



INFORMATION AND TIPS FOR PARENTS

# BULLYING AMONGST CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Projekträger



Ein Projekt der



## LEGAL NOTICE

### **BULLYING AMONGST CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS**

Information and tips for parents

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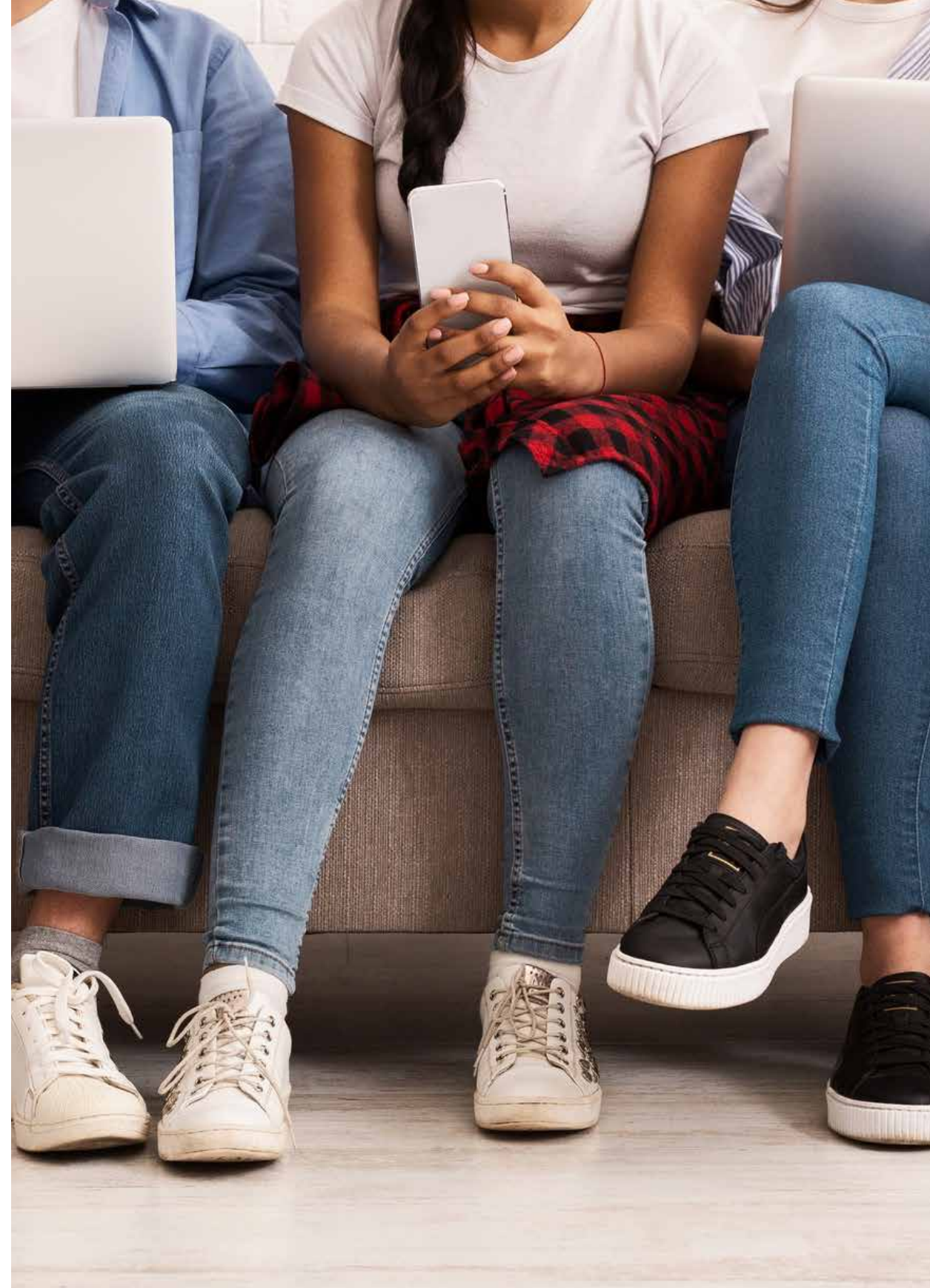
## **BULLYING&YOU – DON'T LOOK AWAY**

The *Bullying&You – Don't Look Away* program was developed by the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University Hospital of Heidelberg on behalf of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung.

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## WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF BULLYING?

Bullying is very complex and has various causes:

### INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Being different in any way can contribute to bullying. Because every single person has something that makes them different or unique, every single person can be the target of bullying. Therefore, victims are never to blame for being bullied.

### SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Bullying is reinforced and supported by bystanders, people who laugh along, and people who participate. But not doing anything and looking away contributes to bullying as well. If no one does anything, the perpetrators think that their behaviour is

okay. The bullying circle shows how everyone plays a role in bullying situations. The eight roles differ in terms of their opinions towards bullying and how they behave in a bullying situation.

### CONDITIONS AT SCHOOL

The school environment also plays a role. If there is a positive classroom environment, adults take responsibility, and everyone takes a united front against bullying, this can help to prevent and stop bullying at schools. So bullying is something that needs to be tackled by the whole class and the entire school.

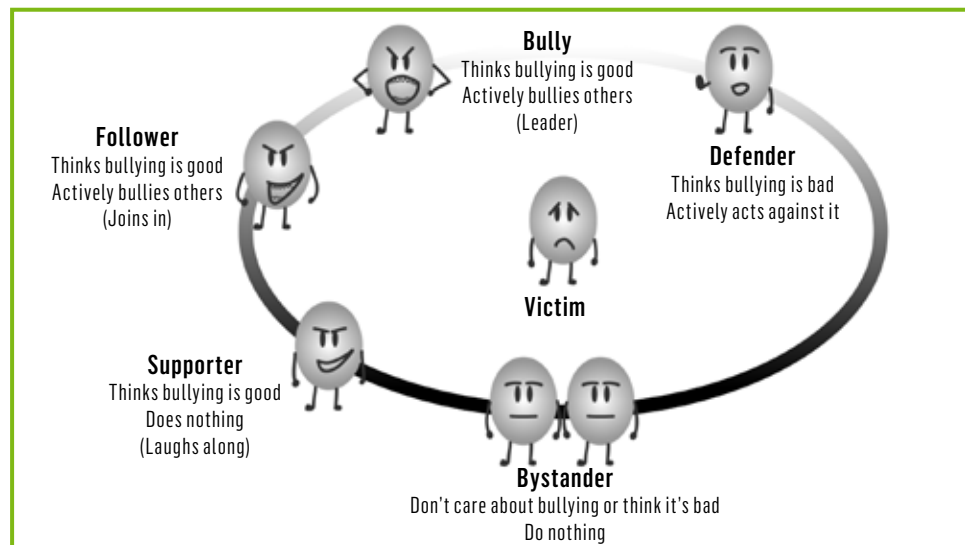


Figure 2: The bullying circle: Roles in a bullying situation

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING?

Bullying can have serious consequences.

Self-confidence and quality of life decreases for **victims**, many of them feel lonely or become withdrawn. They have problems at school, with some not wanting to go to school at all. Some people become mentally ill. The long-term consequences of bullying can persist even decades later, well into adulthood. However, the effects of bullying can be mitigated by supportive family and friends.

The **bullies** often face issues, as well. They learn that they can treat others poorly without consequences, meaning they frequently have difficulties with following rules as adults. This can lead to conflicts with the law or superiors. Bullies don't learn to be respectful or consider others. This can cause difficulties in relationships and friendships.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

It is important to recognise and stop bullying as quickly as possible. Possible **signs** that your child may be affected by bullying include:

- ▶ Your child has become withdrawn.
- ▶ Your child has injuries that they do not have a plausible explanation for.
- ▶ Their property is damaged or has disappeared without a plausible explanation.
- ▶ Their classmates don't come to visit anymore.
- ▶ Your child's mood has worsened.
- ▶ Your child is scared of going to school or does not want to go to school.
- ▶ Your child's grades have worsened.

- ▶ Your child has less of an appetite or frequently complains of stomach or headaches.
- ▶ Your child is sleeping badly or often seems tired.

If you notice that your child is exhibiting signs that they are being bullied, you should approach the topic gently and look for solutions. Explain what you have noticed and offer your help.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

Show your child that you are taking the situation seriously. Try to work together to find ways of changing the situation.

Do not look for reasons why your child is being bullied. Your child is not to blame for being bullied.

With your child's agreement, inform an adult at their school that they trust. Do **not** contact the bullies or their parents. The school will do this.

Together with your child, document all of the incidents of bullying (e.g., write down notes, take screenshots).

Empower and support your child in creating positive experiences with their peers (e.g., in the neighbourhood or a club).

Build your child's self-confidence by encouraging their strengths.

Do not blame yourself. Your child being bullied is not a comment on your parenting. Do not take it personally if your child didn't speak about it with you sooner.

### **In cases of cyberbullying:**

Do **not** forbid your child from using their phone or the internet, because this would also remove any positive contact they have with their peers, increasing their insecurity.

If your child has sent intimate photos or videos that have fallen into the wrong hands: do not blame your child. Instead, work together to find solutions.

Encourage your child to block the bullies.

Contact the operators of online platforms to report inappropriate content.

It may be worth considering contacting the police and getting information about what legal remedies you have to combat the bullying.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS?

Possible signs that your child is bullying others:

- ▶ Your child uses their classmates and friends for their own gain.
- ▶ Your child is aggressive towards you or other adults.
- ▶ Your child is impulsive and quick to anger.

- ▶ Your child has injuries that they cannot plausibly explain.
- ▶ Your child has new things, but you are not sure where the money for them came from.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS?

Make it clear that you do not tolerate bullying. Work with the school and support any measures implemented by the school.

Make it clear that you value your child as a person, even if you do not agree with their behaviour.

Support your child in changing their behaviour.

Make your child aware how negatively their behaviour can affect others, and encourage compassion for the victims.

## WHAT ARE THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING?

Bullying is a crime (even if the bullies may not be of the age of criminal responsibility). Under German law, possible crimes include bodily harm (Section 223 of the German Criminal Code), verbal abuse (Section 185

of the German Criminal Code), defamation (Section 187 of the German Criminal Code), and coercion (Section 240 of the German Criminal Code). However, not every incident will be convicted in court.

## HOW CAN MY CHILD HELP STOP BULLYING AS A BYSTANDER?

You can support your child to actively stop bullying. Ask your child if they have ever noticed bullying in their class or school, and how they reacted if yes. Do not blame your child if they did nothing or laughed along. Instead, explain to them which consequences bullying can have for victims, and that there are lots of ways to combat bullying. Little things can often make a big difference.

Tips for your child on how to act if they see a **bullying situation**:

- ▶ Do not participate, do not laugh along.
- ▶ Inform an adult at school. Important: getting help isn't snitching, it's reporting an emergency.
- ▶ Make your position clear and tell the bullies that they need to stop. However, your child should never put themselves in danger.
- ▶ Speak to other bystanders so that they can work together.

Tips for your child on how to act **after a bullying situation**:

- ▶ Support and comfort the victim to show them that they are not alone.
- ▶ Offer to seek help together with the victim.
- ▶ Invite the victim to do something together (at breaktime or on weekends).
- ▶ Inform an adult at school about the incident.

Tips for your child on how to act if your child **suspects** that someone is being bullied:

- ▶ Ask the person how they are doing and offer help.
- ▶ Pay attention to the person and try to involve them more.
- ▶ Inform an adult at school about your suspicions.



## HOW CAN CYBERBULLYING BE PREVENTED?

Discuss the importance of behaving respectfully towards each other online, and ask your child about their experiences online. Encourage your child to open up to an adult about any hostile behaviour online, regardless of whether it happened to them personally or if they just witnessed it.

Show an interest in your child's online activities (e.g., ask which apps they like using).

Teach your child to take precautions when using the internet:

- ▶ Make their profile private
- ▶ Only chat with people they know personally
- ▶ Be careful when sharing private information, photos or videos

## WHAT IS *BULLYING&YOU*?

### The basic idea

*Bullying&You – Don't Look Away* is a prevention program for schools. Every single person – even *you* – has a role to play when it comes to bullying, and every single person can do something about it – *by not looking away!* The program works with teachers and pupils from grades 3 to 9 to make it easier to recognise, stop, and prevent bullying. By involving the whole school, bullying should be reduced long-term, in a sustainable way.

### The components

*Bullying&You* combines components at schools (e.g., class meetings) with digital components (e.g., e-learning). A core team (4-6 teachers) run the program in each school, adjusting it to their own schools' needs. Parents and pupils can also contact the *Bullying&You* core team about incidents of bullying.

### The contents

In primary schools, grade 3 pupils deal with the topics "classroom climate" and "recognising bullying". In grade 4, topics include "stopping bullying" and "being brave when changing school". Each topic consists of six class meetings.

In the first year of the program in high schools, pupils in grades 5-9 will develop their basic knowledge of bullying via e-learning and in class meetings. In subsequent years, pupils will receive age-appropriate lessons on the different types of bullying, as well as topics that cover being a role model and helpful behaviour.

### Intervention concept

The *Bullying&You* program wants to stop bullying before it starts. But, of course, teachers will need to deal with any bullying situations that have already arisen so they can be stopped. Teachers therefore learn and practice how to intervene in such situations. Class teachers also learn how to have individual discussions with victims and the bullies, so that they can put a stop to bullying long-term. If your child is involved in a bullying incident, you may also be offered a discussion as a parent, so that you can help support the school in their efforts against bullying.

### *Bullying&You* mailbox:

Teachers may not always be able to recognise bullying themselves. They often only become aware once victims, their parents, or other pupils tell them. Which is why incidents can be reported to the school's internal *Bullying&You* mailbox, run by the core team. This will either be a letterbox (for primary schools) or a special email address (for high school students and parents) that can be contacted if bullying is experienced, suspected or witnessed.

## SUPPORT AND HELPFUL LINKS

### For parents:

Nummer gegen Kummer/Number for parents (Tel: 0800-1110550): Free and anonymous telephone support Monday to Friday 09:00-17:00, plus Tuesday and Thursday until 19:00.

bke-Elternberatung (<https://eltern.bke-beratung.de>): Free and anonymous online support for parents with children under 21 via email, a forum, or group chats to exchange with other parents.

### For children and teenagers:

Nummer gegen Kummer/Number for children and teenagers (Tel: 116111): Free and anonymous telephone support Monday to Saturday 14:00-20:00; round-the-clock support online.

bke-Jugendberatung (<https://jugend.bke-beratung.de>): Free and anonymous online support for teenagers aged between 14-21 via

email, a forum or in group chats to exchange with other peers.

JUUUUPPORT (<https://www.juuuport.de>): Free and anonymous online support for cyberbullying (as well as other questions and problems to do with the internet) by trained teenagers.

Cyber-Mobbing Erste-Hilfe App (<https://www.klicksafe.de>): App with advice in cases of cyberbullying.

krisenchat (<https://krisenchat.de>): Psycho-social support via a chat function. Children, teenagers, and young adults under 25 can contact the krisenchat to speak with a professional advisor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via the website, text message or WhatsApp.

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The Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University Hospital of Heidelberg has already conducted six large-scale school studies since 1996, in which a total of approximately 15,000 children and teenagers have participated. As part of these projects, some of which are run internationally, we have been able to gain a comprehensive understanding of children's and family's living situations, implement school social work in Heidelberg, and prevent bullying, self-harming, and absenteeism in schools.

The **BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG STIFTUNG** is committed to ensuring the advancement and prosperity of the state of Baden-Württemberg. The foundation is a pioneer in promoting cutting-edge research, a diverse educational offer and respect for our fellow human beings. It is one of the largest foundations operating in Germany today and the only one to invest exclusively, without political affiliation, in the future of Baden-Württemberg – and therefore in the future of its citizens.

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