

Bullying: How Parents Can Help

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Bullying: What is it?

- Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm which includes:
 - Verbal taunts, name-calling, put-downs
 - Threats and intimidation
 - Exclusion from the peer group

Types of Bullying

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
 - Teasing
 - Name-calling
 - Inappropriate sexual comments
 - Taunting
 - Threatening to cause harm

Social Bullying

- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
 - Leaving someone out on purpose
 - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
 - Spreading rumors about someone
 - Embarrassing someone in public

Physical bullying

- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
 - Hitting/kicking/pinching
 - Spitting
 - Tripping/pushing
 - Taking or breaking someone's things
 - Making mean or rude hand gestures

Bullying vs. Childhood Conflicts

- **Bullying is intentional.** The target does not knowingly provoke the bully and may have made it clear that the behavior is unwelcome
- **The behavior is often repetitive.** Bullying is generally a repeated action, but can sometimes be a single incident

Bullying vs. Childhood Conflicts

- **The act is committed by one or more people against another.** Bullying can be done by a single person or by a group.
- **There is a real or perceived imbalance of power.** A child without power cannot bully. Power can be defined as: intimidation, physical strength, or social status

Myths vs. Facts

Myth: Girls don't bully.

Fact: Girls can and do bully, but often in a different way. Girls often use verbal and social bullying. Bullying for girls escalates during the middle school years.

Myth: Words will never hurt you.

Fact: Even though words don't leave bruises or broken bones, they can leave deep emotional scars.

Myth: Bullying is a normal part of childhood.

Fact: Bullying may be a common experience, but this type of aggression toward others should not be tolerated.

Myth vs. Facts

Myth: Bully's are mostly loners with few social skills.

Fact: Many bullies are often the “cool” or popular students. These students have friends who provide support for their actions.

Myth: Bullied kids need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.

Fact: Some children have the confidence and skills to stop bullying when it happens, but many do not. Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop bullying, as do other children who witness or observe bullying.

Myths vs. Facts

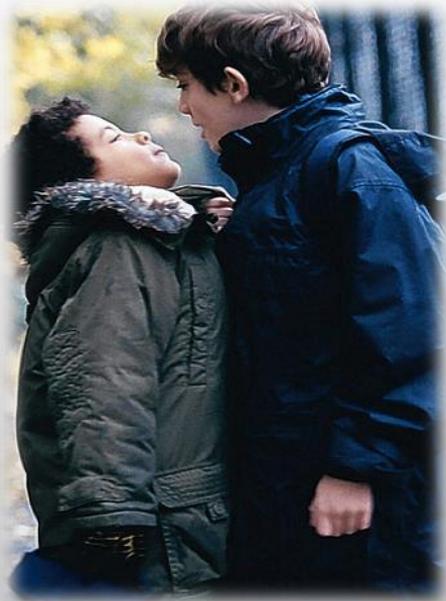
Myth: It was only teasing.

Fact: Teasing in which a child is not hurt is not considered bullying. Teasing becomes bullying when the intent of the action is to hurt or harm.

Myth: Bullying will make kids tougher.

Fact: Bullying does NOT make someone tougher. It often has the opposite effect—lowering a child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Bullying creates fear and increases anxiety for a child.

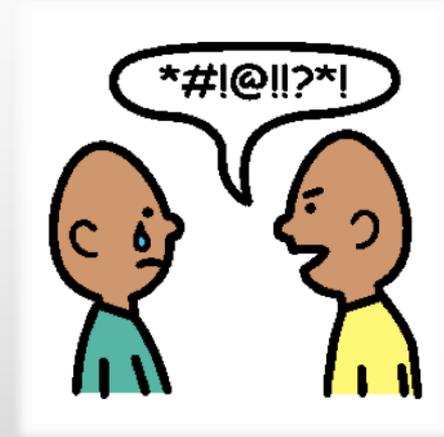
Traditional Bullying



Physical Bullying



Relational Bullying



Verbal Bullying

Bullying Today



Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying Differences

- **Anonymity**- 50% of students reported they didn't know who bullied them.
- **Disinhibition**– “You can't see me I can't see you.”
- **Accessibility**– 24/7
- **Punitive Fears**- victims don't report because fear having computer or phone/computer privileges taken away
- **Bystanders**- different for cyber bullying- don't witness actual face to face confrontation.

Warning signs your child may be bullied:

- Avoiding or fear of going to school
- Sudden failing grades
- Frequent health complaints- headaches, stomachaches
- Withdrawing or losing interest in activities with friends
- Feeling, sad, moody, anxious, depressed, withdrawn, helpless
- Unexplained injuries
- Damaged or missing clothing or items
- Losing items of value- iPod, money, jewelry
- Trouble sleeping- or frequent nightmares
- Changes in eating habits
- Avoiding or spending excessive time on computer
- Significant mood changes after using the computer
- Becoming aggressive or disruptive
- May begin to bully other kids or siblings

Could my child be the bully?

- Has difficulty fitting in
- May look/act differently and be bullied themselves
- Recent traumatic event? (divorce/death of loved one)
- Bullying behavior witnessed at home

What if my child is the bully?

- Don't ignore the situation: ask teacher/counselor about behaviors seen at school
- Ask your child about giving other students a hard time: Be direct but not accusatory
- Ask your child to tell you about what they wish their school day was like: Look for clues. Is your child lonely? Struggling academically?
- Decide whether you can work with the child to correct the behavior, or if outside help is needed.

Children Who Bully Are More Likely To:

- Get into frequent fights
- Be injured in a fight
- Vandalize or steal property
- Drink alcohol
- Smoke
- Be truant from school
- Drop out of school
- Carry a weapon

What can parents do to help?

- **Talk with your child**

- Cultivate and maintain open, candid communication

- **Conversation starters:**

“There have been a lot of news stories about people being bullied lately, do you know of people dealing with this?”

“Have you ever had any problems with people on the internet?”

“Has anyone ever bothered or threatened you?”

“Do you know of kids who are picked on in school?”

“How can I help you make it stop, without embarrassing you?”

What can parents do to help?

Your child may not always talk...so observe and listen

- Offer to drive your child and their friends to events
- Observe their interactions with friends
- Volunteer at the school
- Attend school events
- Chaperone field trips
- Pay attention to changes

How Else Can I Help?

- Help build your child's self confidence:
 - Don't call out your child's faults
 - Compliment specifically and sincerely
- Encourage involvement in outside activities/friendship-building activities

An Important Note...

The list of solutions to bullying **DOES NOT** include telling your child to 'fight back. This can be **MORE** dangerous for your child (especially if the bully is older and stronger). This could also get your child into trouble with the school, because your child may be seen as the instigator of a fight, as opposed to the victim.

Questions?

