

You Are Not Alone:

# When to Talk to Your Child About Bullying

At Dolly's Dream, we understand that bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, and, in the most devastating cases, suicide. Please know that help and support are always available.

## Common Behaviours in Young Children

Young children need our help to manage their emotions, be gentle, and show consideration for others. It's common for young children to sometimes display aggressive behaviour, such as:

- Hitting, pushing, shoving, and yelling
- Snatching toys from other children
- Calling other children names
- Assigning other children undesirable roles in games (e.g., "Robbie has to play the dumb baby")

With support, most children will grow out of these behaviours. However, there may be deeper issues to address if a young child:

- Shows persistent aggressive behaviour towards others
- Makes other children feel scared, isolated, or anxious
- Often targets children who are weaker or less confident



Early childhood is the perfect time to address problem behaviours before they become patterns,

helping to lay the foundation for respectful and caring relationships.

## How to Talk About Bullying to Young Children

You don't have to use the word 'bullying' if you feel your children are too young to understand. It's more important to speak clearly about what's happening and how it makes people feel, such as:

- "Harper keeps hitting Sofia, and it hurts her."
- "Charlotte tries to stop other kids from playing with Josh every day, and it makes him feel sad."
- "James calls Charlie mean names a lot, and it makes Charlie upset."

### Key messages to share with young children include:

- It's not OK to hurt other people.
- It's normal to feel upset, scared, angry, or confused if someone hurts you.
- It's good to ask an adult for help.
- We should treat other people the way we would like to be treated.
- If there's a problem, we can work together to find a solution.

**Tip:** Try to avoid labelling children as 'bullies' or 'victims', as these labels can stick. Rather, focus on changing the behaviours.



# Teaching Kindness and Respect

Parents lay positive foundations for their children by doing things like:

- Being a good role model: letting your children see you being calm, respectful, and assertive.
- Being specific about the behaviours you want to see - e.g., "Let your sister play that game with you"
- Praising behaviour that helps others - e.g., "That was kind of you to let Evie borrow your teddy"
- Helping children to name their feelings and think about how other people are feeling - e.g., "How would you feel if someone did that to you?"
- Creating positive opportunities for children to have power, such as picking out a present for someone.
- Setting clear, consistent rules, with reasonable consequences.

And parents can help children prepare for difficult situations by doing things like:

- Role-playing how to cope if someone is being mean, such as walking away, staying with a friend, standing tall, and saying clear things like "It's my turn" or "No pushing".
- Teaching your children to say "yes" and "no" assertively and ask for help.
- Explaining the difference between nice and mean nicknames, and the difference between hurting someone on purpose and by accident.
- Talking about how to tell when someone is sad or scared, and what we can do to help them - e.g., asking them to join in a game.
- Enjoying books, movies, and TV together, and using them to start conversations about how to cope with life's challenges.

## WE'RE HERE FOR YOU



If you're feeling unsure about what to do or where to turn, we're here to support you and your family every step of the way.

**Dolly's Dream Support Line**  
**0488 881 033**

Free, confidential counselling for families and children, ensuring help is always within reach. Call **0488 881 033**.

**Dolly's Dream**  
**Parent Hub**

We do the research for you and provide trusted, easy-to-read articles with regularly updated information about online safety and bullying.

**Beacon Cyber-Safety App**  
**beacon**

A free app providing practical tools and trusted resources to help families navigate technology and reduce online harms.

