

Bullying Hurts People

How you can help your child not to become a bully or be bullied

Bullying in any form and by any name damages everyone involved – the aggressors, the victims, and the observers. Parents can play an important role in identifying and preventing bullying. It is the job of adults to help kids develop empathy, self esteem and peacemaking skills early in their lives.

In its simplest terms, bullying is when one or more person(s) persistently picks on another. People—children in particular—often feel isolated by bullying and may not even tell anyone else about their experience. Bullying often happens when onlookers are present. According to a recent CNN news series on bullying, more than 70% of the time the witnesses do not attempt to intervene

The anti-bullying educational organization, Bully Free[®], provides the following criteria to help distinguish bullying from other misbehaviors:

- It is intentional.
- It is hurtful (physically or psychologically).
- It is threatening.
- It occurs more than once (typically).
- There is a power imbalance.

There are some typical characteristics of the kids victimized by bullying.

- generally quiet, cautious, sensitive, and perhaps easily moved to tears
- insecure with little self-confidence
- If boys, often weaker than their classmates
- few or no friends and may find it easier to associate with adults

There are some typical characteristics of the kids at risk of becoming bullies.

- enjoy feeling powerful and in control
- seek to dominate or manipulate others
- may be popular with other students, who envy his or her power
- impulsive

There are some signs or symptoms that a child is being bullied.

- sudden decrease in school attendance
- decline in academic performance
- difficulty concentrating in class and be easily distracted
- sudden lack of interest in school-sponsored activities and events
- happy on weekends but unhappy or tense on Sundays

- victim body language

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Once parents recognize bullying, they can help to reduce it in the future. There are protective factors that may keep kids from becoming bullies or being bullied.

- Model tolerance and resist using labels. *Forbid ethnic, racial, religious, or sexual orientation slurs or derogatory jokes or imitations.*
- Acknowledge and discuss the problems and pain associated with bullying. *Identify types of bullying with your child.*
- Explore how we form impressions of one another and the risks of our assumptions. *Talk about what kind of assumptions we may make about people because of their size or gender or age or skin color.*
- Help children to step into one another's shoes. *How would it feel to be bullied? Why do you think certain people might be bullied? What feelings might cause kids to bully?*
- Encourage children to expand to develop multiple circles of friends and physical activities. *This protects kids from isolation and helps to build a greater sense of self.*
- Monitor children on the computer and talk with them about cyber-bullying. *Let kids know the risks and responsibilities of access to instant messaging (IM), chat rooms, facebook, websites and text messages.*
- Encourage kids to report bullying and help them to discern if what they report is bullying or occasional misbehavior. *Be aware of possible alternative motives for children to be victims (i.e. attention).*
- Listen to your children and observe their behaviors and communicate your concerns. *Communicate with school authorities about any troublesome observations or information.*

Information for this article was taken from the following resources: NAESP, *Report to Parents*, RP 28:5 and RP 28:6, *Bully-proofing your kids*, Katia Hetter, CNN, October 11, 2011, Violencepreventionwork.org, The Hazelden Foundation, Bully Free[®] Program, Dr. Alan Beane, Additional characteristics and criteria can be found at www.bullyfree.com

“Our mission is to exercise the kind of loving care which will prompt the child to open his fist and offer up his truth, his individuality, the irreducible atom of his

self. We must provide the kind of environment in which the child will joyfully deliver his message through complete self-fulfillment.”

– Sam Levensen, Humorist/Philosopher, *Everything but Money*, 1949