

## **What are the WITS Programs?**

The WITS Programs bring together schools, families and communities to create responsive environments that help children deal with bullying and peer conflict. WITS has two parts:

1. WITS Primary Program – Teaches Kindergarten to Grade 3 children to Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out and Seek help when faced with peer conflict. The acronym also provides a common language that children and the adults around them can use to talk about and respond to problems.

2. WITS LEADS Program – A more grown-up program designed for Grades 4-6 students, which teaches more complex problem-solving strategies: Look and listen, Explore points of view, Act, Did it work? and Seek help. LEADS trains students to become WITS Leaders who can help younger children with their problems.

Teachers reinforce the programs by reading popular children's books, which emphasize WITS and LEADS messages, to their students. We also encourage students to use their WITS and LEADS skills to deal with problems and hope you will too!

Want to know more? Explore the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca](http://www.witsprogram.ca).

## **2. Why include community leaders in the WITS Programs?**

A distinguishing characteristic of the WITS Programs is their community-based approach to preventing peer victimization. That's why our school encourages community leaders, such as police officers and other adult role models, to participate in the programs. When children hear the WITS message from members of the broader community, they realize it's not just a school lesson or a classroom rule; it's something we all believe in.

Community leaders show their support at the Swearing-In Ceremony, which launches the WITS Primary Program at the beginning of the school year. They guide students in reciting a WITS Oath and distribute WITS badges. Community leaders also take an active role in the WITS LEADS Program by directing the Tug-of-Help. This rope pull skit explores the idea of seeking help when a child faces problems that are difficult to handle alone.

Community leaders also visit classes throughout the year to exchange stories with children about how they used their WITS. These visits have a powerful impact on children because they show that using WITS and LEADS strategies is a lifelong commitment.

Want to know more? Explore the WITS for Community Leaders section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/community/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/community/).

## **3. How can I help my child use WITS to solve problems?**

Your child can likely recite the WITS acronym but may need help putting it in action. Use the tips below with your child to explore how WITS can help with peer conflict problems.

- Walk away: Role-play walking away from the situation. Ask: What would happen if you walked away? Would it solve the problem? If not, try another strategy.
- Ignore: Discuss ways to ignore, like leaving the situation or withdrawing eye contact. Ask: What would happen if you ignored? Would it solve the problem? If not, try another strategy.

- Talk it out: Suggest statements to use to talk it out with the person bothering him or her. Sometimes saying “Stop” is enough. Maybe a joke would help. Ask: What would happen if you talked it out? Would it solve the problem? If not, try another strategy.
- Seek help: Suggest other adults your child could ask for help, like a teacher. Ask: What would happen if you asked another adult for help? Would it solve the problem? If not, who else could you seek help from?

Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

#### **4. How can I help my child use LEADS to solve problems?**

LEADS is a more grown-up version of WITS, which teaches Grades 4-6 students, known as WITS Leaders, more complex problem-solving strategies to deal with peer conflict. Help your Grade 4-6 child apply these strategies by learning more about them.

- Look and listen to get a better understanding of the problem and what others are feeling about it. Make eye contact, have an open posture and be an active listener.
- Explore points of view. Think about how others’ perspectives might differ from yours and what might be going on in their lives to cause their actions.
- Act once you’ve got a good understanding of the problem and have thought about how your actions might affect the situation.
- Did it work? Ask yourself this question after you’ve acted. Is the problem fixed? If not, try something else.
- Seek help when someone could get hurt or you feel like you can’t handle the situation on your own. And remember: if at first you don’t get the help you need, keep asking others until you do!

Want to know more? Explore the Become a WITS Leader page of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/kids/wits-leader/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/kids/wits-leader/).

#### **5. How can I get my child talking about peer conflict and bullying?**

When it comes to talking to your child about peer conflict and bullying, once is not enough. Children need multiple opportunities to learn information and apply it in their lives. So how do you start the conversation?

- Children may feel their situation is unique and that you wouldn’t understand. Share a story about how you were teased or left out as a child. What did you do? Did it work? Who helped you?
- Pick a book from the WITS book list at [www.witsprogram.ca/schools/book-lists/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/schools/book-lists/), read it with your child and start a discussion. What WITS or LEADS strategies did the characters use? Did the book remind you of anything similar that has happened in real life?

Sometimes the best way to get your child talking is through teachable moments. When watching TV or movies, talk about characters’ actions and how they resolved conflicts. When your child experiences conflict with a sibling or a friend, ask which WITS strategies might help. Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

## **6. How can I support WITS at home?**

The WITS Programs are designed to reach beyond schools to protect children from peer victimization wherever they are. Parents play a critical role by teaching children to use their WITS in a variety of situations. So what can you do to support WITS at home?

- Use WITS and LEADS to help your child solve conflicts and deal with your own. Use the language when watching TV or movies to talk about how characters handle problems.
- Talk about WITS reminder gifts. Through WITS, community leaders visit classrooms and drop off gifts, such as bookmarks, pencils and posters. When your child brings home these gifts, ask: Who gave you this? What did the visitor talk about?
- Praise your child when you observe him or her using WITS or LEADS strategies. Ask: How did you decide which strategy to use? How did you feel when it worked?

Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

## **7. How can I support WITS at school?**

A community-based approach is what sets the WITS Programs apart and getting involved in your child's school is great way to join in! So where can you start? Coordinate with your school and its parent group and work to:

- Host an information meeting at the beginning of the school year to introduce new parents to the WITS Programs and how they can support them.
- Volunteer to help with the Swearing-In Ceremony and Tug-of-Help. These assemblies, led by community leaders, kick off the WITS Programs at the beginning of every school year. Parental attendance is a great sign to children that WITS is community-wide.
- Arrange classroom visits from parents who can stop in and read a WITS book to their child's class. Use questions and activities from the book's lesson plan, available at [www.witsprogram.ca/schools/lesson-plans/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/schools/lesson-plans/), to explore WITS-related messages.

Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

## **8. What is the difference between normal and harmful conflict?**

Conflict is a normal part of growing up as children develop skills to interact with those around them. Certain types of conflict, however, can be harmful. So how do you tell the difference? Normal conflict is occasional and not pre-planned. Both individuals involved are usually upset and want a resolution. Potentially harmful conflict, such as bullying, is deliberate and intended to hurt someone. It is repeated and targets the same individual over and over.

Do you think your child is having problems with peer conflict, either as the victim or the aggressor? Visit [www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/symptoms-of-peer-conflict-problems.pdf](http://www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/symptoms-of-peer-conflict-problems.pdf) for a list of signs that your child is being victimized or having problems with chronic aggression. Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

## **9. Why are bystanders important in peer conflict situations?**

Bullying and peer victimization rarely involve just an aggressor and a victim. There are usually bystanders that can contribute to either the solution or the problem. So what's the difference between a helpful and hurtful bystander?

Helpful Bystanders:

- Seek help by reporting the incident to an adult
- Rally support from peers to stand up to an aggressive child
- Directly intervene by discouraging the behaviours of the aggressive child, defending the victim or redirecting the situation

Hurtful Bystanders:

- Do nothing during or after a peer victimization incident
- Instigate peer victimization by prodding others to engage in it
- Join in by laughing, cheering or making comments to escalate the incident

Start a conversation with your child about bystanders by taking the Bystander Quiz at [www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/bystander-quiz.pdf](http://www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/bystander-quiz.pdf). Discuss ways he or she could make a difference as a helpful bystander, reminding him or her that you will always offer support when he or she chooses to seek help.

Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/).

## **10. My child is being victimized: when and how should I seek help?**

Seeking help isn't just for kids. Parents sometimes need support when their children experience bullying or peer victimization. So how do you know it's time to seek help? Ask yourself the following:

- Could someone get hurt?
- Does the situation make you feel afraid or uneasy?
- Is this something you can't handle alone?
- Did your attempts to deal with the situation not work?

If you answer yes to any of the above, it's a good idea to seek help. Check out Your Pyramid of Support at [www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/pyramid-of-support.pdf](http://www.witsprogram.ca/pdfs/families/pyramid-of-support.pdf) for suggested sources of support. Every situation is different and every source of support offers different kinds of assistance, so you may need to seek help from multiple places before getting the appropriate assistance. Remember: if at first you don't get the help you need, keep seeking help until you do!

Want to know more? Explore the Using WITS with Your Child section of the WITS website at [www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/](http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/using-wits-with-your-children/)