

What Parents Can Do (about bullying)

Advice for Parents and Adults About How To Deal With Bullying

A big, tough kid stops a smaller kid on his way to school and threatens to hurt him unless he hands over his homework. The popular girls at school won't let anyone sit at their lunch table except their friends. These two bullying scenarios and others happen more often than most adults realize. Seventy-four percent of eight to 11-year-olds say teasing and bullying happen at their school. But what exactly is bullying?

Bullying is

- Fighting, threatening, name-calling, teasing, or excluding someone repeatedly and over time
- An imbalance of power, such as size or popularity
- Physical, social, and emotional harm
- Hurting another person to get something

Many parents don't think that bullying is as big a problem as bringing a weapon to school or drug use but its effects can be severe and long lasting. Every day, nearly 160,000 children miss school because they are scared of bullying, according to the National Education Association. Bullying doesn't only negatively affect its victims, but also the bullies themselves.

Kids who are bullied are more likely to

- Do poorly in school
- Have low self-esteem
- Be depressed
- Turn to violent behavior to protect themselves or get revenge on their bullies

Kids who bully are more likely to

- Do poorly in school
- Smoke and drink alcohol
- Commit crimes in the future

Parents can play a central role to preventing bullying and stopping it when it happens. Here are a few things you can do.

- Teach kids to solve problems without using violence and praise them when they do.
- Give children positive feedback when they behave well to help their build self-esteem. Help give them the self-confidence to stand up for what they believe in.
- Ask your children about their day and listen to them talk about school, social events, their classmates, and any problems they have.
- Take bullying seriously. Many kids are embarrassed to say they have been bullied. You may only have one chance to step in and help.

- If you see any bullying, stop it right away, even if your child is the one doing the bullying.
- Encourage your child to help others who need it.
- Don't bully your children or bully others in front of them. Many times kids who are bullied at home react by bullying other kids. If your children see you hit, ridicule, or gossip about someone else, they are also more likely to do so themselves.
- Support bully prevention programs in your child's school. If your school doesn't have one, consider starting one with other parents, teachers, and concerned adults.

For more information on bullying, read the articles below and visit the Health Resources and Services Administration's [Stop Bullying Now! Campaign](#).

When Your Child Is Bullied

Many kids are embarrassed to be bullied and may not tell their parents or another adult right away. If your child comes to you and asks for help with a bully, take it seriously. Many times, if kids aren't taken seriously the first time they ask for help, they don't ask again.

Even if your child doesn't turn to you for help, you can watch for these warning signs that he or she is being bullied. Kids who are bullied often experience

- Withdrawal
- A loss of friends
- A drop in grades
- A loss of interest in activities he or she previously enjoyed
- Torn clothing
- Bruises
- A need for extra money or supplies

If you think your child is being bullied or if your child has told you that he or she is being bullied, you can help. Parents are often the best resource to build a child's self-confidence and teach him or her how to best solve problems. Here are a few ways you can help

- Talk to your child's teacher about it instead of confronting the bully's parents. If the teacher doesn't act to stop the bullying, talk to the principal.
- Teach your child nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, like walking away, playing with friends, or talking it out.
- Help your child act with self-confidence. With him or her, practice walking upright, looking people in the eye, and speaking clearly.
- Don't encourage your child to fight. This could lead to him or her getting hurt, getting in trouble, and beginning more serious problems with the bully.
- Involve your child in activities outside of school. This way he or she can make friends in a different social circle.

Some children seem to be bullied all the time, while others rarely get picked on. Why do some kids seem to attract all of the bullies? Kids who are bullied often

- Are different from other kids, whether by size, race, sexually, or have different interests
- Seem weak, either physically or emotionally
- Are insecure
- Want approval
- Won't tell on their bullies

When Your Child Is a Bully

It's hard for any parent to believe that their child is a bully, but sometimes it happens. But just because your child bullies doesn't mean that he or she will bully forever. Parents are one of the best resources to help their child stop bullying and start interacting positively with their classmates.

Your child may bully if, he or she

- Lacks empathy and doesn't sympathize with others
- Values aggression
- Likes to be in charge
- Is an arrogant winner and a sore loser
- Often fights often with brothers and sisters
- Is impulsive

What you can do to stop your child from bullying

- Take it seriously. Don't treat bullying as a passing phase. Even if you're not worried about long-lasting effects on your child, another child is being hurt.
- Talk to your child to find out why he or she is bullying. Often, children bully when they feel sad, angry, lonely, or insecure and many times major changes at home or school may bring on these feelings.
- Help build empathy for others and talk to your child about how it feels to be bullied.
- Ask a teacher or a school counselor if your child is facing any problems at school, such as if your child is struggling with a particular subject or has difficulty making friends. Ask them for advice on how you and your child can work through the problem.
- Ask yourself if someone at home is bullying your child. Often, kids who bully are bullied themselves by a parent, family member, or another adult.