

Bullying

What is bullying?

The American Psychological Association defines bullying as a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. This aggressive behavior can take the form of physical contact, words, or subtle actions.



Who is impacted by bullying?

While bullying affects children and adolescents with many different personalities and backgrounds, all bullied individuals share the difficulty of defending themselves and usually have done nothing to “cause” the bullying. That said, some individuals are more vulnerable to bullying than others. Bullying usually happens in instances where there is an unequal power dynamic (e.g., a child that is physically stronger or older will bully a weaker or younger child). Some other reasons a child may be bullied are a child’s distinctive physical appearance or race/ethnicity. Additionally, the American Psychological Association reports that victims of bullying are more likely to have LGBTQ identities, are religious or ethnic minorities, and/or have disabilities. In addition, 51-70% of such identifying youth have reported bullying in the past year.

Warning Signs

The consequences of bullying are serious. A breadth of research shows that bullying has been linked with poor mental health and academic performance. Statistics also reveal that victims of bullying are twice as likely to take their own life when compared to someone who has not experienced bullying. The following behaviors can signal that your child is being bullied.



- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Irritability or sudden outbursts of temper; aggression
- Complaints of headaches or stomach aches
- Increased clinginess with parents
- Fear or reluctance to go to school
- Bruises, cuts, or scratches without a logical explanation
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

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Cyberbullying



Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that occurs online and includes sending hurtful or threatening messages, spreading rumors, or posting embarrassing photos of others. This type of bullying is especially pervasive, given the dramatic increase in time our youth spend socializing online. It is important to set boundaries and the expectation that you will monitor your child's social media accounts.

What if my child is bullying others?

As a parent, it can be difficult to learn that your child is harming others. However, it is important to remember that no child is inherently born as a bully, and that bullying behaviors can be a signal of low self-esteem, an unresolved emotional issue, or trauma a child may be experiencing. Bullying can also result unintentionally if your child is having difficulty reading social signs. Children also model their behavior after their parents. If your child is bullying other children, it is important to look inward to see if bullying is being modeled at home. Aggressive behaviors, yelling, and overly strict home environments can make your children prone to bullying others at school.

How can I help my child?

- ✓ Provide your child with ample opportunities to develop supportive friendships.
- ✓ Monitor your child's relationships for positive social behaviors and educate your child about the signs of bullying and appropriate behaviors online and in person.
- ✓ Make sure your child understands that he/she does not deserve to be bullied and help him/her identify safe people to ask for help.
- ✓ Teach your child about standing up for victims of bullying to prevent your child from normalizing bullying behaviors.
- ✓ Be aware of anti-bullying policies and programs at your child's school and involve the school and/or a mental health professional if a bullying situation has escalated.



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