

Tips for Parents

Starting at Home

- Teach the Golden Rule - treat others the way you want to be treated.
- Teach your child that both mistreatment and kindness are powerful - creating memories
- Teach your child to say, "I'm sorry." "Please forgive me." and then be kind to the person
- Teach your child how to control his/her anger
- Teach self-control through discipline
- Communicate a zero tolerance of mistreatment of others by consistently applying negative consequences for bullying behavior
- Make time to listen - spend at least 15 minutes per day with your child
- Be a role model – eliminate negative speech or actions aimed at others and avoid gossiping
- Hold family meetings to teach empathy, sensitivity, values and expectations
- Discuss models of acceptance (newspaper stories, television stories, movies, etc.)
- Discuss bullying scenes you watch on television or in movies

In the Pre-School Years

- Bullies often rely on direct verbal bullying and physical power to control material objects or territory.
- They may lack the skills to interact in more socially appropriate ways.
 - ❖ Important Skills to Focus on:
 - ✓ Solving social problems
 - ✓ Sharing voluntarily
 - ✓ Interacting assertively
 - ✓ Understanding other's feelings
 - ✓ Managing emotions

In the Elementary School Years

- Bullies are more likely to use threats and physical force, combined with direct verbal bullying, to make victims do things against their will.
- At this age, some children begin to use indirect bullying to exclude peers from their social circle.
 - ❖ Important Skills to Focus on:
 - ✓ Perspective taking
 - ✓ Awareness and respect of individual differences
 - ✓ Friendship-making/keeping skills
 - ✓ Relationship-building with adults
 - ✓ How and when to ask for help

In the Middle & High School Years

- Bullies rely on direct verbal bullying such as name-calling and making threatening remarks, as well as physical bullying such as pushing.
- Girls tend to rely more on indirect, relational bullying, such as rumor-spreading and social exclusion to enhance their social status, although they engage in physical bullying as well.
- Boys tend to rely more on physical bullying, such as shoving and hitting to enhance their dominance although they also engage in indirect bullying.
 - ❖ Important Skills to Focus on:
 - ✓ Assertive communication
 - ✓ Conflict resolution and problem-solving
 - ✓ Acceptance and tolerance of others
 - ✓ Social media responsibility
 - ✓ Volunteering or helping others

Warning Signs that Your Child is Being Bullied

- Unexplainable injuries or lost/destroyed clothing, books, electronics, etc.
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Declining grades, loss of interest in school, homework or other activities, or loss of friends
- Changes in eating habits such as eating too much or too little
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Increased irritability or agitation, or feelings of helplessness, hopelessness or a decreased self esteem

How to Support

- Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.
- Assure the child that it is not their fault, even if he or she provoked the bullying.
- Know that kids who are bullied may struggle with talking about it. Consider referring them to a school counselor, psychologist, or other mental health professional.
- Give advice about what to do. This may involve role-playing and thinking through how the child might react if the bullying occurs again. Never tell the child to ignore the bullying. Also, do not tell the child to physically fight back against the bully – they could be hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between schools, parents and any other organizations.
- Parents should resist the urge to contact the other parents involved as it may make matters worse. School or other officials can act as mediators between parents.
- Be persistent and follow-up. Commit to making it stop and always be available to support the bullied child. Because bullying is behavior that repeats or has the potential to be repeated, it takes consistent effort to ensure that it stops.

Warning Signs that Your Child is Bullying

- Gets into verbal/physical fights, have friends who bully, have positive views towards violence or show little sympathy towards victims of bullying
- Are increasingly aggressive to peers and adults
- Appear competitive, controlling or attempt to dominate others and situations
- Are hot tempered, impulsive and easily frustrated
- Often test limits or break rules and get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Do not accept responsibility for their actions and blame others for their problems

How to Support

- Address bullying behavior - Parents, school staff, and organizations all have a role to play.
- Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. They must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others. Also, work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.
- Demonstrate that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- Use consequences to teach. Consequences that involve learning or building empathy can help prevent future bullying. For example, the child can read a book about bullying or do a report.
- Involve the child in making amends or repairing the situation with the goal of helping them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can write a letter of apology to the victim or clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences (students and teachers may be less likely to report and address bullying). For example:
 - ✓ "Three strikes & you're out," zero tolerance policies, suspending or expelling students.
 - ✓ Conflict resolution or peer mediation - bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied. In group settings, group members tend to reinforce bullying behavior in each other.
- Follow-up. Continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good friend.