

# Peer Conflict, Mean Behaviour or Bullying

**Know the difference and how to deal with it.**

**When a child is having a problem with a peer(s), it can be hard for parents or other students to know exactly what is happening. Is it bullying or are students just being unkind?**

**Each type of behaviour must be handled differently to keep children safe and to help them learn what is the proper behaviour.**

## PEER CONFLICT

Conflict between peers is a natural part of growing up. Children will often disagree and are not able to solve their differences. Sometimes they will become frustrated and say unkind words or act out physically.



- Adults can help students to calm down.
- Encourage students to talk it out and see the opposing point of view.
- Offer guidance to assist students to work through resolving the conflict.

Peer conflict is usually isolated to one incident typically with no prior history of a power struggle between students.

## MEAN BEHAVIOUR

Children may try out behaviour to assert themselves. Sometimes it involves saying or acting unkindly such as making fun of others, using hurtful names, taking things from others, or excluding someone from a group or activity.



- Recognize that the behaviour can happen unplanned, often spontaneously.
- Adults need to respond quickly, firmly and respectfully to stop the behaviour.
- Let children know it is inappropriate to be nasty and unkind.
- The student may feel embarrassed or upset by their mean behaviour. Help them understand the harm they caused and how to correct it.
- Encourage students to redirect behaviour more positively, which may include apologizing.

Responding swiftly can prevent students from developing a pattern of mean behaviour toward peers and prevent it from escalating into bullying.

## BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying behaviour is serious and has three key elements, all of which must be present in a situation to consider it to be bullying.



- Power imbalance – one child clearly has power over the other(s), which may be due to age, size, social status, etc.;
- Intention to harm – the intention is to cause hurt or harm and is not accidental or spontaneous; and
- Repetitive – the behaviour is continuous over a duration of time and worsens with each incident. There is real and implied threats (verbally or online) that the behaviour will not stop and, in fact, worsen.

The child being targeted may experience increased fear, apprehension and distress. They may have tried to stop the bullying and can no longer cope or handle it alone. Bullying must be addressed immediately to ensure the safety of the student who has been targeted. Adults should assure other students who may have witnessed the behaviour that they are taking care of it using appropriate measures.

## GET HELP



Building safe school environments where students are respected is a top priority for Comox Valley Schools. We encourage students and parents to take action against bullying behaviour.

### ERASE = expect respect & a safe education

You're not alone – everyone needs to ask for help sometimes.

Talk to someone. Chat with a counsellor or trained professional.

Tell someone. Notify your school or report it anonymously through the ERASE Report It tool.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase>