

# Signs That Your Child Is Being Bullied

Be on the look out for signs in your child that indicate trouble. Some of these signs may be bumps and bruises which are signs of physical abuse but other non-obvious signs might consist of:

- Pretending to be sick to avoid school (stomachaches, headaches etc)
- Missing money or belongings
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Poor concentration
- Decrease in grades at school
- Problems with school work
- Anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Sadness and even depression

Don't be afraid to make your child's teacher aware of the situation. A discreet note or phone call can do wonders. You may want to arrange a time to discuss the matter with your child's teacher privately, so that you can be made aware of any other factors playing into the situation.

According to recent statistics, 1 out of 4 children is being bullied. 1 out of 5 admits to carrying a gun to school and 28% of those who carry guns have witnessed violence at home. Every 7 minutes a child is being bullied on the playground with only 15% peer intervention.

In February of 2004, the Arizona Lawmakers Committee passed the 1st phase of a bill that would outlaw bullying at school. This bill would require school districts to enact anti-harassment and bullying policies that:

- Allow students to report incidents confidentially.
- Require school officials to report any incidents they see.
- Mandate that school officials investigate all reports of bullying.
- Discipline students who admit to or are found guilty of bullying.

# IS YOUR CHILD A Bully?

What every parent doesn't want to hear – “your child is behaving like a bully.”

Your first response will probably be defensive. Disarm the situation and buy yourself some time to process what's being said. For example “Instead of labeling my child, please tell me what happened.” Make yourself really listen. Remember that this discussion is ultimately about the well-being of your child, regardless of how its being framed.

Even if your child is behaving aggressively or acting like a bully, remember that this behavior is probably coming from your child's feelings of vulnerability. You need to look for what is going on in your child's interactions with others and what is going on internally, causing your child to behave that way.

In talking with your child, **DO NOT BLAME!** Do not get into a discussion about the “whys” of what happened. Your discussion should focus on several key points:

- Bullying is not acceptable in our family or in society.
- If your child is feeling frustrated, angry or aggressive, offer other ways to release anger, such as counting or a fast run.
- Ask, how can I help you with this? Who could you go to in school if you see yourself getting into this type of situation again?
- Specify the consequences if the aggression or the bullying continues.
- You want to stop the behavior, understand your child's feelings, then teach and reward more appropriate behavior.

Instill in them the Rules For Fighting Fair: Identify the problem. Focus on the problem. Attack the problem, not the person. And finally – advise them to take responsibility for their actions.



## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Is your child “**Being Bullied**“?

Is your child “**The Bully**“?

Bullying is something most children encounter in one form or another. Children struggle with being called names, being picked upon, being excluded, not knowing how to make friends, or being the ones acting unkindly or aggressively toward others. All forms of bullying are abusive and all are opportunities to teach children how to get along, how to be considerate to other people and how to be part of a community or group.

Bullying can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal, or a combination of these. It may involve one child bullying another, or a group of children against a single child or groups against other groups. It is not unlike other forms of victimization and abuse in that it involves:

- An imbalance of power
- Differing emotional tones; the target will be upset whereas the bully is cool and in control
- Lack of concern on the part of the bully for the feelings and concerns of the victim.
- A lack of compassion

Bullies are very often children who have been bullied or abused themselves. Sometimes they are children experiencing life situations they can't cope with, that leave them feeling helpless and out of control. They may be children with poor social skills, who do not fit in or who can't meet the expectations of their family or school. They bully to feel competent, successful, to control someone else, and to get some relief from their own feelings of powerlessness.

# If Your Child Is Being Bullied

Do we as parents really know what happens to our children when they leave the safety of our homes to go to school or anywhere else? Parents really need to get more involved in their children's lives. This way they will be more sensitive to problems occurring.

Promote honesty. Ask questions.

Listen with an open mind and focus on understanding. Allow your child to express how they feel, and treat your child's feelings with respect. Settle conflicts by talking things out peacefully. Congratulate or reward them when you see them using these positive skills to settle a difference. Teach them to identify the problem, focus on the problem, without attacking the person.

If your child is being bullied, get as much information as you can about what has happened. Avoid blaming anyone, including the bully. Look at your own child's behavior and style of interacting. Ask yourself what you know about your child and how you can turn the immediate situation around.

If you are wanting to get in touch with the parents of the bully, remember that they will probably feel defensive. Keep in mind that your goal is to have a safe and nurturing environment for all the children, not to escalate an already difficult situation.

There are several steps you can take with your child:

- Discuss alternatives to responding to bullies
- Don't react, make sure you walk away and get help if pursued
- Agree with the bully, saying "You're right" and walk away
- Be assertive



# How You Can Help Your Child

## 1. Build self confidence in your child.

- Help them to be really good at something and feel good about themselves. Bullies are good at picking their targets and tend to go for the child they know they can intimidate.

## 2. Encourage your child to report bullying incidents to you.

- Validate your children's feelings by letting them know it's normal to feel hurt, sad, scared and angry.
- Let them know they are right to report the incident and reassure your child that he or she isn't to blame.

## 3. Coach your child about possible alternatives.

- Avoidance is often the best strategy.
- Stay near a teacher if at school when bullying is likely to occur.

Use the buddy system and always plan to walk with a friend or two on the way to school, the lunch room, to recess, or anywhere the bully might be.

## 4. Encourage your child to seek help and to report all bullying incidents.

- Report to someone they feel safe with at school, such as a teacher, counselor, principal or bus driver. You as the parent

## 5. Treat the school as your ally.

- Share your child concerns and specific information about bullying incidents with appropriate school personnel.
- Work with school staff to protect your child from possible retaliation.
- Establish a plan with the school and your child for dealing with future incidents.
- What can the victim do about his/her bully? Try confronting them and telling them how they are making you feel. "What did I do to you?" In many situations ignoring has the best results. If the bully no longer gets a reaction out of the victim, he/she will usually move on. Because it is no longer any fun. But what about the bully who is very abusive or violent? Make sure the school knows what is going on. This type of bully should be avoided at all costs. Advise your child to travel to school in a group, and staying away from empty buildings are other wise options.



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