

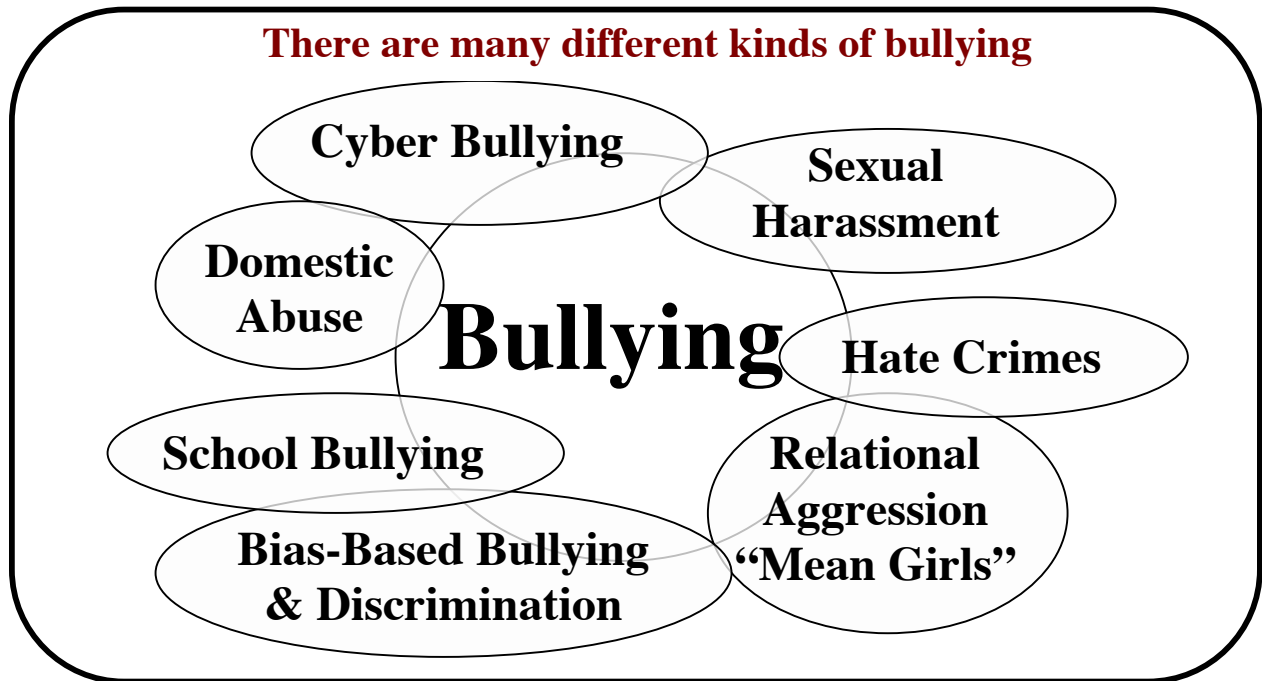
BULLYING 101

What It Is & What to Do about It

By Dr. Paula C. Rodríguez Rust, www.SpectrumDiversity.org

What is Bullying?

There are many different kinds of bullying



How Is Bullying Different from Other Conflicts?

Bullying is different from "normal conflict"

- Bullying involves a power dynamic; power used to hurt others
- Bullying involves three types of people:
 - The Bully/Aggressor/Perpetrator/Offender
 - The Victim/Target
 - Bystanders/Witnesses
- Can be Written, Spoken, Electronic, or Physical

Where does Bullying Occur?

- **In the Workplace.** Bullying at work creates an unpleasant work environment, impacts the families and friends of victims, reduces productivity. When it involves sexual harassment or bias motivation, it creates a "hostile environment" which is discriminatory and illegal.
- **At Home.** Bullying at home includes domestic abuse between adults, abusive sibling behavior, abusive parenting techniques.
- **In School & Other Youth Programs.** Bullying among youth today is not like the playground bullying that most parents remember from their own school days. Schools today are faced with a very different problem.
- **Our Community.** In any public place, especially places where diverse individuals come together, there is a potential for offensive behavior. Sometimes offensive behavior is unintentional, but can be harmful nevertheless.

How Serious is Bullying?

Ask the Victims!

- **Small offenses lead to larger problems;** if we don't take the "little stuff" seriously, and if we don't take bullying seriously among very young children, small problems lead to larger problems.
- **Retaliatory violence.** Remember the Columbine Tragedy.
- **For victims:** Fear, Long-term anxiety and depression, Suicide
- **For bullies:** Youthful bullying sets the stage for adult bullying, including domestic violence, increased risk of criminal convictions, and workplace harassment.
- **The Effects Are Real:** Ryan Patrick Halligan, Victoria Lindsay, Lawrence King, Carl Walker-Hoover.

Cyber Bullying

Real Bullying in a Virtual World

Some Types of Cyber Bullying are:

- Sending nasty or threatening e-mails, IMs, Wall comments, Pokes, Tweets, etc.
- Spreading rumors
- Betrayal/ Revealing Confidential Information
- Photos and Video
- Impersonation
- Griefing

Parents Beware:

- Even if your son or daughter does not have a cell phone, or internet access from home, s/he can still be cyber bullied. The only way to protect young people is through education and monitoring. Teach cyber safety. Then teach it again.
- Your kids might know more about cyber technology and cyber communication than you do. Who set up your electronic equipment at home?
- Do you know. . .
 - That your child can get a cell phone number online without having a cell phone?
 - That gaming is visual "chat" and can involve online communication with strangers even if your wireless network is secure and you haven't given your child the "key"?
 - Do you know how to read TXT and Leet Speak? What do "POS," "9," and "A/S/L/P" mean?
 - Do you know if your child is logging their online chats and IMs?
 - Do you know who is on your child's buddy lists and friend lists?
 - Do you know all of your child's online accounts and passwords?
 - Do you know how to record and check browser and form-fill histories?
 - Do you know which gaming, chat, and networking sites are monitored (Club Penguin? Facebook? YouTube? Runescape? IRCnet?)

Schools

Although schools are required to address cyber bullying, most cyber bullying occurs outside school hours & off school grounds, where schools' authority is very limited. Schools can educate students about cyber bullying, but need parents to be informed, as well.

Many Forms of Cyber Bullying Violate Criminal and Civil Laws

If you think that a law has been violated, save the evidence and contact law enforcement.

Relational Aggression a.k.a. Relational Bullying “Mean Girls”

Definition:

Relational bullying involves the **manipulation of social relationships** with the intent or effect of causing harm--usually **psychological and/or emotional harm**--to another. It includes ignoring, isolating, and excluding, is accomplished by means of gossip, rumors, teasing, alienating, censure, etc., and often involves the use of deception. It is often done by a group of friends to an outsider, to a former member, or to a current member to ensure loyalty to the group or to the group's social leader (stereotypically, the “queen bee”). Female-typical, but also found among boys and with marked similarities to gang behavior.

Bias-Based Bullying

Bias-based bullying ranges from hate crimes to offensive jokes, stereotypes, and insensitive comments.

Definition:

Bias-based bullying is any form of bullying that targets someone, or makes someone feel threatened or uncomfortable because of *who they are*, for example, because of their:

- Race, Color, or Ethnicity
- Religion
- Culture
- Ancestry or National Origin
- Sex/Gender, Gender Identity, or Gender Expression
- Mental or Physical Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Family or Marital Status
- Any other distinguishing characteristic

Some of these characteristics are named in the Law Against Discrimination, and many others are also covered under the school anti-bullying law in Title 18A.

There are no “protected classes;” everyone is legally protected from bias-based behavior, and, in certain circumstances, from bias based on “perceived” as well as “actual” characteristics.

What is a “Hostile Environment”?

A “hostile environment” at work or at school is an environment in which someone is made to feel physically or psychologically unsafe, or is harmed, because of others’ bias-based bullying and harassment. A hostile environment is a form of discrimination under the Law Against Discrimination because it differentially prevents individuals from working or learning, based on others’ bias-based harassment of them.

What Can We Do As a Community?

Speak UP!

The Importance of Bystanders. Remember Kitty Genovese

Get to Know Each Other: Replace Stereotypes with Knowledge and Understanding

As human beings, we are uncomfortable with things we don't understand. This leads to fear, and prejudice. We tend to avoid people we don't understand, so we often prevent ourselves from becoming more knowledgeable and comfortable with different types of people.

Sometimes we offend each other without intending to. Getting to know people who are different from ourselves takes a bit of extra work, because sometimes there are real differences between us, and sometimes there are histories of animosity. But the more we get to know each other as individuals, across our differences, the more we can break down the prejudices we have inherited from the past.

What Can Schools Do to Address Bullying?

Make sure school rules against bullying are clear and applied fairly. Every school is required to have an anti-bullying policy.

Use best practices to address bullying incidents, and prevent bullying by creating a school environment in which all students feel safe and respected.

What Can Parents Do to Address Bullying?

- Be familiar with your school district's anti-bullying policy and code of discipline.
- Teach your child what bullying is, and how to avoid doing it to others
- Talk to your child regularly about what is happening in school, so that if your child does become the victim of a bully, you find out about it as soon as possible.
- Tell your child what to do if s/he is bullied (walk away, tell an adult, use diffusing humor, find a friend, ignore it, etc.) Different strategies work in different situations.
- Teach your child what to do if s/he sees someone else being bullied (stand up for them, speak up, call them away, tell an adult, etc.)
- Teach your child about cultural diversity, and about mental and physical disabilities.
- Teach the difference between Respect and Agreement; you don't have to agree with someone to show respect for them as a person.
- Be a role model; let your child see you intervening on behalf of others, showing interest in different types of people, and showing respect even in disagreement.
- Make comments when you hear offensive language, including sexually inappropriate language, offensive jokes, put-downs like "retard" or "stupid," racial epithets, etc. Teach that the phrase "so gay" or "that's so gay" is offensive. "I'm only joking" or "I didn't say it to offend anyone" are not excuses for offensive language.
- If you find out about an incident at school, report it to appropriate school personnel.
- Recognize what kinds of bullying the school can address, what the school is able to do about bullying, as well as what the school cannot do. For example, school authority to address cyber bullying when it occurs off school grounds is limited. Also, discipline is confidential; school officials can't tell you what was done in response to a given incident.
- Know what the school is teaching students about bullying, so that you don't ask your child to behave in ways that violate school policy or procedure. For example, telling your child to "hit back next time" puts your child in a difficult position.
- Read the Tips Sheets on Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying. Use the resource lists provided at this workshop to learn more.

The New Students' Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights: What Does It Mean for You and Your Child?

Recently enacted legislation has strengthened New Jersey's laws against school bullying. Schools are legally mandated to establish programs that are designed to create a school climate that is physically and emotionally safe for all students and that discourages school bullying. School personnel are also now required to follow a set of very detailed procedures if an incident of bullying occurs within school jurisdiction. It is important for parents to understand the requirements of this new law, and for schools and parents to work together to ensure the safety of students.

Please see page 4 of the Parent Document "Bullying 101" for tips about how to help your child avoid bullying, and how to work with your school to address bullying effectively. The additional tips below provide some further guidance about issues that might arise under the new law.

Understand what bullying is and take bullying seriously, but use the word "bullying" carefully and responsibly. There are many kinds of hurtful behaviors; bullying is a very specific kind of hurtful behavior. Bullying is different from normal conflict, and different from age-related social mistakes; each of these types of behavior requires an appropriate and effective response. The improper use of the word "bullying" for situations that are not actually bullying might, under the current law, compel the school to respond in inappropriate and possibly counterproductive ways. To help keep all students safe, everyone in the school community—school personnel, students, and parents—should know what bullying is, and how to distinguish it from other hurtful behaviors.

Keep in mind that school personnel must respect the confidentiality of all students. School personnel are prohibited by law from providing you with information about a student who is not your own child. When a child is involved in a hurtful situation, it is common for parents to ask how school personnel are responding to the situation, but if that response involves disciplining another child, that information cannot be given to you. Also, keep in mind that whereas discipline must be consistent and fair for all students, discipline must also take other factors—such as student disabilities—into account, and be designed to produce an *effective* result. Keep in mind that school personnel might have information about a situation that they cannot share with you, but which must be taken into account in administering discipline. If the situation is not resolved, inform school personnel that their efforts to address the situation have not been successful, so that a different approach can be used.

The school's jurisdiction is limited. Although the school may address off-campus incidents if those incidents cause substantial disruption or infringe on students' rights within the school, the school's authority to respond to such events is limited. If your child has been hurt by off-campus behavior, you may inform the school, but some cases are properly handled by law enforcement, and not by school personnel.

"Tough on bullying" means appropriate, effective responses to each incident or situation. The goal is to address bullying and other forms of hurtful behavior effectively, so that they are not repeated. More importantly, however, the focus of anti-bullying efforts is to prevent bullying incidents from happening the first time by creating a safe and respectful school environment for all.

If your child wants to talk to you about bullying, listen, and help her/him choose constructive and effective responses. Know what your school is doing to prevent bullying, so that you can provide advice that will not put your child in a difficult position in school or violate school rules. Young people who experience true bullying should not be told to "develop a thicker skin," to "laugh it off," or to "hit back next time." If you are aware of a situation in school, tell the appropriate teacher, administrator, or other school staff member, so that the school can use appropriate and legal responses to address the situation, and encourage your son/daughter to tell an adult at school as well, and to stand up for others.

Respect for all means *respect for all*. All students have the right to feel safe and welcome in school, and it is the school's responsibility to prepare all students for a diverse workplace. Language that derogates or insults anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or any other distinguishing characteristic, cannot be tolerated in school. It is important for students to learn to show respect for others, even those with whom they might disagree or whom they might dislike, to learn to express disagreement or disapproval using respectful language, and to help create an environment in which all their peers can feel safe. Toward this end, school personnel will take seriously the use of any language that derogates others, including put-downs such as "retard," "loser," or the use of "gay" as an insult ("that's so gay"/"you're so gay"), and students who use such language will be reminded that disrespectful language and behavior are inappropriate in the school environment.

School personnel are required to report any incident that might be bullying to appropriate authorities within the school, and the school is required to report any incident determined to be bullying to authorities at the district and state levels. If your child is named in a report of suspected bullying, this does not necessarily mean that your child has been "reported for bullying." School officials will use these reports to monitor the school climate, and to detect patterns in student behavior that might need to be addressed at the classroom, school-wide, or district-wide level. If your child is involved in a suspected bullying incident, school personnel will endeavor to resolve the situation using effective and appropriate methods to protect all students involved.

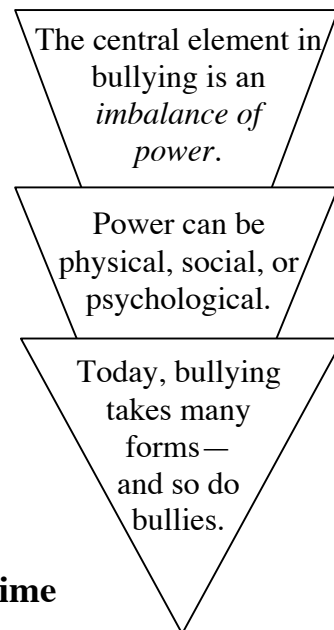


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What is Bullying?

An Applied Definition

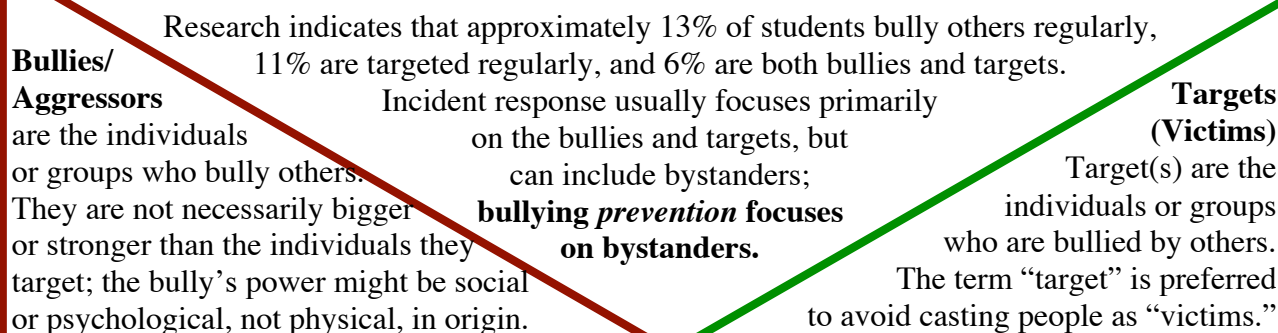
- Gestures or written, verbal, electronic, or physical acts,
- That a reasonable person should know will
- Cause physical and/or emotional harm or fear of harm
- To one or more targets or their property,
- Or insults or demeans any student or group of students
- Usually unprovoked, and
- Involving an imbalance of physical, psychological, and/or social power (perpetrator over target/victim)
- Occurring usually, but not necessarily, repeatedly and over time



The legal definition of reportable bullying in New Jersey’s “Students’ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” differs from this applied definition. School personnel are encouraged to take all hurtful behavior by students seriously, regardless of whether it meets the legal definition of bullying. Some forms of bullying behavior are also covered under criminal and civil law. Taken from “Bullying Prevention and Response: Creating Safe Schools for All,” a professional development program by Dr. Paula C. Rodríguez Rust

The Bully Triangle

Bystanders/Witnesses are students and adult school personnel who witness bullying. Most students are not regularly involved in bullying as either bullies or targets; most do, however, witness bullying or are otherwise aware of bullying in their school environment. The attitudes and responses of bystanders—students and adults alike—to bullying determine school climate with regard to bullying. Activating bystanders to become *upstanders* who will speak up against bullying and intervene when it occurs is a *necessary* component of effective bullying *prevention* efforts in schools.



The concept of the bully triangle is in common use among anti-bullying prevention experts. See Dan Olweus’ work for an original source. This particular representation and wording was designed by Dr. Paula C. Rodríguez Rust, www.spectrumdiversity.org

Types of Bullying

Direct Verbal Aggression

Name-calling, malicious teasing, belittling, insulting, demeaning, humiliating, intimidating, criticizing, undermining, patronizing, tormenting, blaming, and threatening

Indirect Verbal Aggression

Including making cruel comments behind someone's back that they are intended to overhear, making things up to get someone in trouble, spreading nasty rumors

Written Aggression

Including slam books, letters, graffiti and note-passing

Physical Aggression

Harm to another's body, including hitting, pushing, shoving, biting, scratching, pinching, spitting at, choking, punching, kicking, tripping, picking fights, physical abuse or cruelty, physical contact or assault, assault with a weapon, hazing

Property Damage

Taking, defacing, damaging or destroying personal property, stealing or extorting money, blackmailing (e.g., assistance with homework, money, possessions)

Psychological / Emotional Aggression

Harm to another person's confidence and self-worth; harassing phone calls, insults, starting and spreading rumors, gossiping, silent treatment, stalking, subjecting to degrading behavior, coercion, making faces, giving dirty looks or obscene gestures, picking quarrels, etc.

Social / Relational Aggression / Social Exclusion

Harm to another person's social well-being; deliberately isolating or excluding from a group or social activities, manipulating and undermining friendships, ostracizing, arranging public humiliation, and alienation

Bias-Based Bullying

Name-calling, slurs, taunts or jokes, graffiti and gestures when based on actual or perceived factors including race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, disability status, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Bias-based bullying is a bias incident and might even be a crime covered by New Jersey's Bias Intimidation Act.

Sexual Harassment

Comments or actions of a sexual nature that are unwelcome and make the recipient feel uncomfortable

Cyberbullying

Digital bullying using computers or mobile gadgetry, including mobile phone calls and messages, text messaging, e-mail, instant messaging, chat boards, message boards, social networking sites and blogs, polling sites, and malicious web sites.

Hazing

Any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. (Alfred/NCAA Survey of College Athletes)

Source: Adapted by Karen Positan and Paula C. Rodríguez Rust, from Union County Prosecutor's Office, "Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation" booklet



How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children

Parents are often reluctant to report to educators that their child is being bullied. Why?

- Parents may be unsure how best to help their child and may be afraid that they will make the situation worse if they report bullying.
- They may be embarrassed that their child is being bullied.
- Sometimes, children ask parents not to report bullying.
- Parents may fear being seen as overprotective.
- They may believe that it is up to their child to stop the bullying.

Children and youth often need help to stop bullying. Parents should never be afraid to call the school to report that their child is being bullied and ask for help to stop the bullying. Students should not have to tolerate bullying at school any more than adults would tolerate similar treatment at work.

The School's Responsibility

All children are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by students and staff at school. Educators have a duty to ensure that students have a safe learning environment. Fortunately, most educators take their responsibilities to stop bullying very seriously. Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place. Ask for a copy of your school's policy or check the student handbook to see if your school has policies that will help resolve the problem.

Working with Your Child's School to Solve the Problem

If your child tells you that he or she has been bullied or if you suspect your child is being bullied, what can you do?

- Keep a written record of all bullying incidents that your child reports to you. Record the names of the children involved, where and when the bullying occurred, and what happened.
- Immediately ask to meet with your child's classroom teacher and explain your concerns in a friendly, non-confrontational way.
- Ask the teacher about his or her observations:
 - Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
 - How is your child getting along with others in class?
 - Has he or she noticed that your child is being isolated, excluded from playground or other activities with students?
- Ask the teacher what he or she intends to do to investigate and/or help to stop the bullying.
- If you are concerned about how your child is coping with the stress of being bullied, ask to speak with your child's guidance counselor or other school-based mental health professional.
- Set up a follow-up appointment with the teacher to discuss progress.
- If there is no improvement after reporting bullying to your child's teacher, speak with the school principal.
- Keep notes from your meetings with teachers and administrators.

What Can You Expect Staff at Your Child's School to Do About Bullying?

- School staff should investigate the bullying immediately. After investigating your concerns, they should inform you as to what they plan to do about it.
- School staff should never have a joint meeting with your child and the child who bullied them.

This could be very embarrassing and intimidating for your child. They should not refer the children to mediation. Bullying is a form of victimization, not a conflict. It should not be mediated.

- Staff should meet with your child to learn about the bullying that he or she has experienced. They should develop a plan to help keep your child safe, and they should be watchful for any future bullying. Educators should assure your child that they will work hard to see that the bullying stops.
- School personnel should meet with the child(ren) who are suspected of taking part in the bullying. They should make it clear to these children that bullying is against school rules and will not be tolerated. If appropriate, they should administer consequences (such as a loss of recess privileges) to the child(ren) who bullied and notify their parents.
- Educators and parents should be careful not to “blame the victim.” Bullying is never the “fault” of the child who is bullied, and he or she shouldn’t be made to feel responsible for being bullied. However, if your child is impulsive or lacks social skills, talk with a school counselor. It is possible that some students who are bullying your child are reacting out of annoyance. This doesn’t make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why they are being bullied.
- Give the school reasonable time to investigate and hear both sides of the story. Sometimes, a child who bullies will make false allegations about a child as an additional way of bullying them. Educators should not jump to hasty conclusions and assign blame without a thorough assessment of the situation. This entire process should not take longer than a week.
- If bullying continues, write to the school’s principal or administrator, and include evidence from your notes to back up your complaint. Putting a complaint in writing is important so there is a record of your concern.
- Most administrators and staff are responsive to bullying concerns. However, if your school administrator is unable or unwilling to stop the bullying, write to your school superintendent for assistance.
- Be persistent. You may need to keep speaking out about bullying that your child experiences.

When Should Law Enforcement Become Involved?

- Consider involving the police if another child has physically assaulted your child or is seriously threatening him or her with bodily injury.
- If the problem persists or escalates, and your school officials are unable to stop the bullying, you may want to consult an attorney.
- Ask the school to keep a written record of all offenses committed against your child in case law enforcement officials need the information for further complaints.

Bullying Prevention

- Bullying happens in every school, but with an effective bullying prevention program, bullying can be reduced. If your child is being bullied, chances are that there are other children in the school who are having similar experiences.
- If your school does not have official anti-bullying policies, or an active bullying prevention program, work with other parents and your school officials to develop one.



Warning Signs that a Child is Being Bullied

What is Bullying?

Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Typically, it is repeated over time. Bullying can take many forms, such as: hitting and/or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation through gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by phone or computer email (cyber bullying).* Many children, particularly boys and older children, do not tell their parents or adults at school about being bullied. It is important that adults are vigilant to possible signs of bullying.

Warning Signs

Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches
- Has few, if any friends, with whom he or she spends time
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers (such as clubs)
- Takes a long, "illogical" route when walking to or from school
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school
- Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomach aches, or other physical ailments
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams
- Experiences a loss of appetite
- Appears anxious and/or suffers from low self-esteem

What to Do If You Suspect That Your Child Is Being Bullied?

If your child shows any of these signs, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is being bullied, but it is a possibility worth exploring. What should you do? Talk with your child *and* talk with staff at school to learn more.

1. Talk with your child. Tell your child that you are concerned about him or her and that you'd like to help. Here are some questions that can get the discussion going:

Some direct questions:

- "I'm worried about you. Are there any kids at school who may be picking on you or bullying you?"
- "Are there any kids at school who tease you in a mean way?"
- "Are there any kids at school who leave you out or exclude you on purpose?"

Some more subtle questions:

- "Do you have any special friends at school this year? Who are they? Who do you hang out with?"
- "Who do you sit with at lunch/on the bus?"
- "Are there any kids at school who you really don't like? Why don't you like them? Do they ever pick on you or leave you out of things?"

*Children with disabilities may be at a higher risk of being bullied than other children.

2. Talk with staff at your child's school. Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child's teacher. He or she will probably be in the best position to understand the relationships between your child and other peers at school. Share your concerns about your child and ask the teacher such questions as:

- "How does my child get along with other students in his/her class?"
- "With whom does he/she spend free time?"
- "Have you noticed or have you ever suspected that my child is bullied by other students?" Give examples of some ways that children can be bullied to be sure that the teacher is not focusing only on one kind of bullying (such as physical bullying).

Ask the teacher to talk with other adults who interact with your child at school (such as the music teacher, physical education teacher or bus driver) to see if they have observed students bullying your child.

If you are not comfortable talking with your child's teacher, or if you are not satisfied with the conversation, make an appointment to meet with your child's guidance counselor and/or principal to discuss your concerns.

If you obtain information from your child or from staff at your child's school that lead you to believe that he or she is being bullied, take quick action. Bullying can have serious effects on children.

If, after talking with your child and staff at his or her school, you *don't* suspect that your child is being bullied, stay vigilant to other possible problems that your child may be having. A number of the warning signs above (e.g., depression, social isolation, loss of interest in school) may be signs of other serious problems. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child's school.

References

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: what we know and what we can do*. NY: Blackwell.

Olweus, D., Limber, S., & Mihalic, S. (1999). *The Bullying Prevention Program: Blueprints for Violence Prevention*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.



What to Do if Your Child is Being Bullied

What is Bullying?

Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. A child who is being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying is repeated over time. Bullying can take many forms such as: hitting or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation through gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by phone or computer email (cyber bullying).

Effects of Bullying:

Bullying can have serious consequences. Children and youth who are bullied are more likely than other children to:

- Be depressed, lonely, anxious
- Have low self-esteem
- Be absent from school
- Feel sick
- Think about suicide

Reporting Bullying to Parents

Children frequently do not tell their parents that they are being bullied because they are embarrassed, ashamed, frightened of the children who are bullying them, or afraid of being seen as a “tattler”. If your child tells you about being bullied, it has taken a lot of courage to do so. Your child needs your help to stop the bullying.

What to Do If Your Child Is Being Bullied

1. First, focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying.

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying. What the child may “hear” is that you are going to

ignore it. If the child were able to simply ignore it, he or she likely would not have told you about it. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.

- Don't blame the child who is being bullied. Don't assume that your child did something to provoke the bullying. Don't say, “What did you do to aggravate the other child?”
- Listen carefully to what your child tells you about the bullying. Ask him/her to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics being used, when and where the bullying happened. Can your child name other children or adults who may have witnessed the bullying?
- Empathize with your child. Tell him/her that bullying is wrong, not their fault, and that you are glad he/she had the courage to tell you about it. Ask your child what he/she thinks can be done to help. Assure him/her that you will think about what needs to be done and you will let him/her know what you are going to do.
- If you disagree with how your child handled the bullying situation, don't criticize him/her.
- Do not encourage physical retaliation (“Just hit them back”) as a solution. Hitting another student is not likely to end the problem, and it could get your child suspended or expelled, or escalate the situation.

- Check your emotions. A parent’s protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, a parent is wise to step back and consider the next steps carefully.
- 2. Contact your child’s teacher and/or principal*
- Parents are often reluctant to report bullying to school officials, but bullying may not stop without the help of adults.
 - Keep your emotions in check. Give factual information about your child’s experience of being bullied—who, what, when, where, and how.
 - Emphasize that you want to work with the staff at school to find a solution to stop the bullying, for the sake of your child as well as other students.
 - Do not contact the parents of the student(s) who bullied your child. This is usually a parent’s first response, but sometimes it makes matters worse. School officials should contact the parents of the child or children who did the bullying.
 - Expect the bullying to stop. Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see if the bullying has stopped. If the bullying persists, contact school authorities again.
- 3. Help your child to become more resilient to bullying*
- Help to develop talents or positive attributes of your child. Suggest and facilitate music, athletics, and art activities. Doing so may help your child be more confident among his/her peers.
 - Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in his class. Your child’s teacher may be able to suggest students with whom your child can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on work.
 - Help your child meet new friends outside of the school environment. A new environment can provide a “fresh start” for a child who has been bullied repeatedly.
 - Teach your child safety strategies. Teach him/her how to seek help from an adult when he/she feels threatened by a bully. Talk about whom he/she should go to for help and role play what he/she should say. Assure your child that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.
 - Ask yourself: Is my child being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills? If your child is hyperactive, impulsive or overly talkative, the child who bullies may be reacting out of annoyance. This doesn’t make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your child is being bullied. If your child easily irritates people, seek help from a counselor so that your child can better learn the informal social rules of his/her peer group.
 - Home is where the heart is. Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment where he/she can take shelter, physically and emotionally. Always keep the lines of communication with your child open.

References

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