

Schools, Peer Groups & Parents

How can peer groups counter bullying?

Most students are heroes in waiting but they need to be encouraged to realise it. The idea that you can and should stand up for others, rather than being a passive observer to bullying, is an important value which should be actively promoted.

There are several ways schools can do this:

- Students can sign a pledge or an agreement not to passively condone or accept bullying wherever it occurs and whoever is involved. This reduces anonymity and increases positive commitment.
- Students can receive training in 'resilience': a set of skills which predicts good outcomes for young people and is also associated with less bullying in schools. They are then empowered to develop projects to create a positive change in their school or community. These students are often called Resilience Ambassadors.
- Festivals of friendship—these are student run and organised days that broaden connections between students and have been shown to be effective in increasing resilience and reducing bullying.
- Bullying partly occurs when we see other people as less human and less sensitive than they truly are. When we connect people and encourage them to act heroically in the face of bullying, the cultures of schools change. Heroism is the enemy of bullying.
- Groups or alliances can celebrate diversity in the school population, and take a stand against racism, sexism and homophobia.

How can parents support their children in countering bullying?

- Be vocal supporters, in a positive manner, for the importance of schools being safe and friendly places where no one feels bullied or intimidated.
- Encourage teachers to conduct programs that involve students in creating great schools.
- Support your child in effectively intervening in bullying incidents. Teach children to use comments like 'that's not cool', 'don't be mean' and 'come on, you're a better friend than that'. The effects are powerful and can change schools.

