

Peer Conflict, Mean Behaviour, or Bullying

What can I do to support my child?

Peer Conflict

- Conflict between and among peers is a natural part of growing up. Children will have times when they disagree and can't solve their own problems. They may even become so frustrated that they say mean things or act out physically by hitting, kicking or trying to hurt.
- If it's peer conflict you will be aware that these children:
 - usually choose to play or hang out together;
 - have equal power (similar age, size, social status, etc.);
 - are equally upset;
 - are both interested in the outcome; and
 - will be able to work things out with adult help (after calming down).
- Adults can respond by helping the children talk it out and see each other's perspective. This is often referred to as "restorative practices".

Mean Behaviour

- Children may try out behaviours to assert themselves – sometimes saying or doing mean things – such as making fun of others, using a hurtful name, taking something without permission, leaving a child out, or “budging” in line.
- If it is mean behavior, usually:
 - it is not planned and seems to happen spontaneously or by chance;
 - it may be aimed at any child nearby;
 - the child being mean may feel badly when an adult points out the harm **they’ve** caused.
- When adults see mean behaviour they should not ignore it. Adults should respond quickly, firmly and respectfully to stop the behavior, to let kids know that their actions are hurtful and to re-direct children to more positive behaviour.

Bullying

- Bullying is serious behavior that has three key features – all three must be present for the situation to be considered bullying:
 - Power imbalance -- One child clearly has power over the other(s), which may be due to age, size, social status, and so on.
 - Intention to harm -- The purpose of the bullying behaviour is to harm or hurt other(s) – it's intended to be mean and is clearly not accidental.
 - Repeated over time -- bullying behaviour continues over time and gets worse with repetition. There is a real or implied threat that the behaviour will not stop, and in fact will become even more serious.
- Adults must address the bullying behaviour and ensure the safety of the student who has been targeted. They also need to reassure the children who may have witnessed the behaviour that adults are taking care of it.

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Indigenous Cultural Safety/
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