

Kindy Bullies

by Gillian Handley

Bullying can start in kindy. Be aware of the signs and help stamp out this obnoxious behaviour.

The idea of a bully terrorising their vulnerable five-year-old will trigger an adrenaline charge in any parent's veins. Ask me - I know. My daughter started school last year and fell victim to a bully. I had anticipated all sorts of possible problems connected to the first year of school, but bullying was not one of them. While there are no statistics specific to kindergarten, there is no doubt that bullying can occur in the first year of school, just as in any other.

Bullying is one of the top three concerns of the boys and girls aged between 5 and 9 years who call Kids Help Line (KHL). During 2000, KHL received almost 7,000 calls about bullying from young Australians. 10 per cent of these calls were from children aged between 5 and 9 years, 80 per cent were from children aged between 10 and 14 years and 10 per cent of the calls were from 15 to 18-year-olds. 94 per cent of these callers said they had been bullied at least once, while 10 per cent of the callers experienced continual harassment at school. New South Wales had a 10 per cent higher incidence of calls relating to bullying than the rest of the country.

The latest data shows that greater numbers of younger children are using the Kids Help Line. KHL's Director of Counselling, Julie Clark, said that calls about bullying and school-related harassment have increased by 65 per cent over the past three years and the number of calls is expected to increase further. This increase is attributed to more children using the service, rather than an increase in the incidence of bullying.

For girls calling the KHL, issues of concern are, in ranking order:

- 1) peer relationships
- 2) family relationships
- 3) bullying
- 4) grief
- 5) child abuse

For boys:

- 1) family relationships
- 2) bullying
- 3) peer relationships
- 4) child abuse
- 5) grief

In general, boys make about one-quarter of all calls to KHL, except when it comes to

power, usually physically, by persistently seeking to hurt another person or persons just for pleasure."

While we tend to think of bullies as older children, Dr. Rigby notes that: "(Bullying) is sometimes apparent among children before they begin kindy. You can sometimes observe an older sibling as young as three years of age using his or her greater strength to hurt, and enjoy hurting, a younger brother or sister."

Dr. Rigby says children in kindy have not yet developed sophisticated ways of



hurting others so their mode of bullying tends to be physical. "It may nevertheless be accompanied by name calling if the bully discovers the 'victim' can be hurt in this way. Research indicates that at this

stage then the victim by others relatively henceforth subjected

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Date:	Thursday 29th March 2001
Venue:	The Masonic Centre, 279 Castlereagh St. Sydney
6.30pm	Registration
7.15pm	Introduction
7.00 to 8.20pm	The Music within Parents
Presenter:	Helen Shoemark (Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne)
8.20 to 9.00pm	Supper
9.00 to 9.45pm	The Meaning of Misbehaviour
Presenter:	Dr Colin Feekery (Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne)
Cost:	\$15 per couple or \$10 per person