

There are a few students that laugh at me without any reason and I get ~~back~~ back at them immediately, but it doesn't make me feel any better. I haven't given them any reason to hate me. But they made me a bully, too. I don't see a way out of it. Sometimes I wonder why I was born in the first place... So somebody could laugh at me? If somebody has something against me, I can take care of that.

Booklet for Parents

Prevention of peer violence
FOR A SAFE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOLS



Prevention of peer violence

FOR A SAFE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOLS

A programme designed and implemented in Croatia

English language edition



The UNICEF Office for Croatia wishes to extend special thanks to all the individuals, corporate donors and other supporters of the 'Stop Violence Among Children' campaign.

© The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2015

Publisher: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS)

Author: Jasenka Pregrad

Reviewer: Lidija Arambašić

Editors: Paul Nary, Helene Martin-Fickel, Kevin Byrne, Martina Tomić Latinac, Mirjana Bijelić

Translator: Marlena Plavšić, Adam Pilkey

Graphic designer: Zinka Kvakić

All rights reserved by the publisher.

When using quotations and materials from this booklet, please indicate the source.

For further information, please contact the publisher.

This booklet is accompanied by a Programme Handbook 'For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools' and a Programme Summary, which can be downloaded from the website of the UNICEF Office for Croatia <www.unicef.hr>.

To obtain copies of these publications by post, please send your requests to: UNICEF Office for Croatia, Radnička cesta 41/7, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

This booklet does not necessarily reflect the official views of UNICEF.

This booklet is intended for use by parents and schools dedicating their time and effort to preventing peer bullying in their communities.

Contents

- 02 Programme development and implementation in Croatia
- 03 Important introductory words to parents about parenting
- 06 The extent of peer violence in Croatia
- 07 What is peer violence and what is peer bullying
 - 09 How children are bullied by their peers at school
- 10 Child bystanders
 - 10 How parents may encourage child bystanders to act
- 12 Children who suffer from bullying
 - 14 Signs that children are being bullied
 - 16 How parents can help children who are bullied
 - 16 What doesn't help
 - 17 How to provide short-term relief from bullying
 - 19 How to develop self-confidence and self-respect
- 21 Children who bully others
 - 22 What bullying does to children who bully in the short term
 - 22 What bullying does to children who bully in the long term
 - 24 Signs that children are inclined towards violence
 - 24 How parents can help children who bully
 - 25 What helps in the short term
 - 26 How to develop non-violent behaviour
- 28 Cooperation between parents and teachers
- 30 For those who want to know more

Programme development and implementation in Croatia



PARTICIPANTS AT THE 2ND ASSEMBLY OF THE NETWORK OF VIOLENCE-FREE SCHOOLS FORMING THE MESSAGE 'STOP VIOLENCE', 11 NOVEMBER 2008, SIBENIK (CROATIA).

Photo: Sime Strikoman

The programme 'For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools' (SEES) was developed and implemented by UNICEF in primary schools throughout Croatia from 2003 to 2011. It began with a public campaign aimed at raising awareness about bullying and was followed by a carefully planned programme that schools could voluntarily implement.

UNICEF launched the programme in response to a Croatian public opinion survey carried out in 2003. The survey indicated that the public perceived violence among children and youth as a serious problem. The programme also resonated with the contemporary strategic directions of both UNICEF and the Council of Europe.

There are four elements at the core of the programme's approach to reducing violence in schools: (i) enabling children in each classroom to define their own values, rules and consequences regarding their conduct towards each other; (ii) developing a procedure that children can follow to 'restore values'* when these are violated; (iii) teaching children social skills to help them cope with violence; and (iv) shaping school regulations to support a non-violent approach to preventing violence.

The results of an evaluation, undertaken after the first four years of programme implementation, showed that the percentage of children who bully was reduced by almost three fourths, while the percentage of children who suffer from bullying was halved. A substantial majority of parents felt that the activities undertaken by the schools participating in the programme produced positive results.

Many people were involved in the development, support and implementation of the programme in schools. The programme was funded in its entirety by donations of money and services from citizens, companies, governments, and communities. This dedication to reducing violence and creating an environment of mutual appreciation, respect and equity for children was crucial to the success of the programme.

* The restoration of values approach is a method that gives teachers the possibility of responding to violent behaviour by avoiding punishment. Children who break the rules or violate previously defined class values are provided opportunities to re-establish the observation of threatened values or repair damaged relationships through some constructive activity of their choice that is acceptable to everyone.

Important introductory words to parents about parenting

*At times, raising
children resembles
playing a game with an
unpredictable partner
– who surprises us now
and then – and with
unpredictable outcomes.*

This booklet does not aim to provide either instructions or recipes about parenting. The SEES programme requires parents to cooperate as partners with the school and community rather than obey a particular set of instructions, and this perspective is crucial for understanding and making best use of this booklet.

Committing to learn something new indicates that we want to improve something about ourselves. This implies that we are not sure if we are good enough and can be particularly difficult when it comes to parenting. Parents naturally want the best for their children. Therefore, it is never easy to face the inner doubt that our parenting is perhaps not faultless. When parents are dissatisfied with their own child's behaviour, they usually talk it over with family, friends and colleagues. However, when they are 'officially' faced with their own shortcomings (e.g., when invited to come to the school), parents often ask themselves, "What have we done to make things turn out like this?"

Guilt is, unfortunately, a feeling that often accompanies parenthood. But this feeling does more harm than good. It does not facilitate improved parenting but rather pushes parents into anxiety, self-deprecating and defensive behaviour. Most parents act with the best of intentions. Even when they are aware that they are not doing well (when they yell or are permissive or inconsistent), it is because, at that moment, they cannot or do not know any better. Still, even when they do everything 'right', things do not always turn out right, results are not always what they were hoping for. At times, raising children resembles playing a game with an unpredictable partner – who surprises us now and then – and with unpredictable outcomes.

There are only a few pieces of advice suitable for all parents and their children. Families (both parents and their children) are diverse, and what suits some of them does not necessarily suit others. For example, one particularly active and vigorous mother, following the advice of an expert, started talking to her child about an important and sensitive topic by using a much calmer and more restrained demeanour. In response, the child asked her, "Mom, what's wrong? Are you ill?" The challenge facing experts is how to write a short and simple text about a particular phenomenon that everyone can find useful.

There are very few methods of raising children that are purely 'good' or purely 'bad', but there are good and bad consequences for every decision.



I AM IMPORTANT

The intention of this booklet is not to make parents feel guilty or inadequate while reading it.

Feeling guilty leads some parents to act defensively and to blame others – school, society in general, bad company their children may find themselves in, the parents of other children in a given situation, the media. This is a natural way to share heavy feelings of guilt with someone else. Some parents may accuse their own children (regardless of whether they were bullying, or suffering, or observing) or respond by becoming more permissive and abandoning the rules and agreements already established with their children. However, these responses may only add to their feelings of remorse and insecurity, and this downward spiral does not contribute to improving the lives of their children, or their own.

Personal growth and development experts prefer to **speaK about responsibility rather than guilt**, for these are two significantly distinct concepts. Responsibility means taking ownership of our actions, behaviour and decisions and acknowledging that we are accountable, not just for everything that turns out badly, but also for what turns out well. It may be preferable to talk about accountability for the good and the bad sides of our decisions because no decision is entirely good or entirely bad. Taking responsibility implies that we are in charge and that we consider how we acted, how our children reacted, what our agreement with them was, and the results it produced. From such insights about 'my child' and 'myself' we can try to foresee what will happen if we change something in our behaviour towards children; how it will turn out if we do it another way. The conversation with the spouse, other important people or with ourselves may resemble the following:

“When I said and did ___ and ___, the result was ___ and ___, and the child felt and behaved like ___ and ___. If I behave like ___ and ___, what will happen? What result(s) will be reached? Now that I know this about myself and my child, next time I will do ___ and ___, and see how it turns out.”

There are very few methods of raising children that are purely 'good' or purely 'bad', but there are good and bad consequences for every decision, and so we tend to choose what is more important at the expense of what is less important. In this way, taking responsibility allows us to learn something from previous experiences, and how to be in charge and accountable for the choices we will make in the future.

Raising children is, in a way, like weather forecasting. We predict what will happen in the future by looking at what is happening now, and as we all know, both meteorologists and parents make mistakes. The problem is that things are seen much better in hindsight. However, meteorologists have extensive training that teaches them to make forecasts. In addition, the phenomena they predict are much simpler than the development of human beings. We often say, "If only I had known, I would have done this differently... Yes, had I **known** that things would turn out this way, I certainly would have done things differently. The only problem is I didn't know." Since most parents have not taken university-level parenting courses, there is no other way to learn but by doing things by themselves. Responsibility gives parents the possibility to grow and develop while they learn, whereas guilt shatters their confidence. Guilt can push them to blame others, thus encouraging

helplessness by placing solutions into other people's hands instead of being in charge.

The suggestion, therefore, is: Do not 'blindly' follow teachers' or experts' advice, but be responsible to yourselves and your children, learn from your experiences with children, and make choices that you think will turn out right. The following may help you in doing so.

The SEES programme assumes that schools focus on making each child's actions and behaviour their own responsibility, and not merely on determining who is guilty of what. By instilling this mindset in children, schools can empower them to grow and develop instead of leaving them to wallow in guilt. This is especially important when it comes to dealing with children who are prone to be violent, as well as children who tend to become targets of violence.

When teachers and other school staff decided to implement the SEES programme, they chose to learn and change their behaviour regarding peer violence and bullying, and encourage children to develop their capabilities for bettering their reactions and behaviour. This is precisely what we ask of the parents reading this booklet – to improve as much as you can, because acting together will yield better results.

Do not 'blindly' follow teachers' or experts' advice, but be responsible to yourselves and your children.

Every child is special.

The extent of peer violence in Croatia

Although there are slight differences in data between countries and regions, the incidence of peer violence and bullying is generally similar across the Western world. Croatia is in line with averages from other European countries, and its data may provide some perspective about this social phenomenon. In Croatia, 67 per cent of children have not experienced any violence at school, while 22 per cent have experienced occasional acts of violence (once or twice in the span of a few months). However, 10.4 per cent of children suffer from violence two to three times a month or more. This type of violence is referred to as bullying.

Sixty-eight per cent of children have not actively taken part in peer violence, almost 20 per cent are 'rarely violent', but a significant 12 per cent of children describe themselves as 'often violent'. The latter are generally described as prone to bully other children.¹

Our experience in the SEES programme is that most children who bully in Croatia just mock and tease. They spread false rumours about other children and deter others from socializing with them; they tease peers because of their origin; they exclude individuals from their play; they attempt to alienate them. As children age, the mocking and teasing expand to include sexual attributes. Physical violence occurs less frequently than these other forms of intimidation. Boys tend to be violent towards both boys and girls, while girls who behave violently are usually violent towards other girls. Boys are frequently laughed at and mocked, and girls are more often victims of alienation and gossip. Boys comprise nearly 75 per cent of the children who bully, while girls make up the remaining 25 per cent.²

Seventy per cent of children who suffer from violence in Croatia confide in someone, and this is significantly better than the results reported in other international studies. While this is a positive indicator for parents and other adults in Croatia, it should be noted that 28 per cent of children do not tell anyone about what happens to them.³

Some children can cope and defend themselves, and by doing so they prevent isolated acts of violence from escalating into bullying. But, sometimes, they do not succeed, and random acts

1. Pregrad, J., et al., *Priručnik projekta Za sigurno i poticajno okruženje u školama, prevencija nasilja među djecom* (Project Handbook For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools, Prevention of Peer Violence), UNICEF, Zagreb, 2011.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

What is peer violence and what is peer bullying

4. Olweus, D., *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1993.
5. Esbensen, F.-A., Carson, D.C., 'Consequences of Being Bullied. Results From a Longitudinal Assessment of Bullying Victimization in a Multisite Sample of American Students' in *Youth & Society*, vol. 41, no. 2, December 2009, pp. 209–233; Olweus, D., *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1993; Rigby, K., 'The Relationship Between Reported Health and Involvement in Bully/Victim Problems among Male and Female Secondary Schoolchildren' in *Journal of Health Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 4, October 1998, pp. 465–476; Rigby, K., 'Health Consequences of Bullying and its Prevention in Schools' in Juvonen, J., Graham, S., eds., *Peer Harassment in School. The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2001, pp. 310–331.

of violence become routine bullying that can last for months or even years. This endangers and disturbs children – and not only those who suffer directly, but also the other children who are afraid of becoming targets. Despite the fact that 63 per cent of children say that they are sorry for the child who suffers and that they would be happy to help him/her, some children opt to become supporters of bullying in order to protect themselves.

The term 'bullying' does not refer to children of approximately equal strength and power who quarrel or fight over something in an aggressive fashion.

One can find instances of violence and bullying in any institutional setting where children congregate. This is why people consider violent behaviour to be a normal part of childhood, or dismiss it as a clumsy play practice. The truth is that violent behaviour is common in childhood because children do not know any better. They are in the process of learning social skills and taking their first steps in human interaction. These steps and skills need to be taught, and not learning them puts children at risk. Longitudinal studies of bullying have confirmed the potential negative long-term consequences for children, and their current and future social development.⁴ In order to mitigate these risks, everyone in the community needs to take part in raising children – not just those who directly support them in their individual growth and development – by nurturing an environment based on respect, esteem and equity.⁵ Needless to say, the role of parents is a crucial one. This includes not only the parents of children who bully or are bullied, but all parents, because it is important to provide a value system that emphasizes respect for others and the creation of a safe environment for all. Besides, anyone can become a target of violence and bullying at a certain point.



EVERY CHILD NEEDS CARE.

IT'S MORE FUN TO PLAY
THAN TO FIGHT



Bullying is intentional and premeditated. Children who bully tend to be calm and domineering, while aggressive children are often overwhelmed with anger and fear.

It is important to know what peer bullying is, and what it is not.

Children become violent towards others for a number of reasons (the causes of aggressive behaviour are too numerous to detail here). Sometimes, children lack the maturity or skill to handle conflicts peacefully, so they quarrel, call each other names, or hit each other. After some time, they usually reconcile, make peace with one another and become more or less close. Some children, especially boys, tend to assert themselves using strength, physical prowess and power. Once they establish a non-formal hierarchy, they respect it in their relationships.

There are also children who react aggressively (they yell, hit or harm others) in response to the slightest feeling of endangerment. None of these forms of behaviour are desirable, and each of them requires a special type of support to help children develop and mature. However, the term 'bullying' does not refer to children of approximately equal strength and power who quarrel or fight over something in an aggressive fashion.

Peer bullying refers to situations when someone weaker and more withdrawn is harmed intentionally (and repeatedly) without any reason or mutual cause.

Children who bully enjoy inflicting this harm on others, while children who suffer from bullying cannot avoid subjugation to this violence.

Although peer bullying initially appears similar to other forms of aggressive behaviour, there are some key differences:

- Bullying is intentional and premeditated. Children who bully tend to be calm and domineering, while aggressive children are often overwhelmed with anger and fear.
- The goal of bullying is to achieve dominance and control over another child by using physical or verbal aggression. One student, or a group of students, repeatedly attacks the same target.
- Children who bully do so because they see the other child as an easy target and need no reason beyond this.
- Children who bully are usually somewhat more popular among peers than aggressive children.

How children are bullied by their peers at school

- Children can be physically bullied: pushed, beaten, and/or physically hurt.
- Children may receive repeated, unspecified threats.
- Children's personal property (mobile phone, pocket money, lunch) may be stolen or damaged.
- Children may be subjected to verbal bullying, name calling or mocking.

There are also indirect forms of bullying: excluding a child from certain activities for no particular reason, spreading false rumours about him/her, etc. Bullying is carried out through one of these methods, or a combination of several.

Bullying usually starts with a child prone to bully finding 'a target' among children who do not or cannot defend themselves, and have nobody to help them. It continues if children who bully have little or no empathy for the child (or children) they hurt (which is not rare), if they enjoy doing it, and if nobody stops them.

It is never easy to find out who bullies. Bullying usually happens outside of adult supervision and, as we have already said, children are often hesitant to report this behaviour.

It is vital to expose bullying. Parents should encourage their children to tell the teacher or the head teacher, or any other adult person at school whom they trust, about what is happening.

Mitigating the long-lasting negative consequences to the personality development of both children who bully and those who suffer from bullying is at the core of the SEES programme. This is accomplished by responding to every instance of violence, regardless of its cause or type. Such a comprehensive approach is the only way to reduce bullying and, ultimately, ensure a safe and enabling environment in schools.

It is important to note that the most successful antibullying programmes in the world have succeeded in reducing the number of children who suffer from bullying by only 50 per cent.⁶ The SEES programme achieved similar results.⁷ The number of children who suffered from bullying was halved, while the number of children who bullied was reduced by almost three fourths. However, a follow-up evaluation undertaken four years later showed that the impact of the programme decreased significantly in the absence of constant follow-up guidance and support to schools, strong general educational policies against peer violence, and clear political will to support activities preventing violence.⁸

Since controlling impulses and taking responsibility for interpersonal relations (as well as the development of other traits integral to non-violent behaviour) are an ongoing learning process, and not all children are equally adept at acquiring these complex and demanding skills, cases of violence in schools will inevitably remain. However, schools have to respond to every case of violence, and so must parents.

6. Rigby, K., *A Meta-evaluation of Methods and Approaches to Reducing Bullying in Pre-schools and in Early Primary School in Australia*, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, 2002.

7. Pregrad, J., et al., *Priručnik projekta Za sigurno i poticajno okruženje u školama, prevencija nasilja među djecom* (Project Handbook For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools, Prevention of Peer Violence), UNICEF, Zagreb, 2011.

8. Ibid.

The school has to respond to every instance of violence, regardless of its cause or type. Such a comprehensive approach is the only way to reduce bullying and, ultimately, ensure a safe and enabling environment in schools.

Child bystanders

Bullying usually takes place in the presence of other children but in the absence of adults. What do these child bystanders do?

- Bystanders usually stand and watch, which children who bully can interpret as implicit approval of their behaviour.
- Sometimes, they encourage children who bully by cheering and even joining in (for example, by laughing at the child who is suffering).
- It is rare for bystanders to raise objections.
- It is even rarer for one of them to inform a teacher or adult.

If the bystanders' behaviour discouraged violence as it unfolded, most violent incidents would be stopped. While, in some circumstances, it could be risky for a child to intervene, teachers and parents can teach children how and when to do so in a way that guarantees their safety.

How parents may encourage child bystanders to act

As part of the SEES programme in schools, children discuss bullying in class meetings. Children are taught how to react to violence, and what adults will do to help. Teachers also ensure that reporting violence is not regarded as 'tattling' but as a vital tool in maintaining the values and rules of conduct that children defined for their classrooms. It is important that parents support this approach as well.

It can be dangerous for children to help by physically fending off somebody who is violent. However, children can take other constructive steps to curb violence and its consequences for other children. These include:

- Expressing disagreement by saying, "This is not how we should behave, and it is not in accordance with our values!" They can also refuse to watch violence as a source of amusement. Even leaving the scene is better than being a casual bystander.
- Informing adults when violence happens. This is not tattling. Children who are violent and children who suffer from violence need help from adults.



**NO TO PUSHING, FIGHTING,
SPITTING, HURTING, MAKING
FACES AND PULLING HAIR.**

- Helping to solve conflicts before they escalate. Conflicts can sometimes evolve into bullying. Some schools teach children non-violent conflict resolution techniques; in these cases, it is important to encourage children to put into practice what they have learned.
- Providing comfort and support to children who have suffered from bullying. For example, other children can approach children who suffer from bullying and tell them that they do not deserve it; they can sit next to them for companionship; or invite them to play or return home together.
- Holding a calm and friendly discussion with children who are prone to bully after the immediate danger has passed, and pointing out that such behaviour is not okay. Emphasize in such discussions that bullying may bring admiration but destroys friendship and openness. It is often helpful to discuss the possible reasons why such children bully and engage in violent behaviour.

Schools participating in the SEES programme organize a wide variety of activities in which all children, including the 'passive majority' (those who do not act upon bullying), have the opportunity to openly share their views and thoughts about violence. In doing so, children become an 'active majority', which contributes to the creation of a non-violent environment at school.

Child bystanders can provide comfort and support by approaching children who suffer from bullying and telling them that they do not deserve it.

Children who suffer from bullying

When loving and caring parents who value their children are overly protective, they paradoxically send a message to their children that they are incapable of taking care of themselves.

Any child can become a target. Unfortunately, children victimized by violence often blame themselves. They think that there is something wrong with them or that they possess a socially unacceptable personality. This is not true, and it is vital that everyone, especially parents, other children and teachers, clearly conveys this fact to the child.

While it is true that certain characteristics tend to attract bullying, these traits do not make some children inferior to others, but are merely qualities that make them easy targets for children who need to feel dominant over others. In comparison to their peers, children who attract bullying are usually quieter, more cautious and sensitive, withdrawn, passive, become anxious more easily, often react by crying and tend to be physically weaker (particularly boys). They are not prepared to defend themselves and usually have poor social skills – specifically, the ability to socialize with others easily. Because of these reasons, they find it difficult to defend themselves against bullying. Some of these characteristics are inborn and are neither good nor bad (sensitivity, being withdrawn, physical looks), while others are learned behaviours, developed over the course of their upbringing (not standing up for themselves, inability to rely on their own strengths). This is where parents, teachers and other adults can act.

How do children come to lack advocacy skills or a sense of self-reliance? Why do children turn out that way? In their attempt to be caring and responsible, parents usually react whenever a child is in trouble and needs something, but some may intervene even before the child requires outside help. By doing so, parents demonstrate to children that they are good parents who care and that the child is important and valuable. While this is a positive message, parents who intervene too soon are also unintentionally telling the child that they are incapable of taking care of themselves and cannot cope with the world on their own. In addition, by prematurely solving their children's problems for them, parents prevent children from learning how to confront challenges on their own. This discourages children from addressing situations in which they feel unsatisfied or frustrated, and they will develop the inclination simply to withdraw from these situations rather than face them. Ultimately, this will reinforce their feelings of insecurity and their inability to deal

A child needs to be protected.

with frustration and conflict. Sometimes, these children do not develop the confidence or social skills to negotiate conflicts without the help of adults, and this dependency on grown-ups only compounds their alienation from peers and erodes their self-esteem. With these children we need to work on developing their social skills, sense of self-reliance and self-confidence. It is vital that parents recognize how their children 'ended up' this way and what they can change in order to empower them.

Thus, the first important step is to stop the bullying and tell children who are being bullied that they are not to blame for what is happening and that they are valued and respected. Following this, adults can (and should) support children to work on their weak points. It should be noted that defence from violence provides significant short-term help but is not a long-term solution to being bullied. Constantly defending children against bullying is not in their core long-term interests, as it is this very dependency on the protection and support of others that makes them targets in the first place. It may be that part of the reason children are so reluctant to come forward and report their plight to adults is because doing so provides only temporary relief from violence and aggravates the underlying problem. While receiving adult help may improve the child's situation because they realize they do not have to suffer alone, at the same time it reinforces their impression that they cannot cope with others on their own. There have been cases when parents have moved their child to another school to help him/her avoid bullying. Unfortunately, the bullying continued at the new school.

In every community, there are people (and children) who are prone to bully and seek vulnerable targets. The real solution to the problem is to work with children on developing their competencies, especially their social skills, self-esteem and self-reliance. It is a lengthy process, but it is worth the effort because it ensures a much happier and more relaxed, successful

and satisfying life for children when they grow up. Given that both adults and the public frequently react by automatically siding with the child who suffers from bullying and punishing the child who bullies, the aforementioned long-term objective should be kept in mind. This is especially relevant for parents who are overcaring and protective, as they often rush to the school to ask for immediate, harsh procedures and punishment for the violent behaviour. For these parents, any deferral of their demands is equivalent to protecting the child who bullies. Furthermore, in many instances, offering the child who suffers from bullying support in acquiring the skills necessary to deal with the underlying issues is interpreted as punishment. So, the parents often say, "It is not my child who needs help. There is nothing wrong with him/her. My child is nice and kind. You should work with the violent child." **Protection and sheltering from others is not crucial for children who suffer from bullying. However, it is important to tell them that what is happening is unacceptable. The best way to send this message is by stopping the bullying. What they need afterwards is support to develop the competencies that they do not have.**

A small number of children have many traits that make them targets for bullying, but are also garish and attract attention in a more general way. Often, these children are both targets of bullying and violent themselves. They use violence to seek revenge on those who torment them or to prey on other weaker children. Since they have experience as both targets and perpetrators of bullying, they suffer all of the consequences in the cycle of violence, and supporting them to grow into mature, stable adults is an even bigger challenge.

Sometimes, children who suffer from bullying belong to a group associated with negative stereotypes in their community, such as those possessing different nationalities or otherwise unique origins. At times, their interests or physical appearance differ from

those of other children (for example, they do not like football or fashionable toys, they like to learn, they wear glasses, etc.). However, differences such as these do not attract bullying; they are just the details children choose to use in their mockery. These children's belief that their targets cannot defend themselves or stand up for themselves and have no friends or adults who will protect them and that violence can be used to hurt and humiliate is what encourages them to use violence and intimidation against their target(s).

Severe and long-term bullying may lead to the following consequences if the targeted children cannot defend themselves and do not receive help:

- Children who are being bullied may lose self-confidence and self-esteem.
- They may lose friends and become socially alienated.
- They may become seriously depressed, ill, or develop physical ailments.
- They may refuse to go to school.
- They may become unable to achieve or maintain academic goals.
- They may fantasize about revenge and even plan how to get it in order to balance the relationship (in extreme cases, with the use of weapons).
- As time progresses, they may lose trust in other people and have problems making friends. They will require time and positive experiences to regain their self-esteem.

To suffer from bullying is by itself humiliating and shameful and therefore it is hard to talk about it.

Signs that children are being bullied

- Children who are being bullied become irritable, restless, or withdrawn from family activities.
- They become apathetic to their surroundings.
- They lose their appetite, have trouble falling asleep, or wake up during the night.
- They wait to use the toilet at home rather than use it at school.
- They come home with ragged clothes and scratches, but cannot provide a logical explanation about what happened.
- Their things go missing (stationery, gadgets, jacket) or get inexplicably damaged.
- They ask for additional pocket money (in some cases, they also start stealing from parents or other family members).
- They lose interest in school and extracurricular activities.
- They take illogical routes home from school.
- They refuse to go to school or claim to have a stomach ache, headache, or other ailments.
- They want to take something to school for self-defence (knife, etc.).
- They seem lonely, have very few or no friends, and do not participate in social gatherings (sometimes by saying that 'everybody is stupid' and they 'do not care for them') in order to comfort themselves and cover up their feelings of rejection.

Children who suffer from bullying are typically reluctant to speak about their experiences. However, in Croatia, there has been a noticeable improvement over the past five years in children's willingness to discuss bullying with adults, which can be attributed to the various campaigns and other efforts intended to raise public awareness about this issue. Students of all ages are now more inclined to discuss bullying with parents and teachers than in the past, with the most significant increase coming from students 13–14 years old. Data show that younger students



A CHILD HAS A RIGHT
TO A HUG!

9. Pregrad, J., et al., *Priručnik projekta Za sigurno i poticajno okruženje u školama, prevencija nasilja među djecom* (Project Handbook For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools, Prevention of Peer Violence), UNICEF, Zagreb, 2011.

10. Ibid.

(aged 6–10 and 13–14) confide mainly in adults. It seems that the younger students (aged 6–10) naturally expect help from adults and do not think that they should defend themselves, so they tell adults about their problems without hesitation. It is encouraging that students in their early teens (more than other elementary school students) also choose to talk with adults about what is happening. This may be due to their newly acquired social and communication skills that have prepared them for asserting their right to a violence-free life (among other things) without feeling that being targets of bullying is their fault. If this is the case, then it indicates a huge success in terms of establishing a set of public values against violence.⁹

Despite this progress, 28 per cent of students do not confide in anyone and do not ask for help.¹⁰ This happens because suffering from bullying is humiliating and shameful, and like most people, children do not want to talk about the source of their shame. Additionally, children who suffer from bullying often think that they have done something to deserve it, or that they are guilty or bad because they cannot defend themselves. This is especially true if other children take part in isolating them. They also do not believe that adults can protect them, as the majority of violence occurs outside of adult supervision (in a section of the school's premises where there are no adults, or on the way home from school). Sometimes, they are afraid that adults will not help them or even criticize them for their inability to stop the violence. The fear that the bullying will escalate is also a common problem, as children who bully often threaten their targets that things will get even worse if they confide in anyone about the situation.

For these reasons, children who suffer from bullying need two types of help from adults:

- surveillance to prevent further violence;
- support in building self-confidence and acquiring self-advocacy skills.

Support from parents is especially critical in helping children build their sense of self-worth, self-reliance, and their ability to stand up for themselves and cope with the world on their own.

Any child can become a target. Unfortunately, children victimized by violence often blame themselves. They think that there is something wrong with them or that they possess a socially unacceptable personality. This is not true.

How parents can help children who are bullied

Parents can monitor the moods and behaviour of their children and compare them to the previously listed signs. If you notice any of these signals and your child cannot provide an explanation for them, do not immediately confront them. Instead, ask probing questions to obtain more details. You can ask, for example, how things are at school, what they do during breaks from class, what route they use to go to school, who sits next to them on the school bus, with whom they socialize, etc. You can use this kind of information to broach the topic of bullying by using follow-up questions, such as whether or not there are cases of violence and bullying at school, who takes part, how do other students react, and whether or not the head teacher knows that it is happening. Once you show your child that violence at school is an important issue for you, and you can talk about it calmly and rationally, you increase the probability that they tell you what has been happening.

You should also keep in mind that simply listening can be very helpful. Such support can reduce a child's pain and allow them to grieve. Ensure that you give the child enough time to tell you everything, as it is not easy for them to talk about these issues. If you interrupt with comments, anger, or other signs of displeasure, you risk stopping them from revealing significant information.

What doesn't help

- Saying that the child who bullies has problems and is weird doesn't help. Saying that it is the way the world is, that there will always be people like that and that the child should learn to cope with it is equally unhelpful – even if it is true. Clichés such as “Don't let it hurt you!” or “You should become tougher!” come across as “Put your head down and suffer!” and “The world is a rough place!” Furthermore, this advice rarely applies, especially when dealing with bullying.
- We often tell children not to pay attention to the perpetrator of violence and to pretend they are not hurt. This approach can be useful in certain situations, but it will not deter bullying. It is also important to remember that saying things like “Don't pay attention!” is easy to tell children but difficult

for them to accomplish. In fact, when it comes to physical violence perpetrated by a stronger antagonist, it is essentially impossible. If the child were capable of solving the situation by ignoring it, s/he wouldn't be in trouble and asking for help.

- Telling the child to 'get even' is also counterproductive. Not only does it run the risk of pushing the child into a physical confrontation with a child who is stronger, but it also violates the values and rules about violence that children defined in school. Encourage children to respond to violence by advising that this is against the values and policies that we cherish and advocate together with them at school.
- Taking an overly protective approach ("Don't worry, I'll protect you," "You don't have to go to school," or "I'll go to take care of that at school") also doesn't help.

How to provide short-term relief from bullying

The following advice may help parents to talk with their children and understand the issues from their point of view:

- Learn about what exactly is going on, how your child is coping with it, and how s/he feels about the situation.
- Provide your child with advice on how to deal with the situation. Sometimes, being assertive and less emotional is enough to stop violence. Check whether or not your child feels ready for such a change in behaviour, and practise with them if necessary. It is always better if children can do something for themselves, but be ready to provide support. If children do not feel prepared to deal with the situation on their own, do not force them to try to change their behaviour. If the bullying is not too serious, you can teach the child to calmly look at the perpetrator, proudly turn their head, and leave. Children who bully like to see fear and hurt in the eyes of their targets, so they might give up if they fail to achieve this goal. Making remarks like "Move yourself!" "You're boring!" and "Stop it!" is even better.
- Explore the underlying causes of violence with your child. Children rarely provoke others by bothering or annoying them. But, if this is the case, children can learn to change their behaviour to eliminate these problems.
- Sometimes, discussing places to avoid can be wise, as well as identifying adults to whom your child can turn for help in

The rule is - it is better when children can do something on their own and that they seek the company of children rather than adults - if possible.

specific instances. For example, advise your child to stick with other children or adults, or encourage them to be near the school/yard supervisor during breaks. If necessary, help them find company with whom to travel to and from school. Find places along their route where they can hide in the event of an attack (for example, in a shop, at a neighbour's house). Children who bully generally look for isolated targets, so it is important that children surround themselves with others to discourage bullying. While keeping company with other children is ideal, it is not always possible. In that case, adults should be prepared to help shelter children with their presence. Other children make better teachers of this sort of defence than adults as they know more about communicating with their peers and can provide a more natural and less obvious type of help. The rule that it is better when children can do something on their own also applies in this situation.

- Encourage your child to report bullying to a duty teacher or head teacher (or at least to their peers) before the situation deteriorates. Explain the difference between 'tattling' and 'reporting' (the intent behind tattling is to get someone in trouble, while the aim of reporting is to prevent problems).
- Assess the severity of the situation and plan next steps accordingly.
- If you feel that the situation is getting worse (for example, if your child is afraid to go to school, is constantly depressed, cannot focus, has problems sleeping, complains about pain or frequently falls ill) and the child refuses to talk to the head teacher, suggest going together to talk to the head teacher. If they continue to refuse, make an appointment with the head teacher yourself and inform them about your child's situation.
- Convince your child that you will talk to the head teacher without betraying their confidence. If the child feels that there will be repercussions for reporting the bullying, they will tend to diminish the severity of the situation. Therefore, it is

important that you convey to them the value of adult intervention. If resolving the problem is beyond the capabilities of the child and their peers, it falls to adults to stop the violence. Tell them exactly what you intend to do, whom you will talk to, and accept (to a reasonable extent) the child's suggestions, concerns and ideas. Maintaining the child's trust is as important as stopping the bullying.

- Stay calm and settled while talking with your child. Keep this demeanour at the school as well, but be assertive with your concerns. **If the child sees you become agitated, restless, confrontational, scared, or depressed, they will diminish or hide the truth and feel even more helpless and guilty.**
- **Focus on stopping the violence rather than punishing the perpetrators.** Don't forget that both your child and the child who bullies will need time to adjust their behaviour: your child will need time to learn self-advocacy skills and how to cope with peers, while the child who bullies will need time to learn to satisfy their need for feeling valued and powerful within socially acceptable boundaries.
- When talking to the head teacher (or other experts if the head teacher fails to stop the violence) include all the details you can about your child's situation. These may include how they have been threatened or hurt, who has been doing it, what the child (and you) have done to solve the problem and stop the violence, and what you (and your child) think would help the situation. Although schools may not accept your suggestions and may have their own procedures in place, do not hesitate to communicate your views and opinions to them. By doing so, you can help them get a broader view of the problem and gain more ideas about how to react.
- If you are a parent whose child does not attend a school implementing a programme like the SEES programme, take the initiative and ask the school to stop the violence, but give them time to take action in pursuit of this goal. Finally, be persistent

and that needs to be respected

Parents are responsible for providing for their children's needs (safety, protection, belonging, love, respect, etc.), but not for all of their wishes (ice cream, video games, etc.).

and assertive with your request without insulting and blaming the school or its personnel for your own distress and worries. For example, in Croatia, schools are legally obliged to prevent unacceptable forms of behaviour and guarantee students' safety. They are also required to provide counselling services to students who need them. You may want to check the legal basis for taking action in your country.

How to develop self-confidence and self-respect

- Talk with your child about violence and bullying in order to help them understand the problem and its social implications. Nurture the perception that bullying has little to do with their qualities and traits and that they are not bad or guilty of doing anything wrong. There are many films, stories and other resources to help you broach this topic in a natural manner.
- If the child is frustrated and unsuccessful in doing something, help them to deal with their feelings and encourage them to persist and continue to work towards their goal. Tell them how proud of themselves they will feel when they accomplish the task. This also means you must resist the urge to 'rescue' the child as soon as something they are doing becomes hard for them. Start by refraining from doing little things, such as tying shoelaces, putting thread through a needle, matching pieces of a puzzle, or solving maths problems. From there, the child can proceed to bigger problems, such as challenges in their interpersonal relationships.
- Do not indulge all your child's wishes immediately. Parents are responsible for providing for their children's needs (safety, protection, belonging, love, respect, etc.), but not for all of their wishes (ice cream, video games, etc.). The longer they want something, the happier and more satisfied they will be when that want is achieved. While they beg and persuade you to fulfil their wants, they exercise self-advocacy.
- Stimulate your child and let them do things independently (as long as their actions are not dangerous). Reassure them when they fail and make mistakes, and tell them that, while it is normal for new tasks to be hard in the beginning, it is the only way to become more skilful. Also, let them help you with things such as household chores or tasks that benefit others so that they may feel useful and resourceful.

- Encourage your child to socialize with calm and friendly children at school. Engage them in activities that they are both successful at and enjoy. Sometimes, it is good that children participate in activities with other children the same age or younger, as these situations can provide them with positive social experiences.
- Suggest some sports or other physical activities to your child. Children who suffer from bullying are (for the most part) not inclined to participate in group games that require physical aggression, but there are many sports that do not involve physical contact, or can be practised individually. If they do not want to take a course or join a club, think of some activities you can do together (such as jogging). This is particularly important for boys because boys are generally targeted if they are weaker or smaller than their peers. Feeling physically powerful can significantly increase their self-confidence and help these children cope with peer bullying.

Consult with your child about the actions you take and discuss them together. You risk harming their confidence in your relationship if you do not include your child in these solutions; if you lose their trust, they will stop telling you about what is happening. Consequently, they will feel compelled to deal with things entirely on their own, which can cause the situation to deteriorate further.

It is important to resist the urge to personally 'get even' with the child who bullies, or with their parents. It makes things worse for your child and can obstruct the school's efforts to resolve the situation.

If the school does not act to put a stop to the bullying, it is better to inform the police rather than take matters into your own hands. There are many documented cases where, in the end, the police were forced to intervene after parents reacted by themselves. In some of these cases, the outcome has been fatal.

If the child is frustrated and unsuccessful in doing something, help them to deal with their feelings and encourage them to persist and continue to work towards their goal. This also means you must resist the urge to 'rescue' the child, as soon as something becomes too hard for them. Start by refraining from doing little things. From there, the child can proceed to bigger problems, such as challenges in their interpersonal relationships.

Children who bully others



1 KG MORE HONESTY

5 KG FEWER LIES

We have already mentioned that there are many possible causes of a child's inclination towards violent behaviour. In general, children who bully do not care about the people who get hurt. They are not interested in how people feel and do not empathize with others. These children do not have a highly developed sense of empathy (which is one of the four elements of emotional intelligence). They simply enjoy what they do, and they are happy when they see fear and humiliation in the eyes of those they bully, especially when they realize their dominance over their target(s). Sometimes, when justifying their actions to themselves (and to others), they will say that their target(s) deserved to be bullied.

These children believe they are having fun when they bully others, especially if they align themselves with a group of children. Their perception of approval from bystanders has a numbing effect. They are not entirely aware of their responsibility in the affair, or of the harm they inflict upon others because they follow the group's approval.

Some children who bully have been hurt by violence themselves and have had bad relationships with others (for example, with adults, in a sports club, at home, etc.). In these cases, they may try to ease the pain brought on by experiences of humiliation and vulnerability by behaving violently towards others.

Some children bully to gain admiration from others, and being 'bossy' makes them feel good. They also get a sense of security, because they become confident that nobody is going to bully them. Sometimes, these children are impulsive and cannot control their anger. They may also lack the social skills to forge good interpersonal relationships, and yet they can be smart and manipulative. Often, they possess better social skills than others, but they lack the capability to bond with others and trust them.

Other children bully because they want to 'get even' with someone. This can include individuals with whom the child shared a previous friendship that ended over a perceived slight, leaving them feeling hurt from the lost friendship.

The underlying reasons for violence never justify the violent behaviour.

It is important to acknowledge that some parents believe this type of behaviour will help their children later in life, and so they encourage it. Unfortunately, it is not helpful to tell these parents that this is not true and that supporting such conduct has a high price in other aspects of life. It is equally futile to inform them that it is risky because only the absolute strongest have control in such a game, and all the others fail along the road. It is perhaps better to simply, with a cool temper, introduce data from the wealth of international longitudinal studies about the future in store for children who practise bullying.

What bullying does to children who bully in the short term

Children who bully are usually regarded with an average level of fondness by their peers, or sometimes even less than average. Other children are often afraid of them and prefer to maintain good relationships. They even admire their fearlessness to a certain degree. Since these relationships are not based on mutual feelings of admiration and respect, children who bully seldom succeed in developing long, open, loyal, close, genuine friendships. Also, they rarely make good students, and often earn resentment from teachers by targeting adults with their provocative behaviour, as well as children.

What bullying does to children who bully in the long term

Bullying often leads to the violation of laws and criminal activities even before children leave their youth. Sixty per cent of these children are convicted of some minor violation or major felony before they reach age 24, and 40 per cent of these become repeat offenders.¹¹ Such children are also more likely to develop substance abuse problems in comparison to their peers.

Children who bully do not learn to empathize or cooperate with others, or to take responsibility for their actions. Since such children are often unhappy, it is important to help them develop the characteristics and skills they lack. Every shift in this direction decreases their chances of engaging in criminal activities in the future. In this sense, these actions help the entire community, not just the child who bullies.

11. Olweus, D., *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1993.

It is essential to find out precisely why each child bullies. Doing so enables parents and teachers to support them in developing the social skills and capabilities they require. **However, the underlying reasons for violence never justify the violent behaviour.**

Children who bully usually have some or all of the following characteristics:

- They are impulsive and impetuous.
- They cannot cope well with frustration or delaying their personal gratification.
- They are aggressive (towards teachers and parents as well as other children).

We have already mentioned that children who bully do not have a well-developed capacity for compassion (empathy); they have the impression that the world around them is not a peaceful, safe and friendly place. Therefore, they seek dominance and power over others and often need some kind of recognition of their dominance by forcing some favours or concessions to self-interests, such as demanding money or sandwiches from their victims, making their victims carry their school bags, or forcing victims to give them their mobile phone, as proof that they, those who bully, are mighty and valued. They typically have a positive self-image, and boys who bully are usually physically stronger than most of their peers. Hence, there is a combination of nature and nurture inherent in children who bully.

While some of these children grow up in difficult or even traumatic conditions, many of them have a good upbringing and may have received sufficient nutrition, health care, material goods, and opportunities to engage in various types of leisure activities. Their parents may have focused more on doing 'everything right' than fulfilling the child's emotional needs. In these cases, such

children may have been given material support but not compassion. Like most parents, such parents may have hoped that providing this sort of support and attention would enable their children to grow up happy and satisfied, but things have obviously not gone as planned if the child turns to bullying. It is important to note that saying parents have not shown enough compassion does not necessarily imply a lack of parental love. In some contemporary cultures, people are not inclined to show emotions, especially the unpleasant ones. Children may be told things like "Come on, you're not going to cry now, are you? You're not a baby!" "There is nothing to be afraid of!" and "Stop sulking!" Even showing pleasant emotions may be discouraged – the response to someone 'jumping for joy' may be "Ok, ok, what's the big deal?" Unfortunately, some people seem more comfortable expressing anger and directing criticism towards others and tend to use anger to mask fear and sadness when trying to express these emotions to others.

From interviews and testimonies of parents of children who bully, it is observable that parents do not cultivate warm relationships in the family, they have a hard time sharing their feelings (especially the warm and soft ones), and they do not encourage intimacy. There are basically two paradigms these parents follow when raising their children: some parents are rather permissive and inconsistent when it comes to disciplining and monitoring their children. When their children fail to recognize that they are 'crossing the line' with their behaviour (because they do not have a clear understanding of where that line is), they react impulsively and, sometimes, even with aggression or violence. On the other hand, the alternative pattern involves very strict parenting, with strong principles regarding discipline and a willingness to punish bad behaviour (often with physical punishment).



When children cross those boundaries (which they do because they are children, and they are in the process of learning), the SEES programme provides them with opportunities to restore violated values through their actions. This allows adults to emphasize to children that they are responsible for their own behaviour, thereby empowering them to show others (and themselves) that they can do better.

Signs that children are inclined towards violence

These are the signs that may indicate children are inclined towards violent behaviour:

- These children have a strong compulsion to dominate and subordinate others (for example, friends and siblings while playing).
- They are often assertive and threatening until they achieve their goal(s).
- They disturb siblings or other children from their neighbourhood.
- They boast about their dominance (either real or imagined) over other children.
- They are quick-tempered, impulsive, and are angered easily.
- They have trouble coping with frustration and obeying the rules.
- They are also unable to tolerate unpredictable situations or delayed gratification.
- They cheat, do not always tell the truth, and manipulate others.
- They tend to disagree, protest and rebel in their relationships with adults (parents, teachers, sports trainers, etc.).
- They always have something to add, object to, or prove.
- They behave offensively when confronted with their mistakes, and can even become aggressive.

How parents can help children who bully

Although the majority of children who bully are impulsive, quarrelsome and competitive, there is a smaller number of children who appear calm and introverted in school, yet still bully their peers at home (or vice versa). Often, these traits will appear only in certain social situations. In these instances, the revelation that a child bullies at school often takes their parents by surprise. The parents of children who bully have to consider the cause(s) of their child's bullying thoroughly. The previous list of reasons is a good place to start for insights into their behaviour.

Parents of children who bully should not conclude that they are to blame and take on responsibility for their children's behaviour (especially older children). Likewise, they should not excuse their children. However, parents should ask themselves if they have ever acted violently in front of their children, or in any

other way that may have influenced their behaviour. Children who bully may have witnessed such behaviour from parents or other adults and may be attempting to emulate what they have seen. It is also worthwhile considering whether such children feel humiliated or oppressed by someone close to them (at home, at a sports club, etc.) and what may motivate them to hurt others.

Parents should express their disapproval of violent behaviour and demand that children put a stop to it, regardless of the underlying causes and conditions, even if children consider it fun. Teachers often invite parents to school in order to help improve situations where bullying has occurred. It is tempting for parents to react with denial and defend their children by rationalizing and justifying their behaviour. However, it is more productive to focus attention on behaviour that needs to change, primarily to protect the well-being of all children at school. Instead of deprecating, yelling at or criticizing children for their violent behaviour, it is recommended to express concern for children who suffer from bullying by using a calm and comforting tone and firmly asking children who bully not to continue bullying.

What helps in the short term

These are the steps that may help stop violent behaviour:

- Take the problem seriously. Do not diminish the severity of the situation with clichés like ‘boys will be boys’, or by saying that mocking, fighting and similar forms of behaviour are meaningless jokes or a natural part of childhood.
- Listen carefully to the child and focus on finding out the facts instead of making interpretations. If they say something like “Oh, I only wanted to scare him a little, that’s all,” make an effort to get more information. Ask for details such as

what exactly they said and did to the other child, where, how many times, how long it has been going on, etc. Children prone to bully are very good at manipulating adults; they can tell stories that make them appear to be innocent or make situations seem to be the result of a series of coincidences rather than the product of any wrongdoing.

- Children who bully will deny allegations of bullying for as long as possible. Because the SEES programme encourages surveillance in schools by teachers, and the students are encouraged to report cases of violence, many acts of child violence in schools can be documented. Tell your child that hiding their behaviour will make things worse and create more trouble for everyone (including him/her).
- Investigate carefully notes taken at school as they can reveal patterns and other details about your child’s behaviour. This information can provide insights into the reasons behind your child’s bullying and the patterns of his/her violence, and can be an invaluable resource for solving the problem.
- Don’t be afraid to seek advice from an expert at the school (or some other institution) if you are unsure how to proceed.
- It is extremely important that you hold the child responsible for their behaviour when discussing it with them (and others). Do not take blame and responsibility for them and do not excuse their actions.
- Make it clear to your child that violent behaviour is a very serious problem and that you will not tolerate it in the future. Ask them clearly and assertively to stop the violence.
- Tell your child that you will be monitoring their behaviour and will be in contact with personnel at their school and ensure you follow through with this promise.
- Do not threaten or punish the child brashly. It may stop the immediate bullying behaviour, yet in the long run it can only strengthen your child’s resolve to use force and domination as tools to control others.

How to develop non-violent behaviour

Most children will not experience immediate success when they attempt to change their behaviour. It takes time for them to find better and more constructive ways to fulfil their emotional and psychological need to feel strong and powerful. Fostering values like appreciation and respect for others, promoting empathy and compassion, and encouraging the realization that their environment can be a peaceful and friendly place takes even more time and positive experiences with interpersonal relationships.

One of the problems associated with supporting children who bully is that their violent behaviour, besides concern, also induces anger in others (including their parents). Anger may bolster others to speak out against bullying by showing children who bully that they are not that strong or powerful. Such parents may pursue this objective by moralizing, humiliating and punishing children who bully. In this way, a child's violence provokes violent reactions from others. An often-witnessed public reaction to bullying, which is sometimes found in schools and families as well, demands that the child who bullies is punished even more rigorously. This contributes to a vicious circle that breeds aggression. Unfortunately, it is not an efficient method, especially not with children prone to bully. By punishing children, thus imposing power on them, adults only justify and deepen the child's conviction that dominance is important and instrumental in controlling others. Punishment and control of behaviour by power may well stop violent conduct for the given moment (and 'prove' to grown-ups that it is a justified method), yet in the long run such approaches foster a logic of control by power, thus directly reinforcing violent behaviour.

Children who bully are more likely to experience long-term problems as a result of their behaviour than the children who suffer from their violence. This is why

they need help in finding more constructive ways to support their development.

This should not be taken as belittling the suffering of children who are bullied: our intent in making this point is that our failure to help children who bully change their behaviour is condemning them, and those around them, to a life plagued by the negative consequences of their actions. It is vital to focus efforts on supporting those who bully to make the following changes:

- learn to control their impulses;
- develop a sense of empathy (which cannot be done without empathy towards them);
- establish fair yet clear boundaries; and
- prove to them by our behaviour towards them (and those who suffer from their bullying) that the world can be a safe and friendly place if we respect each other.

Children will not be able to make these changes without experiencing empathy, boundaries and respect from their parents and teachers. Enlisting the aid of an expert in these matters is highly recommended, for the sake of both the parents and the child.

This is why the SEES programme started by supporting children to identify and establish values, rules and consequences in their own classroom. Doing this enables children who bully to realize that they are not being punished for their mistakes, but rather that they are facing the consequences of actions they had previously agreed upon (just like the other children). Thus, they experience the world surrounding them as a place of respect, with fair boundaries. When children cross those boundaries (which they do because they are children, and they are in the process of learning), the SEES programme provides them with opportunities to restore violated values through their actions. This allows adults to

emphasize to children that they are responsible for their own behaviour, thereby empowering them to show others (and themselves) that they can do better.

The following points summarize an effective plan of action for parents:

- Establish home values, rules and consequences (like those at school) and ensure that everyone follows them. To avoid humiliating children, the 'consequences' could, therefore, include things like restricting privileges (e.g., by limiting TV watching and/or playing computer games, reducing pocket money, etc.) or requiring chores that serve the family or family members.
- Be consistent in enforcing rules and ensure that children have the opportunity to 'restore values', that is, to re-establish the observation of threatened values through some constructive activity, thus providing them with a clear path for changing their behaviour. Clarity and consistency are effective forms of support. Coordination between parents and school is important and instrumental.
- Talk more with the child about where and how they spend their free time. Also make an effort to meet those with whom they socialize. If they are associating with 'bad company', limit the time they spend together.
- Take time to have fun with the child and do activities that make both parents and child happy, or something that is useful to the family by calling him/her to help you (not as a duty or punishment).
- Ensure that the child is praised for following the rules, and also when they show compassion and empathy towards others.
- Teach the child to negotiate to meet their needs and desires. Do not give in to their demands when they pressure or try to blackmail you (do not use these tactics either). Negotiate with them in a fair manner, so that the child can decide what is important to them, and what they are prepared to do to get what they want or need.

Fostering values like appreciation and respect for others, promoting empathy and compassion, and encouraging the realization that their environment can be a peaceful and friendly place takes even more time and positive experiences with interpersonal relationships.



EVERY CHILD NEEDS

LOVE

Cooperation between parents and teachers

It is fundamental that parents and teachers work together to eliminate violence in schools because everyone has a unique role and can make a contribution. This means that everyone has to take responsibility for situations of violence, not just the parents of children who bully and those whose children are bullied. Being sensitive to this problem and committing to raising children to respect and appreciate each other can help create a community in which everyone feels valued, important and empowered.

The media are often considered to play an influential role in promoting bullying. Research shows that this is only partially true.¹² Violence shown and described in the media supports and models violent behaviour for children who may already be prone to bullying. Such depictions desensitize the public to the phenomenon. Research also points out that as long as both parents and school are clear in their attitudes and values towards violence, the impact exerted by the media remains limited.¹³ Thus, it is essential that everyone in the local community contributes to establishing clear social values related to violence. In Croatia, UNICEF has been able to influence public opinion through two campaigns that highlighted violence and bullying ('A harsh word hurts more than a slap in the face', 'Gossiping scars heal slowly', 'Last in line, first in bruises') and has compelled both the public and schools to act. It now rests with schools and parents to mobilize additional resources in their local communities to maintain non-violent values in their social environment and to support parents and children who need it.

12. Livingstone, S., Drotner K., 'Children's Media Cultures in Comparative Perspective', in Nightingale, V., *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2011, pp. 405–425.

13. Ibid.

It is fundamental that parents and teachers work together to eliminate violence in schools, each from their own perspective and role. This means that everyone has to take responsibility for violent incidents, not just the parents of children who bully and those whose children are bullied.

Respect other opinions!



BOYS, GIVE GIRLS A FLOWER
AS A PRESENT, DON'T PULL
THEIR HAIR

Possibilities are numerous. Here are just some of them:

1. Parents can contribute their unique expertise to initiate innovative solutions to specific school needs regarding violence prevention. For example, psychologists, pedagogues and physicians can work with children and staff in schools; electricians can add lights in darker areas of the schoolyard; artists and graphic designers can create school posters and other communication resources; performers can engage in productions exploring bullying, etc. The possibilities vary in different school contexts, but there is always an opportunity to invent new solutions to these problems.
2. Parents can use their roles in the local community to develop support networks and implement new methods to eliminate violence. This can include, for example: linking schools with activities in churches, local sports clubs and other organizations working with children and youth, including local radio stations, television networks, newspapers, centres for social work, mental health centres, family centres, etc.
3. Parents can organize surveillance teams to monitor and protect children on their way home from school and provide a broad support network for children who bully and children who suffer from bullying.
4. There are parents who can bridge the communication gap between schools and the parents of children who bully (or suffer from bullying) when those parents avoid contact with the school.
5. Parents can mobilize resources (money, goods or services) to support various bullying prevention activities in schools.

It is important to emphasize that those who volunteer time and effort to such bullying prevention initiatives should do so in coordination with parent-activist groups, as well as school coordination committees. Parents need to be supported and not simply left alone to carry out programme tasks.

For those who want to know more

The following is a list of literature about violence published in English and Croatian, some of which was referenced earlier in this booklet. The Croatian titles have been translated into English, and a brief description of their content has been included here. It is recommended that each country compile its own list of publications with similar subject matter.

For parents

1. Juul, J., *Your Competent Child. Toward a new paradigm in parenting and education*, Balboa Press & Familylab International, Bloomington, 2011.
2. Juul, J., *Do we really want strong and healthy children? Woman & Mother*, Authorhouse (e-book) & jesperjuul.com (Audio file), 2012.
3. Juul, J., *Family Life. The most important values for living together and raising children*, Authorhouse & Familylab International, Bloomington, 2012.
4. Juul, J., *Here I Am! Who Are You? Resolving conflicts between adults and children*, Authorhouse & Familylab International, Bloomington, 2012.
5. Juul, J., *NO! The art of saying No! with a clear conscience*, Authorhouse & Familylab International, Bloomington, 2012.

This is a series of books written by one of the world's most influential contemporary family psychologists and therapists. These are not typical self-help publications, they enable parents to understand the dynamics of their relationship with their children, including why certain actions can have a special impact on children. The author examines elements of parents' relationships with children to explain why children do not always turn out the way parents plan. The first book provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary upbringing, while the remaining four focus on specific issues. These books are recommended to parents who want to understand contemporary parenthood and the new paradigm of child-rearing practices based on relationships instead of authority.

6. Seligman, M., *The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007.

An important book that teaches parents how to support healthy experiences that build self-esteem and self-confidence in children. It is intended for parents and other experts who work with children and includes concrete exercises and activities. The author is a psychologist who based the book on scientific research about the development of so-called learned helplessness, discouragement and depression. He has shaped hard scientific data into principles that help teachers and other experts avoid discouragement in children and raise their optimism and self-confidence.

7. Field, E. M., *Bully Blocking. Six Secrets to Help Children Deal with Teasing and Bullying*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, revised edition, 2007.

A handbook that aims to help children overcome the harmful consequences of teasing and violent behaviour and develop a skill set and knowledge base that will benefit them for life. Topics covered include: regulating your feelings; understanding why you are bullied or a bully; building your self-esteem; becoming a confident communicator; creating your own power pack; developing a support network.

8. Middleton-Moz, J., Zawadski, M. L., *Bullies. From the Playground to the Boardroom*, Health Communications, Inc., 2002.

A handbook to aid the recognition and comprehension of bullying on the playground, in schools, in interpersonal relationships, on the roads, and in the workplace. The authors identify strategies for opposing bullies and bullying.

For schools and parents

9. Olweus, D., *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1993.

A description of the first and most famous bullying prevention programme. It includes the findings of research into the phenomenon of bullying, as well as the results of the programme's outcome in Norway.

10. Rigby, K., *Bullying in schools – and what to do about it*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1997.

This comprehensive presentation of the various approaches to bullying taken in Australia was written by one of the most highly regarded experts in the field. It is primarily intended for schools, but is useful too for anyone who wants to understand the genesis of violence and bullying, as well as methods for their prevention.

11. Council of Europe, *Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community*, 2004.

This book reviews highlights from the Council of Europe conference 'Local Partnerships for Preventing and Combating Violence at School'. The conference sought to promote prevention, mediation, intercultural dialogue, respect for human rights, school-led initiatives outside of their traditional role, and connecting schools with their local communities.

For support to children

12. Rondina, C., *Gossip: Deal with it before word gets around*, James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2004.
13. Rondina, C., *Rudeness: Deal with it, if you please*, James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2005.
14. Slavens, E., *Bullying: Deal with it before push comes to shove*, James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2003.
15. Slavens, E., *Arguing: Deal with it word by word*. James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2004.
16. Slavens, E., *Peer Pressure: Deal with it without losing your cool*, James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2004.
17. Slavens, E., *Fighting: Deal with it without coming to blows*, Turtleback Books, 2005.

A series of booklets, containing stories about the various forms of bullying experienced by children, written in a child-friendly way. They instruct children on what they can do and how to cope with such situations.

18. Rundek, M., *Mirko i sedam prigovora: knjiga zagonetka s ljekovitim biljem* (Mirko and the Seven Complaints: A riddle book with medicinal plants), Golden Marketing, Zagreb, 2005.
A book for children in elementary school (aged 7–15 years) about a boy named Mirko who was criticized and bullied, and the steps that helped him recover from these experiences. Parts of this book are used in the workshops of the SEES programme.

Bullying needs to be exposed. Parents need to encourage children to tell a teacher (or some other adult whom they trust at school) what is happening.

UNICEF Office for Croatia
Radnička cesta 41/7
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Telephone 385 1 2442 660
Fax 385 1 2442 662
www.unicef.hr