

FOR PARENTS: BULLYING: WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

WORDS HURT: Teasing IS Bullying

Bullying is peer abuse. The acts are repeated and aggressive. The child who bullies wants to gain power by making another child feel powerless.

Direct bullying uses hitting, pushing, and punching. Indirect bullying uses words to tease and spread rumors. Whatever form it takes, it makes the child being bullied angry, isolated and sad.

Words are more often the weapon of choice. They are powerful. They leave scars that can't be seen but remain clear in a child's mind.

Bullying can happen anywhere children are: the playground, the mall, the video arcade, the ballfield. It happens most often at school.

Bullies are careful. They know when adults aren't looking. They

choose times when adults aren't around. They take advantage of a child who is alone.

When they know they are safe, children who bully use words to make another child feel inferior. They choose children who have few friends or who are shy.

Children who are bullied don't want anyone to know. They think no one will listen. They may have tried to tell adults and been told not to "tattle" or to "solve your own problems."

The truth is that once bullying begins, it doesn't stop until someone, usually an adult, steps in.

Adults need to listen to children. A child who comes home with new, threatening words may have experienced bullying. They may say



"being happy doesn't matter" when asked how they are.

Parents need to talk with their children about words. Children need to know that threats and teasing are NOT okay. That the child who bullies is wrong.

CHILDREN DON'T TELL

Children who are being bullied are scared and embarrassed. They think that being bullied is THEIR FAULT.

Children who are bullied don't tell because they think no one will listen and no one cares. They keep it all inside. The bully makes them believe that IF they tell, worse things will happen to them.

Parents can watch for signs that something is out of the ordinary. A child who suddenly wants to avoid school; a child who avoids other children MAY be a bully's victim.

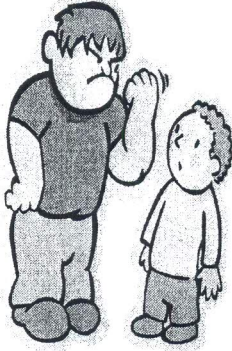
Begin by listening to your child. Talk about lunch and recess. Who do they sit with? Who shares their free time? If they seem to be alone, find out why. Just being alone isn't always a sign of being bullied but if it comes with other things, it could be.

If you are worried, talk to your child's teacher.

PARENT RESOURCES

- www.adapp.org
- <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/825-what-parents-can-do-about-childhood-bullying.gs?page=1>
- <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

BULLYING IS NOT PART OF CHILDHOOD



Children don't have to be bullied. Children who know they are important and loved are less likely to give-in to a bully.

Parents are the ones who can help "bully-proof" a child. How?

Laughter is a good thing when it is done together. Laugh with a child. Don't let other adults tease children even in good fun.

Praise your child. Make sure he knows that his

accomplishments count. Even small things—helping at home, caring for a young sister—should be appreciated. A child who is enthusiastic will meet challenges not avoid them.

Limits help a child feel secure. Even when a child tests boundaries, what she really wants to know is they are there.

Teach a child social skills and ways to communicate. This means teaching a child

how to assert herself without being aggressive.

Example is the best teacher. What a parent does, a child will do. If you use words to make people do what you want them to do, so will your child. If you let other people force you to agree with them when they pressure you, so will your child.

Teaching children they are strong enough to do the right thing is an important lesson.

Bringing an end to bullying can only benefit your child and others who may be victims.

WHAT CAN A PARENT DO?

Your child tells you he is being bullied. What do you do?

The first step is to call the school. You want to work with them to solve the problem. Bringing an end to bullying can only benefit your child and others who may be victims. It will also help the child who bullies.

The first step is to keep to the facts. Bring information about your child's experi-

ence. Be specific about who is involved, what happened, where and when the events occurred. If you can, use the bully's exact words.

While you want to face the bully's parents **DON'T**. It is the job of the school to intervene.

Keep talking to the school staff and your child. If things don't seem to be improving, have another talk with the school. Keeping the

dialogue open helps everyone.

Help your child resist bullying by strengthening talents and skills in sports, music and art. Suggest she reach out to other classmates and make friends (a teacher can help suggest students).

A child needs to know that reporting bullying is not tattling. Make sure your child knows how to get help from adults.

WARNING SIGNS FOR PARENTS

If your child is being bullied, you might notice:

- Torn, damaged, missing clothing, books
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- Few friends
- Fear of traveling to school
- Avoiding afterschool clubs, sports or other group

activities

- Sudden drop in grades or interest in school work
- Fewer smiles, lots of frowns, tears
- Loss of appetite
- Wanting to stay home

- Frequent bad dreams or trouble sleeping
- Threats of violence to self or someone else
- Complaints about headaches, stomachaches, physical complaints

Not all of these are caused by bullying. BUT if your usually happy child changes, they could be.



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