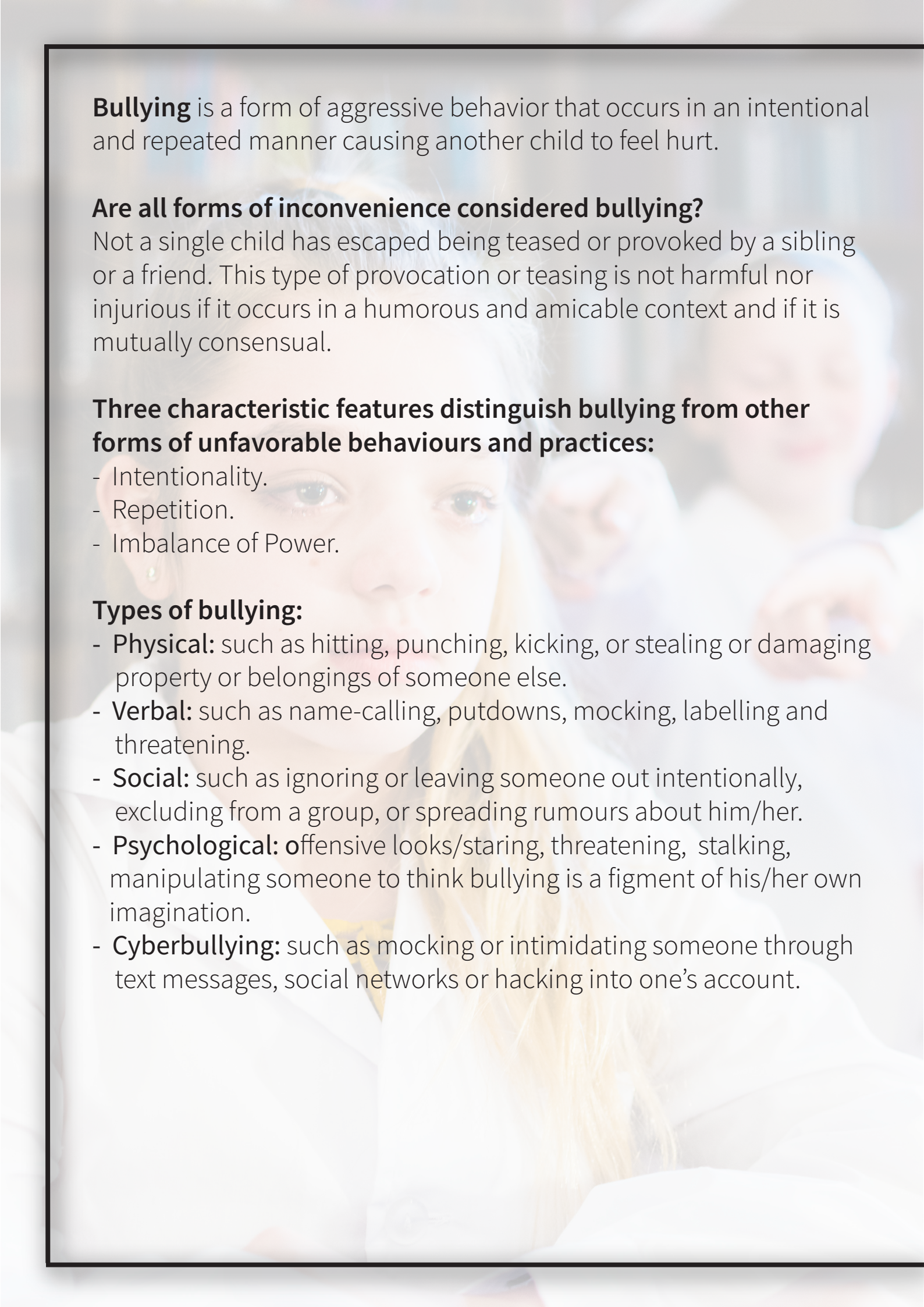


The national program to prevent bullying



A blurred background image showing a group of children in a classroom setting. A girl with blonde hair is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. Other children are visible in the background, slightly out of focus.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that occurs in an intentional and repeated manner causing another child to feel hurt.

Are all forms of inconvenience considered bullying?

Not a single child has escaped being teased or provoked by a sibling or a friend. This type of provocation or teasing is not harmful nor injurious if it occurs in a humorous and amicable context and if it is mutually consensual.

Three characteristic features distinguish bullying from other forms of unfavorable behaviours and practices:

- Intentionality.
- Repetition.
- Imbalance of Power.

Types of bullying:

- **Physical:** such as hitting, punching, kicking, or stealing or damaging property or belongings of someone else.
- **Verbal:** such as name-calling, putdowns, mocking, labelling and threatening.
- **Social:** such as ignoring or leaving someone out intentionally, excluding from a group, or spreading rumours about him/her.
- **Psychological:** offensive looks/staring, threatening, stalking, manipulating someone to think bullying is a figment of his/her own imagination.
- **Cyberbullying:** such as mocking or intimidating someone through text messages, social networks or hacking into one's account.

Groups who are more targeted by bullying and abusive behaviors tend to be children who are:

- Different: in appearance, cultural or religious background, social status, or have health issues or disabilities.
- Super achievers, exceptionally gifted or who receive significant attention.
- Socially-shy and introverts who are less likely to speak out loud or more likely to feel intimidated.
- Newly arrived to a community: like those who recently moved to a new school or team.

How does bullying affect the bystander or witness?

- Feel guilty.
- Feel powerless and helpless.
- Feel anxious and scared of becoming the next victim.

What are the common causes of bullying?

No one is born a bully. However, anyone can develop and acquire bullying behaviors under certain circumstances. Some of the prevailing reasons why children/adolescents become bullies include:

- Most children who engage in bullying have been bullied before.
- Development and acquisition of aggressive and bullying behavior at home, at school, or through the media.
- Feeling ignored at home or suffering from a negative relationship with their parents.
- Feeling vulnerable and powerlessness.
- Jealousy and attention-seeking.
- Lack of emotional and psychological security.
- Prior experience that bullying pays off.
- Lack of awareness of the real harmful impact of bullying on victims.

Signs that a child is being bullied:

- **Physical:** Unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts, torn clothes, damaged belongings.
- **Psychosomatic:** Non-specific pains, headaches, abdominal pains, mouth sores.
- **Emotional indicators:** Appearing upset, unhappy, lonely, tearful, distressed, becoming withdrawn and depressed, stammering, unexpected mood swings.
- **Changes in social behavior:** Having fewer friends, refusing to go out, being invited out much less often.
- **School related behaviours:** Fear of walking to or from school, change of route to school, afraid of riding on the school bus, asking to be driven to school, unwilling to go to school, deterioration in school work, coming home hungry (because lunch money was taken), reporting loss of possessions.
- **Worrying behaviours:** Irritability and temper outbursts, stopping eating, over-eating, being unable to sleep, nightmares, bed wetting, crying out during sleep, refusing to say what is wrong.

Help students to develop better ways of responding to bullying:

With very severe bullying such as when one is attacked physically and repeatedly, it is important to seek help from a teacher or other adult. With low level bullying such as unpleasant teasing and name-calling, the student can sometimes handle it himself/herself.



What can parents do to prevent their children from getting involved in bullying at school?

- During the early days of the child's life, do whatever you can to enhance his / her feeling of a safe relationship with the care provider, because the lack of safety and serious anxiety during childhood can affect a child's ability to connect with his classmates later.
- Keep in mind that during different stages of a child's development he/she need more opportunities to act independently and therefore you have to practice your role in a way that combines control and support at the same time.
- Avoid the cold authoritarian relationship and over-controlling your child because it leads to acts of violent with his/her classmates.
- Do not use bullying tactics or your child will become another copy of you.
- Do not be too lenient with your child because he/she needs to know that there are limits to everything he/she does.
- Do not overprotect your child by reducing the amount of experience he/she can learn from, and thus can mix with other different students, because your excessive protection of the child can make him vulnerable to bullying.
- Positive aspects of a child's behaviour must be discovered and enhanced because it will helps him/ her to accept him/herself and trust in his/her personality, consequently becoming less affected by bullying.
- You must show feelings of empathy with others through your personal behaviour, this will help your child accept others and become more cooperative and less inclined to bullying.