

Bullying Information for Parents

Bullying is the repeated behavior of someone who uses their power to control, scare or harm another person. Children who are bullied may become depressed and anxious. They may also have other physical and mental health problems, as well as problems with their schoolwork.

Bullying Can Happen in Different Ways

Verbal ways include:

- Name calling or mean comments
- Making threats
- Making fun of someone's race, religion, sexual orientation, health needs or the way they look or talk
- Saying they will share hurtful information about them unless they do what they want

Physical ways include:

- Hitting, kicking, slapping, shoving or spitting
- Taking or damaging things
- Forcing someone to do something they do not want to do with the purpose of hurting them

Social ways include:

- Leaving someone out of activities
- Starting rumors or spreading gossip about someone
- Telling others not to be friends with someone
- Using hurtful nicknames for someone, even after being asked to stop

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using digital devices like cell phones, computers and tablets. It may involve texting, email, sharing photos or videos, messaging or social media apps (like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube).

Teach Your Child About Bullying and Watch for Signs

- Read books or watch videos or movies about bullying with your child. This may help your child to know if they or others are being bullied.
- Practice what your child can do or say if someone tries to bully them or someone else.
 - › It is best to ignore a bully, walk away and tell an adult.
 - › It is not a good idea to fight back physically or with words.
- Watch your child's social media activities and accounts. Check their phone, computer or other devices.

Ask Questions

Talk and carefully listen to your child. Ask questions that cannot be answered with just a “yes” or a “no,” such as:

- Who did you eat lunch with at school?
- What do you think about the other children in your class?
- How did your clothes get dirty or torn?
- What happened to your money, books, toys, phone?
- What nicknames do other children have for you? Do you like this nickname?
- What happens when someone you see is picked on?

For older children, you might ask:

- How do you and your friends work out problems with other people?
- What types of things do you and your friends share on social media?
- Tell me about the friend groups (cliques) at your school?

Signs a Child is Being Bullied

Physical signs:

- Clothes are dirty or torn
- Things are missing or broken
- Cuts, bruises or scratches they can't explain
- Headaches, stomachaches or physical problems with no medical reason

Changes at school:

- Acts out or has problems at school
- Will not take part in activities or follow directions
- Loses interest in doing schoolwork
- Does poorly in school all of a sudden

Social changes:

- Few or no friends, changes friend group or does not play with old friends
- Withdraws from friends and family
- Fears going to school or being around other children

Changes in how child acts:

- Moody, crying or has outbursts of emotion
- Has bad dreams and trouble sleeping
- Does not want to eat
- Talks about feeling hopeless, being worthless or suicide

If your child is being bullied:

Talk to Your Child:

- Tell your child bullying is never okay and praise them for telling you. Remind them that you need to know what is going on. It is your job to help and protect them.
- Tell your child that it is not their fault and they have a right to feel safe.
- Explain that it is NOT tattling to tell if someone does something to hurt or bother them or another person.
- Help your child to know who are the safe or trusted adults to go to.
- Talk with them about how to avoid places, if they can, where the bullying happens.
- Tell them to do activities near adults and other groups of people. Bullies tend not to act out around adults.
- Tell your child to use the “buddy system” so they are not alone.

Work with Your School:

- If your child is being bullied at school or by another student outside of school, contact the school to report it. Include the teacher, school counselor and school principal. There are rules at school about bullying.

Report it to Others:

- Report bullying when it happens through social media or websites to the computer experts who manage the site. They can remove the content, block users or delete accounts.
- Contact the bully’s parents, if possible. They may not know what their child is doing.
- For threats of physical harm or violence, contact the police.

Provide Support and Help:

- Think about counseling or therapy for your child if you see changes in how they are acting.
- If you feel that your child might try to harm themselves, go to the closest emergency department for help right away.

Special Needs Children

When a child with special needs is bullied at school, by law, the school has to use an IEP (Individualized Education Program) plan to deal with it. The IEP should describe what your child can do if they think they are being bullied and what the school will do to take care of the problem. Set up a meeting with the school principal, teacher and counselor as soon as you can.