



WHAT IS BULLYING AND HOW DO I MANAGE IT?

The National definition of bullying for Australian schools says:

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

The 3 main features of bullying are:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repetitive
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm

Signs of bullying,

Each student who has been bullied or is bullying others will respond and act differently.

A student's behaviours and moods can change for a variety of reasons. Teachers and parents/carers need to be alert to the possibility that the change in behaviours and moods is related to bullying.

Talk with the child about school if you are concerned and ask general questions about how things are going.

You are not just a coach. You are a safe haven, role model and mentor.

It's important that you know your students and that you are able to recognise possible signs of bullying.

Signs a coach might notice include if a student:

- becomes aggressive and unreasonable
- starts getting into fights
- refuses to talk about what is wrong
- starts to do considerably more poorly in class
- is often alone or excluded from a group
- is a frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule
- changes their willingness to speak up in class
- withdraws from friends and activities they previously enjoyed
- appears insecure or frightened in the gym

Signs a parent or carer might notice include if their child:

- doesn't want to go to gym or participate in gym activities
- changes their mood at gym or is frightened of being in the gym
- drops in performance or changes in training patterns
- changes in eating patterns
- has frequent tears, anger, mood swings
- has unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- loses or brings home damaged belongings or clothes

The signs of possible cyber bullying are consistent with those above but also may include:

- being hesitant to discuss something noticed on social media
- seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- being visibly upset after using the mobile phone, or suddenly avoiding it
- closes the screen, or hides the mobile phone when asked what's wrong
- spending unusually long hours online in a more tense, pensive tone
- receiving suspicious or unwanted phone calls

How am I meant to respond?

If a child talks to you about bullying, they need to know that they are being heard, that their feelings matter and that their issue will be managed respectfully. All bullying should be taken seriously.

Listen calmly and get the full story.

Your first response when a child tells you of a concern can make a big difference to the outcome.

A calm response is important to allow your child to tell you all about the situation. After they've told you their story, ask questions to get more details if you need to: who, what, where, when.

Although you may feel some strong emotions about your child's experience, try to keep calm and avoid over reacting. This will only make it more distressing for the child.

If you can, as soon as possible write down as much as you can.

Reassure the child they are not to blame and that you are there to help

Many children blame themselves and this may make them feel even worse.

Offer reassuring and understanding phrases such as, *'That sounds really hard to deal with, you shouldn't have to put up with that'* or *'I'm so glad you told me.'*

Ask the child what they want to do and what they want you to do. Explain that is important that you both talk to Mum, Dad and management.

A critical part of your response is to avoid jumping in to solve the problem.

While it is natural to want to protect a child, helping them to find their own solution is a better option. It helps them feel they have some power in the situation.

Learn some strategies to talk about talking to children.

There's load of information out there,

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/> is a great source.

It's very important to remember that kids need to be heard and feel safe.

You must never ignore or avoid taking action:

- If a child is being bullied
- If a child is bullying others
- If a child has seen bullying

Contact Ian or Martin, they will in turn contact the parents and help you.

A child may be reluctant for you to do this, so discuss the idea and reassure them that taking action is the best solution.

Check in regularly with the child

Keep up the contact. It can take time to resolve issues, so check in regularly with the child about their experiences and their feelings. Your ongoing support is important.

If you require any help or advice please contact ian@mwgymclub.com

Confidentiality is offered.....