



What Parents Can Do About Bullying

According to the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) 20% of students in grades 9–12 experienced bullying nationwide. The 2008–2009 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that 28% of students in grades 6–12 experienced bullying and that only 1/3 of the incidents were reported to an adult. The National Education Association (NEA) reports that nearly 160,000 children miss school each day because they are afraid of being bullied.

Bullying is defined as fighting, threatening, name-calling, teasing, or excluding someone repeatedly and over time – or hurting another person to gain power or control over them, or to get something from them. Bullying is typified by an imbalance of power, such as size or popularity – and the harm caused can be physical, social and emotional. Kids who are bullied are more likely to: do poorly in school; have low self-esteem, suffer depression and turn to violent behavior to protect themselves or get revenge on their bullies. There is a negative impact on the bullies as well. They are more likely to do poorly in school; be susceptible to substance abuse and take part in other illegal activities. So what can a responsible parent do to help? Here are some suggestions:

- 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. If you see any bullying, stop it right away – including if your child is the one doing the bullying.
- Teach your child not to be a bystander. Encourage your child to help others who need it.
- Don't bully your children or bully others in front of them. If your children see you hit, ridicule, or gossip about someone else, they are also more likely to do so themselves.
- Visit www.stopbullying.gov a federal government website operated by the Dept of Health and Human Services – an extensive resource on bullying and other aggressive behaviors

Warning signs that your child is being bullied:

- withdrawal, depression, unusually quiet
- a loss of friends and interest in activities (s)he previously enjoyed
- a drop in grades, loss of interest in school, faking illness to stay home
- torn clothing, bruises and other injuries
- missing or damaged belongings; needing extra money or supplies
- a change in eating habits such as loss of appetite because of depression – or bingeing because of being prevented from eating lunch in school
- nightmares, frequent headaches and stomach aches
- self-destructive behavior and thoughts; running away

If you suspect your child is being bullied, ask. Remember only 1/3 report it due to embarrassment, fear being labeled a tattletale or having been threatened into silence.

Warning signs that your child may be bullying:

Parents are the best resource to help their child stop bullying and start interacting positively with their peers. Kids who bully generally disrespect authority and people who are different from them. They sometimes exhibit the following behaviors:

- enjoy violence and joke about violent acts
- impulsive, aggressive and like to be in charge
- lack empathy; have friends who bully
- have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- arrogant winners and sore losers; blame others for failures
- extremely competitive; concerned about popularity

If your child is being bullied

- Be supportive and assure your child it is not his/her fault
- Discuss the situation with your child's school.
- Teach your child nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, like avoiding their hangouts, walking away, staying with a group of friends.
- Help your child learn to look assertive and self-confident. Practice body language together by standing up straight, making eye, and speaking clearly.
- Increase self-confidence by encouraging your child's involvement in activities outside of school where (s)he can make friends with other kids.

It's not necessarily a good idea to confront the bully's parents. Also, don't encourage your child to fight – which could lead to injury and more serious problems.

If your child is bullying

- Take it seriously. Assure your child that you still love him/her, but bullying behavior won't be tolerated. Set clear, nonviolent consequences for any future bullying.
- Talk to your child to find out why (s)he is bullying. Children sometimes bully when they feel sad, angry, lonely, or insecure – feelings which may be brought on by major changes at home or school.
- Help build empathy for others. Discuss with your child how it feels to be bullied. Ask, "How do you think the other kid felt?" or relate a time that it happened to you.
- Ask a teacher or counselor if your child is having problems at school. Work with the school to help change your child's behavior.
- Is someone is bullying your child? Kids who bully are often bullied themselves.

When and how to get help immediately:

- If someone is at risk of being harmed, call 911
- If someone is expressing feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and talking about harming themselves, call the Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



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Helplines: 1-800-1-AM-LOST (1-800-426-5678)
Email: information@childfindofamerica.org

Business Phone: 845-883-6060
Parent Help: 1-800-716-3468
Web Site: www.childfindofamerica.org

Adapted from material provided by: stopbullying.gov; Prevent Child Abuse-NY; National Crime Prevention Council
PDFs of this and other Child Find safety tips are available to download online at www.childfindofamerica.org