

Bullying: It's Not OK

Bullying is when one child picks on another child again and again. Often children who are being bullied are either weaker or smaller, are shy, and generally feel helpless.

Facts About Bullying

- Both girls and boys can be bullies.
- Bullies often target children who cry, get mad, or easily give in to them.
- There are 3 types of bullying.
 - Physical—hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, punching
 - Verbal—threatening, taunting, teasing, hate speech
 - Social—excluding victims from activities or starting rumors about them

Bullying Happens:

- **At school**—in the halls, at lunch, or in the bathroom, when teachers are not there to see what is going on.
- **When adults are not watching**—going to and from school, on the playground, or in the neighborhood.
- **Through e-mail, texts or instant messaging**—rumors are spread or nasty notes are sent.

Bullying is Different from Fighting or Teasing:

- A bully has power over another child.
- Bullies try to control other children by scaring them.
- Being picked on over and over can make your child a victim.
- Bullying usually happens when other children are watching.

Talk With Your Child About Bullying

Even if you don't think your child is bullied, a bully, or a bystander, you will be helping to protect your child just by asking these questions:

- "How are things going at school?"
- "What do you think of the other kids in your class?"
- "Does anyone get picked on or bullied?"

When your child is bullied, talk with your child about how to stay safe. Bullies generally pick on smaller or weaker children. If there is a fight, and the bully "wins," this will only make matters worse for your child.

Help your child learn how to respond

Let's talk about what you can do and say if this happens again.

Teach your child how to:

- Look the bully in the eye.
- Stand tall and stay calm in a difficult situation.
- Walk away.

Teach your child how to say in a firm voice:

- "I don't like what you are doing."
- "Please do NOT talk to me like that."
- "Why would you say that?"

Just telling your child to do and say these things is not enough. For many children, these skills do not come naturally. It is like learning a new language—lots of practice is needed. Practice so that, in the heat of the moment, these skills will come to your child naturally.

Teach your child when and how to ask for help. Your child should not be afraid to ask an adult for help when bullying happens. Since some children are embarrassed about being bullied, parents need to let their children know that being bullied is not their fault.

Encourage your child to make friends with other children. There are many adult-supervised groups, in and out of school, that your child can join. Invite your child's friends over to your home. Children who are loners are more likely to get picked on.

Support activities that interest your child. By participating in activities such as team sports, music groups, or social clubs, your child will develop new abilities and social skills. When children feel good about how they relate to others, they are less likely to be picked on.

Alert school officials to the problems and work with them on solutions.

- Since bullying often occurs outside the classroom, talk with the principal, guidance counselor and your child's teachers. When school officials know about bullying, they can help stop it.
- Write down and report all bullying to your child's school. By knowing when and where the bullying occurs, you and your child can better plan what to do if it happens again.
- Some children who are bullied will fear going to school, have difficulty paying attention at school, or develop symptoms like headaches or stomach pains.

When Your Child is the Bully

If you know that your child is bullying others, take it very seriously. Now is the time when you can change your child's behavior.

In the long run, bullies continue to have problems. These problems often get worse. If the bullying behavior is allowed to continue, then when these children become adults, they are much less successful in their work and family lives and may even get in trouble with the law.

Set firm and consistent limits on your child's aggressive behavior. Be sure your child knows that bullying is never OK.

Be a positive role model. Children need to develop new and constructive strategies for getting what they want.

Show children that they can get what they want without teasing, threatening, or hurting someone. All children can learn to treat others with respect.

Use effective, nonphysical discipline, such as loss of privileges. When your child needs discipline, explain why the behavior was wrong and how your child can change it.

Help your child understand how bullying hurts other children. Give real examples of the good and bad results of your child's actions.

Develop practical solutions with others. Together with the school principal, teachers, counselors, and parents of the children your child has bullied, find positive ways to stop the bullying.