

What is Bullying?

Bullying is another name for harassment. It can take many forms, such as pushing, kicking, hitting and threatening. It can include name-calling, humiliation, sarcasm and spreading rumors in person or through cyber-bullying (over the Internet).

Bullying can have serious, long-term emotional effects. It is not simply “kids being kids.” Bullying affects all aspects of children’s lives, including their ability to learn.

How Do I Know if My Child's Being Bullied?

Bullies can target just about anybody for a number of reasons, but kids who are habitually bullied tend to be those who already have lower self-esteem.

Children are often reluctant to talk to parents about being bullied. They think complaining about bullying will make them look weak or invite more harassment from bullies.

If you suspect your child is being bullied:

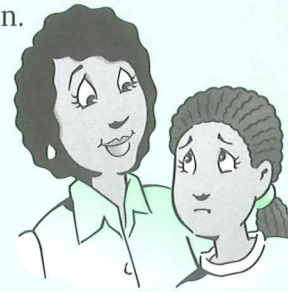
- **Observe your child.** Bullying victims often start avoiding school. Their grades may drop. They may withdraw from activities. The stress may cause frequent stomachaches, headaches, panic attacks or difficulty sleeping. Their self-esteem may plummet, or they may take out their frustration on others.
- **Talk and listen.** Encourage your child to tell you about what goes on in school or at other activities. Ask about the trip to and from school.



What If My Child is a Victim of Bullying?

Some parents tell their children to strike back at bullies. That usually creates more problems than it solves. Here are some better solutions:

- **Provide an emotional refuge.** Hold your child when she cries. Let her know that she is not to blame and that no one should have to put up with bullying. Keep your child involved in finding a solution, but make sure you are taking action.
- **Discuss with your child** how to avoid situations in which bullying often occurs. It might be possible to take a different route or avoid doing something that draws the attention of bullies.
- **Give your child some ways to respond** to bullies. Help your child develop ways to stand up for herself without losing her temper. Your child might:
 - Try to ignore the bully.
 - Turn and walk away.
 - Try not to show that she is angry or upset.
- **Let the school know.** Keep a record of the times your child is bullied. Save harassing emails, text messages, etc. Make sure school officials know about these incidents at once.
- **Decide with school officials** whether to contact law enforcement authorities.
- **Find a new activity** for your child that will allow her to focus on things she likes or does well and get her together with people who aren't connected with her bullying problems.



What If My Child is a Bystander?

Peers often know that a child is being bullied before any adults do. Tell your child that bystanders need to act. Ignoring the problem won't make it go away and may lead the bully to think that bystanders support what he is doing. Share these bystander Dos and Don'ts with your child:

Dos:

- **Persuade** the victim to tell an adult. Or offer to tell an adult for the victim.
- **Let the bully** know that you disapprove of what he is doing. Tell him that you are on the victim's side and that you'll stand up for the victim.

Don'ts:

- **Don't use violence** against the bully—you may get hurt or even be blamed for being a bully yourself.
- **Don't try to handle** the situation by yourself. Talk to a responsible adult.