

Thursday, 14 March 2019

Be upstanders and not bystanders and put a stop to bullying says Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is urging everyone who knows of someone being bullied to move from silence to action and put a stop to bullying this National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

According to **yourtown's** Head of Client Services Brendan Bourke too many people don't speak up about bullying they see or hear about and this urgently needs to change if bullying across Australia is going to be stopped.

"Bystanders have immense power to intervene and effectively stop bullying yet few are aware of this and actually do," Mr Bourke said.

"There are lots of reasons people don't speak up including a fear of reprisal, being a friend of the bully and not knowing what to do. But we can all stand up and help put a stop to bullying even if it's supporting someone bullied by talking through a plan to manage what happens next.

"Sadly, bullying happens everywhere - at school, in sporting teams, workplaces - it's not just an online issue.

"In 2018, 3,581 counselling contacts from children and young people to Kids Helpline were about bullying with 86% related to bullying at school. A quarter of bullying contacts involved cyberbullying.

"We need to protect our kids by creating a cultural shift that sees everyone adopt a zero tolerance approach to bullying by interrupting and reporting bullying behaviour as the highest of priorities."

New Kids Helpline data released today revealed most bullying reported to the 24/7 national helpline service included verbal abuse (24%), while 13% included exclusion, isolation and/or spreading of rumours. One in 20 said they experienced intimidation, extortion or threats of personal harm (6%), while a similar number (4%) experienced physical aggression or assault. In almost a quarter (22%) of contacts about bullying it was a combination of these.

Mr Bourke said it's also important to remember it's not just children and young people that bully and that children pick up on these behaviours.

"Being an upstander is not just about looking out for others but modelling the behaviours we want our children and young people to have," he said.

"We can never let children or young people think that bullying behaviour is ok or 'normal' but sadly there are some that do.

"One young person Kids Helpline surveyed told us 'It's simply child culture. If you're not mean then you end up with no friends' and 96% of those surveyed said they had witnessed bullying.

"What's encouraging is that young people also revealed they are keen to be upstanders. They told us we need to 'encourage people to stop being bystanders and actually do something if they witness it in action or suspect it'. It's crucial that we teach our kids how and not just by giving them information but by leading by example."

It can be tough to know how to talk with children and young people about bullying and being an upstander. This National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence Kids Helpline is sending a FREE new learning tool to schools across Australia to help. The comic book available in digital and hard copy uses a story about young people and bullying to help young people understand what to do to be an upstander. To find out more go to kids helpline.com.au/comics/bullying

Kids Helpline also has these tips for kids and parents about being an upstander and talking about bullying.

Kids Helpline's 5 top tips for children and young people who are upstanders:

1. Stay calm: don't react or retaliate – in some situations this can make bullying worse
2. Interrupt the bullying
3. Remove the person being bullied from the situation
4. Offer support
5. Tell adults you trust about the bullying.

Kids Helpline's 5 top tips for parents to talk with their children about bullying:

1. Try to be open to hearing their point of view and listening rather than jumping straight to solutions.
2. Talk regularly about school, their friendships and anything that might be troubling them
3. Ask them directly if they're being bullied and let them know you want to work together to help stop it
4. Discuss your own experiences of being bullied and how you got through it
5. Encourage them to call Kids Helpline and talk to a counsellor

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. **FREE call 1800 55 1800** or www.kidshelpline.com.au Access survey findings www.yourtown.com.au/insights/research-and-evaluations

Schools can invite a counsellor to class to talk about bullying and cyberbullying via the **Kids Helpline @ School Wellbeing** program supported by Bupa and **Optus Digital Thumbprint with Kids Helpline** see <https://kidshelpline.com.au/schools>

Kids Helpline works closely with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to support children and young people who are experiencing online safety issues. Young people can report cyberbullying at www.esafety.gov.au

Kids Helpline would like to remind media to include **Kids Helpline** contact details at the end of broadcast coverage and articles where children and young people may need support.

-ENDS-

INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Virtual Services Manager

Amanda Grehan, Kids Helpline Counsellor

Kids Helpline VNR footage available on request re call centre and counsellors & children and young people on phones and in community settings

More info & tips:

Kids Helpline's website has more tips for kids, young people, schools, parents and carers about bullying at www.kidshelpline.com.au

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