

***Dear parent, family member or friend,***

When we face a conflict situation between children, we must carefully identify the issues and possible ***solutions***. During conflict, the desires or objectives of those involved are incompatible and it is difficult to find common ground. Sooner or later, all children experience conflict and teasing. These situations are part of the child's socialization process.

***Resolving conflict peacefully*** restores the balance of power between the children involved and helps them to make compromises and reach an agreement. Emphasize mediation during your child's initial conflicts and use conflict resolution approaches is encouraged. Staff at your child's school can suggest a variety of approaches.

To clarify the differences between "bullying" and "conflict," see the *Differences Between Conflict & Bullying* table below.

This material is a reference tool, inspired from *Fondation Jasmin Roy* <https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/> that will help you to intervene and give you strategies to create a **positive and caring environment** for your children.

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## HOW TO INTERVENE IN CASE OF CONFLICT OR BULLYING

1

- First, make sure you know the whole story in order to properly assess the problem. The children's account must include their own actions and involvement.
- Ask them whether they have tried to get help from school resources or the place where the incident occurred (e.g. responsible adults, parents in the home, on school grounds, older brothers or sisters)

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- Ask them to accurately describe the problem they are having with their peers. It could be an isolated incident, unplanned by the aggressor. If this is the case, then it is a one-time aggression under the "violence" category as opposed to "bullying." Sometimes there is a misunderstanding, incident or conflict.
- You should also make sure that the act was a one-time incident or "scrap" not an ongoing issue.
- If it is not an incident, ask whether the act of aggression was repeated several times over a period of time.

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With the information gathered, from speaking with your child(ren), determine if it is a *conflict* situation or a *bullying* situation.

- Conflict is the result of a disagreement between two or more individuals, whereas bullying, is an imbalance of power between two or more individuals. There is generally no power imbalance in a conflict situation.
- A fight, an insult or isolated threat does not necessarily constitute bullying, but these violent actions are reprehensible and we need to intervene. When we intervene appropriately, we prevent the behaviours from recurring.

## SUGGESTED COURSE OF ACTION FOR PARENTS

### CONFLICT

- Encourage the children to handle the situation by themselves. (Do they have any possible solutions in mind?)
- Emphasize mediation during your child's initial conflicts and use conflict resolution approaches.
- Remember: staff at your child's school can suggest a variety of approaches.

### BULLYING

- Mediation and conflict resolution are not appropriate techniques to deal with a bullying situation. Since there is an imbalance of power, victims often lie to avoid further problems with aggressors, giving you the impression that it was simply a conflict. You will therefore have missed an opportunity to end the hostilities. Repeated bullying will likely continue and possibly intensify for a certain period.
- Proper intervention will restore the balance of power and deter the aggressors from repeating their behaviour.

**If you have any doubt, contact the school administration and request an appointment. Make sure they are quickly informed of the situation so that they can intervene. They will analyse with you the situation and support you and your children.**

Approach

**CONFLICT****BULLYING****4**

Suggest possible solutions and ways to prevent future incidents:

- They should not take revenge or any form of retaliation that could make the situation worse.
- 1) They should carefully choose their words to end a conflict rather than make the situation worse (e.g. "This isn't the way to behave," "Leave me alone", "I don't like that", "Calm down and tell me how you feel").
- 2) They may decide to remain silent and consult a responsible adult if they feel unable to resolve the problem by themselves or not listened to.
- 3) Show them how to listen to others and put themselves in the other person's shoes.

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- Intervene if necessary, to do so, set your emotions aside. We often get carried away by the fact that we are attached to the child we are defending. This sometimes prevents us from properly resolving a situation. Harassing, insulting or injuring the child who hurt our child will not stop the aggressor from doing it again.
- Keep in mind, that the aggressors may also need help. They may be experiencing a difficult situation at home or in another area of their lives. What was truly underlying their frustration?
- Just like your child, the aggressor can also learn a lesson. Do not miss this golden opportunity to raise their awareness about listening and empathy.

- Calmly provide support for your children
- It is important to be appropriately involved in the intervention carried out at school.
- Do not threaten, get angry with or insult school staff.
- You are entitled to share your fears and concerns about the victims, but do it in a civilized manner.
- Show good faith while participating in the intervention process.
- Remember that proper intervention seeks to understand the difficulties experienced by the victims, aggressors and witnesses.
- Whether they are victims, aggressors or witnesses, support your children by asking them questions at home about behaviours that foster good relations with peers.
- Tell them how to report a violent or bullying situation by informing the principal, teacher, support staff or educator verbally or in writing.
- It is critical to take action so that the individuals affected receive the necessary support to overcome their problems
- Remind them that if they were in the same situation, they, too, would appreciate help with their problems.

## Differences between conflict & bullying

	CONFLICT	BULLYING
<b>Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ A normal situation, not necessarily negative</li> <li>→ It may be an accident; in this case, the children who were “bumped” will say that the person hit them. Once you are properly informed, you may realize that it was an accident</li> <li>→ A situation that arises occasionally and under certain circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ An abnormal situation, intentional acts (not an accident)</li> <li>→ A child endures repetitive acts of aggression without saying anything about the abuse from his/her peers</li> </ul> <p>Bullying : (Education Act)  <i>“Any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.”</i></p>
<b>Relationships with children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ In general, the two children are of equal strength. They will both retaliate and “stand their ground.”</li> <li>→ The students know each other and may be friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The bully is in a dominant position and abuses power over the victim, who does not know how to defend him/herself</li> <li>→ The children are not necessarily friends, even if they might have been in the past</li> </ul>
<b>Causes and expressions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Conflict occurs after a disagreement, a difference of opinion or perception.</li> <li>→ Conflict may be caused by either child</li> <li>→ The conflict is not expected. There is no negative intent to cause harm, as it was not planned. None of the children concerned would say “I’m going to hurt him/her.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Bullying occurs when the bully wants to use power over the victim</li> <li>→ It is always the same child who is attacked or insulted, without being able to respond or defend him/herself</li> <li>→ Bullying acts are intentional and can be expected. The bully may warn silent witnesses about what he/she will do to the victim</li> <li>→ In some cases, the bully threatens and warns that he/she will continue, especially if the victim reports his/her distress in order to get help</li> </ul>
<b>Problem solving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Children generally accept help to solve the problem</li> <li>→ Children may accept to fix their mistakes</li> <li>→ During a disagreement, after discussions and mutual apologies, an agreement is generally reached</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Very often, the bully will accuse the victim, will not admit to wrongdoing and will not recognize the severity of the behaviour</li> <li>→ In order to fix his/her mistakes, the bully often has to be forced by an adult</li> <li>→ The victim does not need to apologize to the aggressor or fix mistakes</li> <li>→ Since it is not simply a disagreement, one cannot expect the parties to reach an agreement</li> <li>→ Unless the victim speaks out and gets help, the situation goes on and may get worse</li> </ul>