

Bullying and Kids: What You Need to Know

What is bullying?

Bullying is defined as acting to harm, intimidate or persuade another. Bullying can take several forms including verbal, social or physical. Examples include name calling, writing mean or hurtful things about another person, purposely excluding others from games or activities, spreading lies about someone or physically hurting them.

Why do students bully?

Some children are looking for attention. Others bully to feel stronger, smarter or better. Some want to feel in control or powerful. Some kids model behavior they've seen in their environment, while others use it as self-defense if they've been a victim of aggressive behavior.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 14 percent of public schools report that bullying is a problem that occurs at least once a week. Every seven minutes on the playground, a student is bullied. Over one in three students have been bullied online. Children who are bullied can experience lasting problems that may interfere with their social and emotional development and school performance.

Bullying isn't something kids need to endure as a rite of passage or to make them stronger. Bullying increases the risk of emotional stress. It's important to understand that the child doing the bullying may also need help due to a history of being a victim or having trauma.

Signs to look for in potential bullying:

- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or damaged belongings/clothing
- Feeling sick often or faking illness
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Failing school performance or loss of interest in school/activities
- Sudden loss of friends/avoiding social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or lowered self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as: running away from home, harming themselves, talking about suicide



What can you do if you're being bullied or witness bullying at your school?

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell them in a calm voice to stop. If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don't fight back.
- Find an adult you trust and plan together to stop the bullying.
- Be kind by using kind words and including everyone by asking those sitting alone to join your group of friends. Since kids tend to be bullied when they're alone, use the buddy system and always have someone around.



What can parents do to address bullying?

- Explain what bullying is and that it's wrong. Let your child know that you'll be there to help them, no matter what.
- Help your child learn how to react to bullying. Teach self-control and how to assert boundaries. Teach kindness and encourage empathy.
- Work with teachers, counselors and principals. Keep detailed records about the bullying so you can tell the school exactly what happened. Look into your county resources that may be available.
- Identify an adult at school whom your child trusts. This adult can help your child feel safe at school by listening to them.
- Monitor social media use and teach kids how to use it responsibly.
- Seek help immediately from a doctor or a mental health professional if your child talks about suicide or seems unusually upset. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or 988 is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Each of us can impact the culture of bullying in our society by listening to our kids, educating about the impact of bullying and violent behavior, increasing empathy and teaching skills to stop the pattern.

For more information, visit: <https://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/articles-support/bullying>.



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