

WHAT IS BULLYING AND WHO IS IMPACTED?

- Bullying is any type of aggressive behavior that one person (or a group of people) directs at someone else with the intention of causing physical harm or emotional distress. Bullying is not accidental or unintentional.
- Bullying (or the threat of being bullied) is a repeated behavior; although hurtful, a one-time incident is not considered bullying.
- Bullying typically happens between people with unequal power (e.g., a stronger or older child bullies a weaker or younger child), but it may also happen between friends or children of the same size or age as they seek to become popular.
- Bullying can be physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, spitting, taking or damaging someone's belongings), verbal (e.g., teasing, name-calling, threats of violence, hurtful comments), or social (e.g., rumor spreading, public embarrassment, social exclusion). It can also happen online (cyberbullying; e.g., sending hurtful comments or messages, sharing embarrassing media, pretending to be others).
- About 35% of 12-18 year old students report being a victim of traditional bullying and 15% report being a victim of cyberbullying.
- The most common reasons for being bullied are a child's distinctive physical appearance, race/ethnicity, appearing emotionally vulnerable, and social isolation.
- LGBTQ, religious or ethnic minorities as well as, students with disabilities have a higher likelihood of being bullied, with 51-70% of such youth reporting bullying in the past year.
- Bullying has been linked with poor mental health and low school performance, especially when it persists for a long time and when children blame themselves for being physically or emotionally attacked.
- A victim of bullying is twice as likely to take his or her own life compared to someone who is not a victim.



WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Increases in depression and anxiety; low self-esteem
- Irritability or sudden outbursts of temper; aggressive behaviors
- Complaints of headaches or stomachaches
- Increased clinginess with parents
- Fear or reluctance to go to school; avoidance of recess or school activities
- Bruises, cuts, or scratches, without a logical explanation; torn clothes or damaged belongings
- Unusual increase in requests for money
- Atypical avoidance of social media or online game play
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Cyberbullying research center - <https://cyberbullying.org/what-is-bullying>
National bullying prevention center - <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/>

Additional References:

National Association of School Psychologists – *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Among School-Age Youth*
American Psychological Association – <https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/>

TIPS FOR PARENTS

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT OR STOP BULLYING

BUILD SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE.

Provide your child with enough opportunities to develop supportive friendships. Facilitate playdates for younger children and help adolescents connect with same-age peers. Monitor relationships for positive social behaviors, such as balanced give and take.

BE AWARE OF YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL.

Communicate with your child about what happens at school and ensure that they tell you about both positive and negative things that happen daily. Frequent communication ensures that children are comfortable sharing when they are having social challenges. Monitor your child's online activity closely and restrict access to applications and websites if necessary.

HELP YOUR CHILD RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF BULLYING.

Have conversations about bullying (e.g., What does bullying mean? Why do people bully? Who is a trusted adult that you could talk to if you witness or experience bullying?). Educate your child about appropriate behaviors, both online and offline.

WHEN YOUR CHILD REPORTS BULLYING TO YOU, CONVEY UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT.

Let them know that they don't deserve to be bullied and that you are there to help. Tell your child you will work together to take the steps to stop bullying.

FACILITATE PROBLEM-SOLVING.

Assist your child in defining the problem and the desired outcome (e.g., stop bullying at school). Help your child make a list of possible solutions to the problem and select one to try.

ENCOURAGE HELP-SEEKING.

Role play with your child and think about how to react and how to report the problem to school personnel (if bullying is happening at school). For cyberbullying, encourage your child to tell you if anything that happens online makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN WITH YOUR CHILD.

Decide what are good ways of responding and moving forward. Identify safe ways to act in dangerous situations. Suggest your child walk with peers or other adults if they feel intimidated. Encourage your child to contact you via phone if needed. Identify other adults whom your child can contact.

INVOLVE THE SCHOOL AND SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IF NEEDED.

Check on anti-bullying policies and programs that the school may have. Write down objective information about bullying incidents. Talk to educators and administrators to resolve situation. If your child is demonstrating high levels of distress and is having difficulty coping with being bullied, seek mental health services. If you feel like your child is a danger to him or herself (e.g., makes comments about wanting to kill self) contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to obtain crisis counseling and local referrals.