

Bullying

Bullying is a big deal. It is a problem that affects lots of kids. Three-quarters of all kids say they have been bullied or teased. Being bullied can make kids feel really bad. The stress of dealing with bullies can make kids feel sick. It can make kids not want to play outside or go to school. It's hard to keep your mind on schoolwork when you're worried about how you're going to deal with the bully near your locker.

Bullying bothers everyone — and not just the kids who are getting picked on. Bullying can make school a place of fear and can lead to more violence and more stress for everyone. Teasing at bus stops, taking another child's lunch money, insults and threats, kicking or shoving – it's all fair game to a bully. Fears and anxieties about bullies can cause some children to avoid school, carry a weapon for protection, or even commit more violent activity.

Although anyone can be a target of bullying behavior, the victim is often singled out because their psychological traits or physical traits. A typical victim is likely to be shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Some children are picked on for physical reasons such as being overweight or physically small, having a disability, or belonging to a different race or religious faith.

If a bully is bugging you, walk away, tell a grown-up, hang with friends, or try to talk it out. Don't be a bully yourself. Treat others with kindness. Stick up for kids who are being bullied.

What Can Parents Do To Help?

- Listen to your children. Encourage them to talk about school, social events, other kids in class, and the walk or ride to and from school so you can identify any problems they may be having.
- Take children's complaints of bullying seriously. Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell anyone that they have been bullied, so listen to their complaints.
- Watch for signs that children may be a victim of bullying such as withdrawal, a drop in grades, torn clothes or needing extra money or supplies.
- Tell the school immediately if you think that your children are being bullied.
- Don't bully your children yourself, physically or verbally. Use nonphysical, consistently enforced discipline measures as opposed to ridiculing, yelling at, or ignoring your children when they misbehave.
- Help children learn the social skills they need to make friends. A confident, resourceful child who has friends is less likely to be bullied or to bully others.
- Praise children's kindness toward others. Let children know that kindness is valued.
- Teach children ways to resolve arguments without violent words or actions.
- Teach children self-protection skills - how to walk confidently, stay alert to what's going on around them, and to stand up for themselves verbally.

Helpful Websites and Information

<http://kidshealth.org/>

<http://www.stoppingschoolviolence.com/>

Safe and Drug Free Hotline – 1-877-SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867)

10 tips to Help Stop Cyberbullying

Talk to the school. If the cyberbullying in question is coming from a classmate, contact school officials immediately to determine if they have a policy in place to deal with such behavior.

Tell your kids not to open or read emails that they suspect are from cyberbullies. In the case of the Internet and Cyberbullying, what you can't read won't hurt you. Teach kids to dump suspicious emails right in the trash.

Take advantage of the technology. Bullies who use chat rooms as a means for spreading hate can easily be blocked using most chat programs. Sit down and take the time to show your kids how they can filter out bad people from their conversations.

Tell children NEVER to agree to meet someone they meet online. The Internet is filled with individuals who have bad intentions. Even those people who may seem trustworthy in their online persona may turn out to be a cyberbully or even a predator. Teach kids the importance of staying safe online.

Supervise your kids' online time. One of the most foolproof methods for stopping Cyberbullying is to monitor closely what your children do online. Tips for this method include removing computers with an Internet connection from the child's bedroom and designating specific "family hours" for Internet use.

Tell your kids never to share their passwords or personal information with anyone. Friends and acquaintances of your children can wield a great deal of power if they know the passwords to their favorite sites and chat rooms. One of the fastest-growing types of cyberbullying is stealing someone's identity and making embarrassing, damaging statements in that person's name.

Monitor the use of your child's photo online. Many cyberbullies will take your child's photo and manipulate in ways that are damaging or embarrassing. Be very careful about the images your child presents online.

Watch out for the warning signs. Kids who are being cyberbullied may not want to talk about the problem with their parents. Common warning signs include depression, withdrawal from social situations, and spending more and more time online.

Be willing to contact the police. Parents who have gathered evidence about cyberbullying, and feel as if contacting the school has not stopped the problem should contact police – especially if the cyberbully has made threats to the health and well-being of the child.

Stick to your guns. The Internet is a big part of your child's life. Getting them to agree to be safe and limit their unsupervised time online may be difficult. Stay firm and continue to oversee their computer time – even if the child lashes out and claims that you are invading their privacy.

Helpful Websites and Information

<http://www.cyberbullyalert.com/blog/2008/07/10-ways-parents-can-help-stop-cyberbullying/>