

Let's Stop Bullying - Tips for Parents

Bullying behaviour may seem rather insignificant compared to kids bringing guns to school and getting involved with drugs. Bullying is often dismissed as part of growing up. But it's actually an early form of aggressive, violent behaviour. Statistics show that one in four children who bully will have a criminal record before the age of 30.

There are many types of bullying, but all bullies have some characteristics in common:

- they are concerned with their own pleasure
- they want power over others
- they are willing to use and abuse other people to get what they want
- they feel pain inside, perhaps because of their own shortcomings
- they find it difficult to see things from someone else's perspective

What can we do as parents to stop bullying?

Provide opportunities for children to talk about bullying, perhaps when watching TV together, reading aloud, playing a game, or going to the park or a movie.

Watch for symptoms that your child may be a bullying victim, such as withdrawal, a drop in grades, torn clothes, unexplained bruises, not wanting to go to school, needing extra money or supplies, taking toys or other possessions to school and regularly "losing" them.

Take your child's complaints of bullying seriously.

Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell anyone that they have been bullied, so believe your child's complaints.

Tell the school or organization immediately if you think that your child is being bullied. Alerted caregivers can carefully monitor your children's actions and take other steps to ensure your child's safety.

Work with other parents to ensure that the children in your neighbourhood are supervised closely on their way to and from school.

Listen! Encourage your child to talk about school, social events, the walk or ride to and from school. Listen to his or her conversations with other children. This could be your first clue to whether your child is a victim, a bully, or neither.

Don't bully your children yourself, physically or verbally. Use nonphysical, consistently enforced discipline measures as opposed to ridiculing, yelling at, or ignoring your children when they misbehave.

Teach children ways to resolve arguments without violent words or actions. Teach children self-protection skills -- how to walk confidently, stay alert to what's going on around them, and to stand up for themselves verbally.

Praise your child's kindness toward others. Let your child know that kindness is valued.

Help children learn the social skills they need to make friends. A confident, resourceful child who has friends is less likely to be bullied or to bully others.

Recognise that bullies may be acting out feelings of insecurity, anger, or loneliness. If your child is a bully, help get to the root of the problem. Seek out specific strategies you can use at home from a teacher, school counsellor, or child psychologist.

REMEMBER

SCHOOLS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

Registered inspectors report on behaviour and discipline as part of the OFSTED Framework for inspection. They consider whether pupils are free from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. This takes into account views of parents as well as students.



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How do I know if my child is being bullied?

A child who is being bullied **may** display some of the following signs:



What can I do if I suspect my child may be bullying others?

Take the problem seriously.

Children who continue to bully others often get into serious trouble in later life. They may also have continuing trouble in their relationships with others.

Establish a few family rules and stick to them.

When children follow rules be quick to show approval. When they do not, there should be punishment e.g. loss of privilege or reduced spending money. Ensure that your children are not witnessing violent behavior between other family members.

Talk to your child.

Keep in mind that a child who is bullying will often try to place the blame on others.

Talk to his/her teacher and or Head teacher.

Keep in mind that a child who is bullying may try to place the blame on others. Frequent communication with teachers and/or administrators is important to find out how your child is doing in changing his or her behavior.

Seek help.

School Social Workers, Psychologists and councillors are available to assist you and your child.

Arrange for an effective, non-violent consequence.

This should be in proportion with the severity of your child's actions, and his or her age and stage of development. Physical punishment carries the message that "might is right".

Spend more time with your child.

Look for activities you can share such as sports or hobbies. Try to avoid watching violent television and video games. Too much exposure may increase violent and aggressive behavior.

Tell your child that you will not tolerate this kind of behavior.

Discuss with your child the negative impact bullying has on the victims. Praise kindness toward others. Show your child that you value kindness.

Increase supervision of your child's activities and whereabouts.

Find out who their friends are and make sure that you know where they are at all times. Discourage relationships with aggressive peers.