to poor emotional regulation which can cause difficulty in managing stress, they can find it difficult to adapt to change and, of course, difficult situations and challenges, they are in the risk of having lower academic achievement, and, one of the most important and serious consequences is the increased risk of mental health issues. On the other hand, high levels of resilience can lead a child to the exact opposite of what we just mentioned, and can cause greater overall well-being, that being either physical or mental well-being.

Both of the concepts have a high effect on important life choices and will have an impact on decisions that we make as well as the paths we take in life.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

There is a number of ways how we can build our own self-esteem and resilience and also how to help our children with it. Why we're talking about our own first, is to realize that we are a role model for our children and what we are practicing, they will most likely absorb and start consequentially, start acting in the same or similar way.

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If you want your child to become more resilient, you should try and do some of the following:

- Promote making connections. Make sure your child knows the importance of engaging and connecting with their peers but also with their family, friends, etc. In this context, you should also teach them empathy (*see previous unit for more info*).
- Teach them self-care. Help them create more time to eat properly, exercise, and get sufficient amount of sleep.
- Set realistic goals. Teach children to set first of all, realistic goals, and then help them on the way of achieving them, as this will help them focus on specific tasks and move forward in the face of challenges.
- Teach them to accept change. Changes can often be scary for them but you need to help them see that change is a part of life and teach them how to let go of their past. Help them see that goals that they have set can be reevaluated and adapted (APA, 2020.)
- Teach them learning from experience. Let them know that mistakes are also part of our everyday life and that mistakes happen, but as long as we learn from them. Errors can help us moving forward rather than be a setback. Help them become aware of the skills and strategies that helped them through difficult times and to focus on those.
- Teach them to be proactive. Make them understand that ignoring problems doesn't make them go away. Instead, they should plan and act.
- Promote making every day meaningful. Teach them to do or do something with them that will give a sense of accomplishment and purpose. Remember setting clear, achievable goals. (Mayo Clinic, 2022.).

To practice building up children's self-esteem, try and do the following:

- Create a positive, safe environment – this is an important first step. Create an environment for children in which they feel safe, which motivates them to act.
- Show love and acceptance. You should spend time with them and give lots of affection. It's important to remember to be moderate.
- Praise your child. Provide genuine but realistic praise. Avoid exaggerating and overpraising. Also make sure to praise effort and avoid focusing only on results (NCH, 2018.).
- Practice positive self-talk. Teach children to draw healthier conclusion and practice reciting positive affirmations to oneself.
- Give a chance for independence. Children feel better about themselves (as we all do) when they make something done by themselves. Offer help, but don't do things for them. Think about

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doing things together and let them lead the process. As with the resilience, let them learn from their mistakes but you can also help them by learning from your own mistakes.

- Provide rules and structure. First come up with a set of rules to follow and when you're sure it's the right thing to do, stay consistent.

To do in both cases:

- Be a role model. Take good care of yourself and let your child learn from your experiences as well as their own. Make sure to, while doing so and dealing with any difficult situations, challenges or problems, take time to relax, to take a break. Set an example.
- Practice mindfulness - in this way, we give children (as well as ourselves) tools needed to build confidence, cope with stress and relate to uncomfortable or challenging moments. There are number of positive outcomes with using this method such as:
    - **Increased focus**, attention, self-control, classroom participation, compassion
    - **Improved academic performance**, ability to resolve conflict, overall well-being
    - **Decreased levels of stress**, depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior (Mindful.org).

There are number of ways and number of resources to start practicing mindfulness on our own and some of them we pointed out in the section for additional resources, both for children and for adults because, as we said, it's important to be a role model!

Suggested resources

Resources:

- Free online tools that help with building resilience https://thiswayup.org.au/coping-and-resilience-tools/
- Three free resilience exercises pack https://tools.positivepsychology.com/3-resilience-exercises-pack

Articles:

- The Mediating Role of Resilience and Self-Esteem Between Life Events and Coping Styles Among Rural Left-Behind Adolescents in China: A Cross-Sectional Study - https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.560556/full

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- Mindfulness for Kids - https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/

Videos:

- Building your child's self-esteem (by Canadian Paediatric Society) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvufTp2c2LU
- 3 Minutes Body Scan Meditation - Mindfulness For Kids And Adults - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihwcw_ofuME
- Guided Meditation for Kids | Spaceship to the Moon | Relaxation for Children - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mV9BBR1RoGg
- Can Mindfulness Increase Our Resilience to Stress? - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALjF1yb-VLw
- How to manage stress and build resilience with mindfulness - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMGvuS_csRk
- Mindfulness Exercise: Body Scan - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0f9wa2SUX0

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Unit 4 “Intervention on Bullying Incidents”

1. *“Initiating a discussion on sensitive topics”*

Learning Objectives

- Understanding the significance of good communication between parents and children to tackle bullying behaviours and their consequences
- Getting familiar with ways of initiating conversations with children and adolescents about sensitive topics, such as bullying

Parental support

The bullying phenomenon has attracted significant attention over the years. Bullying incidents, debates about its causes and consequences and opinions about its different types and forms have been focal topics in the literature (Sawyer, et al., 2011). Even though there might be disagreements on some aspects of bullying such as factors that contribute to rising of the phenomenon, there is a general consensus on the crucial role that family relationships and parental support play in responses to bullying behaviours (Evans, et al., 2017). Good family relationships are built on good communication between parents and children. However, it should be acknowledged that starting a conversation with a child on sensitive topics, such as bullying, can be a really difficult task for any parent. This sub-unit aims to support parents in this endeavour by highlighting the factors that a parent should have in mind before having a conversation of such nature with their children and by suggesting ways on how a parent can initiate a discussion about bullying.

Family relations

Family relations play a central role in the development of children and adolescents. Studies have shown that children with healthy family relations and parental support tend to achieve better results in several aspects of their lives and mitigate the negative effects of bullying behaviour (Lovegrove, et al., 2013). Within this context, the literature acknowledges that parental support is an important – and sometimes

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necessary – element for victimized children and adolescents so they can cope successfully with bullying (Evans, et al., 2017).

Children and adolescents have the tendency to remain silent on bullying-related incidents (Dowling & Carey, 2013). This is the case for both victims, bully-victims and bystanders. The reasons, why children might remain silent about bullying behaviours, are fear of stigmatization, worries that adults may not take them seriously by showing a lack of empathy (Stives, et al., 2018), lack of confidence in adults' ability to help and fear that telling might lead to more harm than solutions to the problem (Dowling & Carey, 2013). This silence may sometimes lead to misconceptions on behalf of parents regarding the volume and nature of bullying behaviours surrounding their children. Previous studies conducted with the participation of parents and children highlighted that parents estimate the frequency of bullying at their child's school to a lower extent compared to their children (Demaray, et al., 2013). These discrepant viewpoints of bullying behaviours, besides children's silence, could also be the result of different understandings and definitions regarding bullying (Demaray, et al., 2013). It is imperative for both children and adults to realize that bullying should not be confused with teasing or other similar acts since bullying implies uneven power dynamics (Sawyer, et al., 2011), harms someone in a visible or not-visible manner and creates an unequal relationship between victim-bully (LiveWithoutBullying.com, n.d.). Both issues – silence and differentiated understanding – have the matter of communication at their core. Healthy parent-child communication can empower meaningful responses to tackle bullying and may eventually lead to more successful interventions to mitigate or even stop such harmful occurrences. However, healthy communication needs constant effort. It is not something built overnight, as children and adolescents need to feel comfort, being respected and show trust towards adults, as part of a safe environment. Positive communication may assist parents in identifying potential worrying signs of bullying behaviours in their children, earlier compared to cases where communication was limited, and also prove helpful in overcoming any social stigmatization associated with sensitive subjects (Cingel, et al., 2021), and also let the youth be aware that their family members are dependable to help them and to provide adaptive ways to cope with bullying (Larrañaga, et al., 2018).

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In addition to children's need for a safe environment, this type of safe space is crucial for parents as well. Parents themselves may experience discomfort and showcase signs of worry and fear about their children's health and safety. However, parents need to keep a calm stance without impulses and show their children that they can handle difficult situations (American Psychological Association, 2021). To achieve that, a safe environment is necessary. A safe space for both children and parents is also a prerequisite to facilitate a discussion on sensitive topics that would be impossible otherwise.

Ways to initiate a sensitive discussion

Before the discussion

- Before starting a conversation with their children about bullying, parents are advised to plan their thoughts ahead. This means that it could be wise to think about what they want to say since some beforehand planning can make the discussion easier and give confidence to the parents to lead the conversation.
- Parents are advised to initiate a discussion of such nature in a quiet time for them and their child. A moment like this could perhaps be after dinner or while preparing lunch for the next day. The place is also a crucial element since the conversation should take place somewhere with no further distractions, e.g. home. In any case, the crucial element of time and place is that your children are the sole centre of your attention while you are having this discussion (American Psychological Association, 2021).

The discussion

1. One possible way to initiate such a discussion with the child could be to use a phrase like "let's sit down to talk about it because I want to hear your thoughts" (LiveWithoutBullying.com, n.d.). Another way to start this conversation is to use some kind of excuse to introduce the topic in your dialogue e.g. a post from social media, an article or a film referring to bullying could give the opportunity parents to initiate the discussion (Cingel, et al., 2021).
2. Discuss their knowledge and/or opinions on the subject. Parents sometimes have the tendency to underestimate the knowledge and opinions that adolescents and children have on serious and complicated topics. By asking them what they know about bullying, parents can establish a common knowledge base for both parents and children, by also showing the children/adolescents that their opinions have value and are respected.
3. Express emotions about the topic. Parents should not be afraid to share their feelings with their children. This way, children can acknowledge them but they can also realize that despite their parents' upset, they can pull themselves together and overcome difficulties (American Psychological Association, 2021).

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4. Be truthful. It is recommended for parents lay out the facts at a level understandable by their children, without underestimating their children's worries and without proceeding to promises that are difficult to keep. If parents feel uncertain about something, it is possible to answer that they do not know, while reassuring the child/adolescent that you will not ignore it (LiveWithoutBullying.com, n.d.).

Throughout this sensitive discussion, parents should at all times adopt a calm stance as this could be a reassuring factor for the child. Additionally, it is imperative for parents to:

- listen carefully to what children and adolescents have to say,
- avoid a judgmental tone, threats and labels

Suggested resources

- Live Without Bullying: https://livewithoutbullying.com/en/home-en/
- The Bully Project: https://www.thebullyproject.com/
- StopBullying.gov: https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/how-to-talk-about-bullying

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2. *"Tips and Advice to support a child who is a victim of bullying"*

Learning Objectives

- Recognizing the different coping strategies adopted by victims of bullying
- Learning ways to support a child-victim of bullying

Bullying Symptoms & Coping Strategies

Victimization from bullying can lead to negative consequences for children's mental health. Such negative outcomes can be categorized into 3 types of symptoms (Dowling & Carey, 2013; Evans, et al., 2017):

- Internalizing symptoms (e.g. school avoidance, a decline in school performance, anxiety, withdrawal, depression, self-harming behaviour etc)
- Externalizing symptoms (e.g. anger and reactive aggression)
- Symptoms of PTSD (e.g. hypervigilance, sleep disorders etc)

Even though bullying is not always the sole cause of these behaviours, it can serve as a catalyst facilitating the negative impact.

Children and adolescents who fall victims to bullying, tend to adopt several coping strategies to deal with this challenge. These include (Evans, et al., 2017):

- Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies
    - Internalizing & PTSD Symptoms (e.g. ignoring the bullying or the aggression, pretending that bullying does not bother them, distancing from thinking about the situation)
    - Seeking help (as means of emotional support and comfort)
- Problem-Focused Coping Strategies
- Seeking help (as means of finding solutions)
- Verbal and physical aggression (for self-protection, expressing revenge and punishment to the bully, or as means of evoking empathy)

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- Standing up for themselves (as means of preventing potential bullies)

Parents need to take into consideration how their children respond to bullying incidents so they can better understand their emotional state and needs and thus, find the most suitable ways to support them. The parental role can be an essential element in efforts to tackle bullying either during the **prevention** stage or the **intervention** phase.

Prevention

1. Establishing healthy family bonds and communication: The quality of relationships with their parents is a crucial factor related to different forms of bullying (Larrañaga, et al., 2018). Parents should make the everyday effort to nurture a positive family environment by communicating with their children, and discussing and hearing about each other's social lives. If children feel the comfort of talking to their parents about their peers before a bullying event occurs, the chances are higher that they will feel comfortable getting their parents involved after (Lovegrove, et al., 2013). Through these positive family bonds, it would be easier for parents to teach emotional and interpersonal skills to their children, such as emotion-rich language, enhanced emotional intelligence and better navigation of peer groups.
2. Expressing parental warmth: Parents are encouraged to show high degrees of warmth, love and closeness towards the child while setting, simultaneously, clear limits. It has been argued that parental warmth is closely related to lower levels of cyberbullying victimization (Elsaesser, et al., 2017). Additionally, providing positive feedback, expressing how proud they are of their children and rewarding them can be significant factors in building essential relationships and enhancing children's self-esteem (LiveWithoutBullying.com, n.d.).
3. Adopting anti-bullying and anti-victimization habits: Parents can coach children at an early age on what they can do to build good peer relations (e.g. empathy, kindness) and what they cannot (e.g. hitting, teasing etc). They can also teach children how to react themselves in case they experience bullying e.g. by learning to say "no" or "stop" firmly or telling an adult (Lovegrove, et al., 2013).
4. Cultivate relationships within the school context: Strong partnerships and engagement between parents and school staff have been highlighted among the most crucial indicators of successful bullying prevention and intervention programs. (Dowling & Carey, 2013). More immediate responses on behalf of the school authorities and teachers regarding bullying can prevent future bullying events from happening, and also enhance students' confidence in reaching out to an adult for support (Larrañaga, et al., 2018).

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Intervention

1. Looking for signs: Parents are encouraged to keep an eye out for potential signs of bullying (e.g. attempts to avoid school, bruises, torn cloth, withdrawal, changes in eating habits, sleep disturbances etc). Since children do not always disclose to an adult their feelings and their experiences with bullying, parents should pay close attention to potential signs (Lovegrove, et al., 2013).

2. Keeping a calm stance: Once parents become aware of their children's victimization, they should manage their own feelings first, as the lack of composure and emotional reactions in such cases may lead to negative outcomes. Instead, parents are advised to engage in a meaningful discussion with their children, through active listening, by giving them enough time and space to express themselves and also by posing questions in a calm manner (Lovegrove, et al., 2013).

3. Avoiding labelling & blaming: Talking about trauma can be healing and protective for the mental health of the victim. A verbal response from parents can be an effective intervention strategy only if the victimized youth felt supported. For that to happen, blame and label avoidance towards the victim is a necessary precondition (Bjereld, et al., 2021). Instead, victims need to be reassured that it is not their fault for what they are going through.

4. Deciding the next steps together: At the end of the discussion with their children, parents are advised to reach mutually acceptable and understandable next steps with their children. It would be wise to take into account and listen to the children's feelings and opinions on the matter. Such an approach showcases to children that their opinions are respected, but also that they have parental support at all times. It has been argued that among victimized children, those who report higher levels of parental support (i.e. feeling that parents listened, understood them, offered advice and solutions) indicate lower depression rates (Conners-Burrow, et al., 2009).

5. Working together with the school: Collaborating with school authorities and staff can prove to be meaningful in the intervention stage of bullying behaviour as well. Parents can take an active role in working with the school in the design of plans and affirmative actions to tackle bullying behaviours.

6. Promoting pro-social behaviours: Positive interactions have the potential of creating healthy relationships (Sawyer, et al., 2011). Additionally, supporting children in planning for the future can enhance youth resilience towards bullying and thus serve as a catalyst for mental health well-being (Lovegrove, et al., 2013).

7. Throughout the intervention phase, parents are advised to avoid strategies and advice to their children such as:

8. "Fighting back": Previous research on bullying intervention strategies has argued that this has proven to be a poor strategy to stop bullying behaviours (Evans, et al., 2017). In a matter of fact, advising children to fight back may lead to further victimization, escalation of bullying incidents and/or expulsion from school (Lovegrove, et al., 2013).

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9. Confronting directly the bully or their parents: Parents are discouraged from getting to direct confrontation with a child-bully or its parents and, instead, are encouraged to build fruitful relationships with the school and contact the school authorities (Larrañaga, et al., 2018).

10. Ignoring: Children need to feel safe and respected. This is why they need reassurance that their parents take their experiences seriously and that they can help them at all times. By advising children to ignore bullying behaviours as something "casual" or as something "that will go away over time", they normalize the problem and, thus, make it harder to solve (Sawyer, et al., 2011).

Suggested resources

- The "School Bullying Management – Effective Skills for Educators" online course: https://education-hub.kmop.org/course/school-bullying-management-effective-skills-for-educators/
- Bullying Resource Center: https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_Youth/Resource_Centers/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Bullying_Resource_Center/Home.aspx
- PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: https://www.pacer.org/bullying/

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3. *"Tips and advice on how to deal with Bullies (for parents)"*

Learning Objectives

- Know the characteristics of children who bully
- Identify the reasons why a bully child
- Apply family actions to eradicate negative behaviours
- Define new practices to improve behaviour

Intervention on Bullying Incidents

Introduction

Parents have a great responsibility in educating their children to prevent them from committing acts of bullying, since the behaviour of their children affects the well-being of other people.

For that reason, preventing bullying is a priority for many families. Many parents wonder how to approach bullying when it is committed by their children. The first response is to understand that children's behaviour is not personal, but the result of a hostile social environment. This means that parents must work to change their children's environment, so that they feel good about themselves and others.

Parents should look for opportunities to talk to their children about bullying and the importance of speaking with respect and consideration for others. This is something that can be reinforced at home with clear boundaries and consequences for any unacceptable behaviour. In addition, parents should foster their children's self-esteem so that they feel safe and be able to handle difficult social situations without resorting to abuse from others. If children feel insecure, parents need to help them develop skills to deal with complicated social situations.

Finally, it is important for parents to teach their children to seek help if they become involved in a bullying situation. Children should know that they can turn to a trusted adult for help and support. This

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will help them understand that bullying is not acceptable and that there are other ways to deal with difficult situations. Parents play an important role in educating their children to prevent bullying.

Characteristics of the Bully Child

According to Ruiz Pastor (2019), there is no single profile of aggressor, just as there is no single profile of victim. **To help the bully, we need to know why they behave like this**. We may think that it is their character or their personality and that nothing can be done, but it is not so. These behaviours and attitudes are preceded by a previous fact, a performance that was lived, and an uncomfortable situation that has caused this behaviour. In this way, some common traits among children who bully include:

- They tend to be aggressive and irritable.
- Lack of self-control and impulsivity.
- Lack of empathy.
- Few conflict resolution skills and social skills.
- They find it difficult to take responsibility for their actions and tend to always justify them and blame others.
- Model of interaction with others based on dominance and submission.
- Self-esteem 'apparently swollen'. They may seem to have high self-esteem when in fact it is quite the opposite.
- Worried about what others might think of them.

Causes of Children Bullying

It is difficult for parents to identify problematic behaviours outside the family environment. It is difficult for parents not to notice the behaviours of their children. However, there are many signs that should make parents suspect that their children have adopted aggressive and/or violent behaviour. Examples of such signs can be the way they treat the household pet, or their younger siblings, when they invite someone home and behave in an intolerant or rude manner, or when they continually refer to someone in a derogatory and mocking way... These are signs that mark their bullying behaviour.

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The success to successful behavioural change is the identification of possible causes for aggressive and/or violent behaviours. Jönsson & Muhonen (2022) describe some factors that may be prone to the occurrence of these behaviours:

- Family violence: It is very common for abusive children to come from a violent family dynamic. If they grow up in an environment of violence and/or verbal, physical or psychological abuse, there is a high probability that they will learn to follow these patterns. And their escape route from that realisation is to reproduce them.
- Parents being the bad example: If children see that their parents express themselves disparagingly of others, are insensitive to others, have fun putting names and laughing at the failures of others, surely that model will lead them to their own relationships.
- Lack of limits: Children who are used to always having what they want, to crossing boundaries without any consequences, to yelling, insulting and hitting without anything happening, it is very possible that they use those behaviours in other spaces.
- Exposure to violent content: Exposure to video games that are increasingly aggressive and violent, to movies or television programs, without supervision, can be generators of aggression in children and young people.
- Negative influence: Sometimes certain relations and friendships can negatively influence the behaviours of children and young people who begin to imitate aggressive behaviours.
- Lack of social skills: There are those who have difficulty linking and connecting with others because they do not have the necessary social skills and failing to feel truly integrated they adopt aggressive patterns with the weakest often in search of what they believe will be "acceptance" of the group.

What to do if your child bullies?

It is important that family and school work together in a coordinated manner to help the bully cease their bullying behaviour. Families are a critical part of their recovery and behaviour change.

The "What to do if your child is a bully" guide from Optum (2021) identifies some of the signs that could make you suspect that your child is harassing other children in ways such as exhibiting aggressiveness, getting into trouble and blaming others for their mistakes.

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Intervention with the bullying child is a delicate job involving many agents and a specialised and thorough intervention. **The prevention of bullying is the responsibility of everyone**, family, school and society as a whole. And, in the same way, it is necessary for multidisciplinary teams to act in this process.

In the guide we find the following steps to act accordingly:

1. Detect it and accept that there is a problem. The first step is to detect and recognise it, which, although painful, is imminent in order to take action and help them.
2. Find the cause of their behaviour. We must try to define since when this situation is occurring with our child, see if there is any specific event that could have triggered their aggression, review the aspects mentioned above and if we discover what may be the cause, take immediate action, especially if they are within the family dynamic.
3. Take school complaints seriously. If the School lets us know that there is a situation with our child, it is essential to take it seriously and make a joint action plan that includes the repair of the fault, constant supervision and apologies to whoever has been assaulted.
4. Talk about it and define consequences. Once it has become clear that our child is having a behaviour of this type we must discuss it with them, seize the scope of what happened, find together how to correct the failure and define the consequences that they will have to face at home.
5. Consult a specialist. In some cases, it is best to ask for support from a specialist to detect what triggers this behaviour, what changes should be made at the family level, such as being more consistent with limits, etc.; and to help them through an intervention, to change those aggressive patterns, manage them anger, develop social skills, etc.

Educating in Social Values

All parents strive to educate their children in positive and healthy values that make them good citizens critical and active that contribute to the creation of a better society. But there are attitudes that are permeating children and by which they finally develop not so healthy habits.

Parents play a very important role, they must be open, listen and have a positive attitude when talking about other classmates. This will be the first step for the children themselves to report cases of bullying

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in a friend or even if they live the harassment in their own skin. In addition, they can also give clues about their positioning and their attitude towards those attitudes.

According to the child psychologist Santamaría (2019) the profile of a boy or girl who harasses has characteristics that often coincide, and in the same thing happens with the candidate to be harassed. That is why, it is important to take care of certain values from home, that help avoid harassment. It makes the following selection of values that work at home to change inappropriate behaviours:

1. Responsibility. This value can be worked through small tasks entrusted to the children appropriate to their age. It is also important that they see adults, their referents and parents, fulfilling their obligations and being accountable for their own actions.
2. Tolerance. It refers to the understanding and acceptance of being able to see in others a different way of thinking, being and acting, and admitting it as valid. How I, as an adult, speak and treat others, how I accept their differences, is the model we are going to offer to children. To encourage it, children will be talked about what it means to be tolerant. And stories, for example, can be a good way to do that.
3. Respect. It consists in treating others as we like to be treated, something apparently simple but sometimes forgotten. Not only to people, but also to animals, to social norms, to the environment in general.
4. Humbleness. It is important to teach children to know and recognize their own abilities as well as each other's weaknesses. This will help them get to know each other better. It is necessary that they feel secure in their strengths, but also that they see that everyone is different and is superior to nothing or anyone.
5. Solidarity. Sharing time, space and energy with other people with the aim of living in harmony, collaborating and helping, benefits in love for others. Since children are young, they can participate with their children in charitable acts, volunteering, solidarity activities…
6. Sincerity. The value of sincerity is also key. It is necessary to be sincere, to be noble and frank. This is a complicated issue, that sometimes with that of the 'pious lie' we play with the truth, and we take for granted some lies.
7. Honesty. Being honest means respecting yourself and others. It is important to inculcate children to follow their own judgment and not to be influenced by other relationships or attitudes that they think may harm them.

The main idea is that, as role models of children, they will repeat all the actions they see adults do, so educating them and reducing children's negative behaviours begins with us.

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Suggested resources

- AUGUSTA, Rebecca; CABRERA, Daniela; GIARDULLO, Salvatore. DOCUMENTARY: "BULLYING IS NOT CHILD'S PLAY." I work to qualify for the title of Social Communicator mention AUDIOVISUAL ART. UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA ANDRÉS BELLO, CARACAS-VENEZUELA, 2014.
- Protect Yourself Rules – BULLYING https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mrE5zgEvt4&ab_channel=FightChildAbuse
- SONG: THE BULLY (SIA)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FR0TKp9Zzls&ab_channel=Sia-Topic
- SONG: THE BULLY (SODY) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSEHl51XF9Y&ab_channel=SodyVEVO
- SML MOVIE: THE BULLY SOLUTION! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j56rwSYEDE&ab_channel=SML

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