

The WITS Programs

The WITS Programs bring together schools, families and communities to create responsive environments that help elementary school children deal with bullying and peer victimization.

WITS Primary Program

- Stands for **W**alk away, **I**gnore, **T**alk it out and **S**eek help
- Teaches Kindergarten to Grade 3 children to make safe and positive choices about peer conflict
- Provides a common language children and the adults in their environment can use to talk about and respond to peer victimization

WITS LEADS Program

- Stands for **L**ook and listen, **E**xplore points of view, **A**ct, **D**id it work? and **S**eek help
- Teaches problem-solving strategies to help Grade 4-6 children deal with conflict and stay safe
- Provides developmentally appropriate strategies and resources to older elementary students so they can become WITS Leaders in their school

“WITS helps you connect to the school because you’re using the same language. It’s just so simple.”

DORIAN BROWN, PARENT

The Role of Parents

Talking about WITS at home teaches children to apply these strategies beyond the school walls. When parents help children process strategies to deal with conflicts, they:

- Empower their children to stand up for themselves
- Show they are available to help solve problems
- Teach their children the skills they need to solve problems before they escalate

Tips to Share with Your Children

- **If it’s hard to stand up for yourself, ignore the bullying, walk away and tell someone who can help.**
- **Get funny! Humour shows you’re not bothered.**
- **Be assertive, not aggressive; fighting back makes the bullying worse.**
- **Remember that telling is not tattling.**
- **If you walk away and get help, you are part of the solution. If you stay and watch, you are part of the problem.**
- **Put yourself in the other kid’s shoes. Would you want to be picked on or left out?**
- **Apologize to the kids you have bullied.**
- **Be a real leader. Treat others with respect.**
- **Remember that no one deserves to be bullied.**

Additional Resources

Books

- *Bullying Prevention: What Parents Need to Know.* By Drs. Wendy Craig, Debra Pepler & Joanne Cummings. Published by Createspace (2013).
- *Words Wound: Delete Cyberbullying and Make Kindness Go Viral.* By Drs. Justin Patchin & Sameer Hinduja. Published by Free Spirit (2014).

Online Resources

- Adults Make a Difference: The Protective Factors of Parent and Teacher Emotional Support on Emotional Behavioural Problems of Peer-Victimized Adolescents. Published in *The Journal of Community Psychology* (2010).
www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/schools/research-evaluation/adults-make-a-difference.pdf
- WITS Parent Toolkit
www.witsprogram.ca/families/wits-toolkit.php

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Centre for
Youth & Society

University
of Victoria

ROCK SOLID
foundation

Using Your WITS at Home

A Resource for Parents



Creating responsive communities for the prevention of peer victimization

Walk Away
Ignore
Talk it Out
SeeK Help
www.witsprogram.ca

How can you use the WITS Programs at home?

- 1. Adopt the WITS Language at home** – Remind your children to *Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out* and *Seek help* when competing for toys, television and who gets to go first or for more serious problems like hitting, pushing, teasing and threatening.
- 2. Read WITS Books with your children** – Borrow a WITS Book from the library. Find our book lists at www.witsprogram.ca/schools/book-lists/.
- 3. Watch TV with your children and their friends** - Talk about characters' actions in resolving conflicts by posing some of the following questions: What problem did the main characters face? Could they resolve it alone or did they need help? How do *you* know when to ask for help and when to work it out on your own? Have you ever had a similar problem? How was it resolved? How would you use your WITS to solve a similar problem? How did the other characters act? How did their actions make the main characters feel? Could they have acted differently? Which of their WITS could they have used?
- 4. Use WITS Timeouts** – A timeout is a great chance for children to *Walk away and Ignore* a conflict in order to think of a good solution. After a timeout period (one minute per year in age is a good guideline), discuss the conflict with your child alone and then together with a sibling or friend. Ask them to talk about how things got out of hand, how they could have used their WITS to avoid the conflict and how they would do things differently in the future.
- 5. Use WITS to solve your own conflicts** – If your children see you using your WITS to deal with problems, they will better understand how WITS strategies can be used in many different situations and environments.
- 6. Offer praise when your children use their WITS** – Encourage your children to continue using their WITS and to address conflicts positively and proactively.

How can I support my older child?

WITS LEADS helps older children deal with more subtle and social kinds of bullying by using five essential strategies:

- **Look and listen**-To develop positive relationships, we must be active listeners and look beyond first impressions. Encourage your children to verbalize what they see and hear, and help them explore their judgments about people and experiences.
- **Explore points of view**-To really understand people and situations, we need to see them from multiple perspectives. When reading books or watching TV with your children, discuss characters' feelings or thoughts as they face challenges.
- **Act**-Talk to your children about how it feels to positively respond to a conflict or bullying situation, even as a bystander. Explore the bystander's powerful role by taking our quiz at www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/bystander-quiz.pdf
- **Did it work?**- Explore strategies people use to resolve conflicts by asking your child to compare behaviours. Which actions led to positive outcomes? Which had negative ones?
- **Seek help**- Seeking help is a skill we all need. Talk about ways adults seek help when faced with challenging situations, and encourage your child to keep seeking help until they get the help they need to solve the problem.

For more ideas about how to support your child with LEADS, go to www.witsprogram.ca/schools/leads-training-program/.

Four Steps for Solving Sibling or Peer Conflicts

1. Ask what the conflict is about.
2. Ask the children which of their WITS they could use to solve the conflict. They may need to try all the WITS strategies in order to find a resolution.
3. Ask what they think might happen if they used their WITS.
4. Talk about why using their WITS is a better choice than fighting.

