

Wednesday, 15 March 2017

## Putting a stop to 'Bullying' is everyone's business!

With children as young as six contacting Kids Helpline (KHL) about being bullied, KHL is calling on everyone in Australia to take note, take action and make putting a stop to 'bullying' their business.

With the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence this Friday, 17 March, Kids Helpline says it's an ideal time to take note of possible bullying in the community and put in place strategies to stop it happening.

According to Kids Helpline Manager Tony FitzGerald, children as young as six years are contacting the helpline about bullying with alarming reports of victimisation at school and online.

"In 2016, KHL received more than 3,800 counselling contacts from children and young people concerned about bullying with 84% of these related to bullying at school," Mr FitzGerald said.

"There were also more than 23,000 page views of the KHL website's bullying self-help 'tip sheets' for children and young people.

"Types of bullying behaviour reported included verbal abuse, exclusion, isolation and/or spreading of rumours, intimidation, extortion or threats of personal harm, and physical aggression or assault.

"While we're glad children and young people are contacting KHL for help, what they tell us they are experiencing is alarming.

"For example, a nine year old girl contacted KHL and said she was feeling anxious and scared, and talked about wanting to 'go away and never be found' and 'just wanting to die'.

"She told our counsellors that girls in her class at school were telling her she was 'stupid', that everyone hated her and she should 'kill herself'. This was happening every day.

"Nobody should ever have to experience this or feel this way, let alone a nine year old child.

"She had also experienced this for some time because she didn't feel she could talk to her parents or another adult. In this case, our counsellors were here to work with the girl on strategies to manage the situation. However, it's important that we as a community are all vigilant, looking around us and keeping an eye out for signs that things may not be right with your child, your friend or student and ask them if they're OK.

"It's also important that we have robust education and awareness programs in place that teach kids that it's OK to speak up and that help is available. Whilst it's great that schools have anti-bullying policies in place, the ones that tackle this problem most effectively are those who embed the anti-bullying message as an essential part of the school culture."

According to Mr FitzGerald, while technology is a great thing, it is also exacerbating the bullying issue.

"In July 2016, Kids Helpline expanded its data collection to gauge the frequency of cyber-safety issues being discussed in counselling sessions," he said.

"In 1,566 counselling sessions between July and December last year the child or young person disclosed they were experiencing issues with online safety.

"By far the most common concern of those disclosing these issues was bullying, with more than one in three (36%) of these counselling sessions focusing on bullying.

“In addition, in 2016 more than 4,600 referrals to the KHL website were received from cyber-safety or anti-bullying websites, including the Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s website, Bullying No Way, Take a Stand Together, and National Centre Against Bullying.”

Mr FitzGerald said it was great that many schools across Australia had exceptionally good bullying education programs in place and that initiatives like the “Bullying. No Way!” awareness campaign were helping to get the message out there.

He also applauded the ABC’s focused programming around bullying this week designed to create community awareness about the issue.

“Kids Helpline has been working with the ABC and ReachOut over the last year contributing content for the supporting [ABC Bully website](#) that provides tips and information about managing bullying.

“From this portal, audiences will be able to access a range of support – whether it be digital self-help, peer-to-peer forums, or counselling or crisis support through services like Kids Helpline.”

Attached are KHL’s top anti-bullying tips for parents and others concerned about the issue. The Kids Helpline, ABC Our Focus: Bully and Bullying No Way websites also have lots of useful information about how you can recognise and support children and young people who may be experiencing bullying. See [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au), [www.abc.net.au/ourfocus/](http://www.abc.net.au/ourfocus/) and [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

KHL gives children and young people choices, support and someone to listen. It is Australia’s only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or **www.kidshelpline.com.au**.

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or **parentline.com.au**.

Primary schools across Australia can access the free **Kids Helpline @ School** program. KHL counsellors connect with classes via video link to talk about issues like bullying, staying safe online, friendships and resilience. See **www.kidshelpline.com.au/school** for more information.

**ENDS**

#### **INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO
- Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Manager
- Louise Davis, Kids Helpline Clinical Practice Manager
- KHL Counsellors
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## KIDS HELPLINE'S TOP ANTI-BULLYING TIPS

### What to look out for:

- Unexplained cuts or bruises or pencil marks on the skin.
- Being quiet or withdrawn.
- Reporting vague headaches or stomach aches.
- Ripped, stained or soiled school clothes.
- 'Losing' lunch money or other things at school.
- Falling out with previously close friends.
- Being moody or easily distressed.
- Not wanting to leave the house or reluctance to go to popular places such as malls or parks (they may be trying to avoid the bully).
- Not wanting to go to school
- Experiencing difficulty in sleeping at night.
- Becoming worried about a lot of things.
- Showing sudden changes in eating behaviour.

### If your child is being bullied:

- Let the child know it is ok to talk about how the bullying is making them feel.
- Remind children it is NEVER their fault and provide the space for them to talk about what's going on. Sometimes it's good just to listen before acting.
- Help the child or young person understand the power dynamic involved in bullying. Discuss ways to stop giving the bully power, for example, walking or turning away from the bully.
- Reassure them that you will help to stop the bullying from continuing.
- Find out what, when and where it happened and if anyone was present. Contact the school or organisation where relevant and make sure they are aware of the problem and work out with them how to stop the bullying.
- Talk to the experts - If you don't know what to do or where to go consider calling trained counsellors at Kids Helpline or Parentline or contact [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au).