

What Every Parent Should Know about Bullying

What is Bullying?

Bullying harms children and teens. It can make them feel bad about themselves and can hurt their relationships with others. Bullying can also interfere with learning.

Why do some children bully others?

Children may bully others for lots of reasons. These reasons include:

- Wanting to be in control or feel powerful.
- Wanting attention from others.
- Poor adult supervision.
- Adult acceptance of bullying.
- Prejudice.

What can parents do when bullying occurs?

Bullying is not something kids need to endure. Putting up with bullying does not make a child stronger. It makes them more at risk for emotional stress. Students that bully are also at risk. They are more likely to get in trouble, participate in risky activities and have problems as adults. Fortunately, there are many things that parents can do to address bullying.

If you suspect a child is being bullied, **DO NOT:**

- **Blame the child.**
- **Use the word tattletale.**
- **Tell the child to ignore it.**
- **Tell the child to retaliate.**
- **Expect the child to work it out alone.**
- **Allow mediation if the child is reluctant.**
- **Demand apologies.**

Tips for parents whose children are bullied:

Talk with your child.

Explain what bullying is and that it is wrong. Let your child know that you will be there to help him or her, and always follow through.

Work with teachers, counselors and principals.

Check your district's anti-bullying policy. Review your school's policy and talk to your child's teacher, guidance counselor or principal if you have questions about it.

Bystanders Matter

Bystanders are the people that see bullying when it happens.

Bystanders may encourage bullying to continue if they participate, laugh or ignore bullying.

Children should be taught about the role of bystanders in bullying. They should discuss and practice helpful responses.

Range of Bystander Actions



Identify an adult at school who your child trusts.

This adult can help your child feel safe at school by listening to them. If the adult is willing, they may play an active role in checking in with your child and following up with specific concerns.

Document and report continued bullying.

Keep detailed records about the bullying so you are able to tell the school exactly what happened. If bullying continues, write a letter to the school to report the bullying and ask for a response.

Help your child develop new friendships.

Try to connect your child to other children who are positive influences or have things in common with your child.

Help your child learn how to react to bullying, such as:

- Speak up when bullying behavior happens.
- Try not to cry or lash out in front of the child who bullies.
- Walk away.
- Tell a trusted adult.

Work with other parents.

It takes a group effort to stop bullying behaviors. Work with other parents to respond to bullying if it is happening in your neighborhood after school hours.

Seek help if your child talks about suicide or seems unusually upset.

If your child is actively engaging in self-harm behavior and actions, **call 911**. If your child is discussing suicide, **call 988** to be connected to a crisis counselor.

If your child experiences cyberbullying, he or she should:

- Not respond.
- Block the sender.
- Save or print harmful messages.
- Report cyberbullying to a trusted adult.
- Contact websites or internet service companies to ask that the harmful messages be removed.

Note: The information in this publication was updated in 2023 by Center for Safe Schools, to reflect current best practices and research. This publication was originally created in partnership with Highmark Foundation, in 2017, as a companion piece to the Pennsylvania Bullying Prevention Toolkit. All current information and bullying prevention toolkit resources are now on CenterForSafeSchools.org.

Helpful hints to kids, from kids who have been bullied:

- **Tell an adult at home.**
- **Tell a friend.**
- **Make a joke about it instead of reacting with emotion.**
- **Tell an adult at school.**
- **Remind yourself that it was not your fault.**

Source: www.youthvoiceproject.com

Authorities may be able to help in some cases of cyberbullying. If the cyberbullying is interfering with learning, report it to the school. If you think a crime was committed (e.g., serious threats of harm), contact the police.

While it is helpful for parents to set limits for using cell phones and computers, taking these items away from children altogether is not recommended. This may actually cause children to hide their online lives from their parents.

Tips for parents whose children bully others:

Discuss bullying and set clear rules at home.

Let children know that bullying is wrong and that it will not be accepted.

Provide consequences for bullying behaviors.

This may include time out, loss of TV, cell phone or computer time, grounding, etc.

Work with school staff.

Learn about the school's bullying policies and meet with school staff. Get reports on how your child is doing.

Model the behavior you expect from your child.

Show respect to others. Solve problems without aggression. Set a good example for your child.

Visit CenterForSafeSchools.org for bullying prevention resources and services.

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