

BULLYING PREVENTION

What is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- ◇ An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power – such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity – to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- ◇ Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.
- ◇ Intent to harm.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Types of Bullying

There are three types of bullying:

Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things.

Verbal bullying includes:

- ◇ Teasing
- ◇ Name-calling
- ◇ Inappropriate sexual comments
- ◇ Taunting
- ◇ Threatening to cause harm

Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:

- ◇ Leaving someone out on purpose
- ◇ Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- ◇ Spreading rumors about someone
- ◇ Embarrassing someone in public

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:

- ◇ Hitting/kicking/pinching
- ◇ Spitting
- ◇ Tripping/pushing
- ◇ Taking or breaking someone's things
- ◇ Making mean or rude hand gestures

Where and When Does Bullying Happen?

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or the bus. It can also happen travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet.



How to Talk About Bullying

Parents and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- ◇ Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.
- ◇ Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- ◇ Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- ◇ Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

Model How to Treat Others with Kindness & Respect

Kids learn from adults' actions. By treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the kids in their lives that there is no place for bullying. Even if it seems like they are not paying attention, kids are watching how adults manage stress and conflict, as well as how they treat their friends, colleagues, and families.

Help Kids Understand Bullying

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

- ◇ Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.
- ◇ Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away.
- ◇ Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- ◇ Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

Encourage Kids to Do What They Love

Help kids take part in activities, interests, and hobbies they like. Kids can volunteer, play sports, sing in a chorus, or join a youth group or school club. These activities give kids a chance to have fun and meet others with the same interests. They can build confidence and friendships that help protect kids from bullying.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions. Sometimes spending 15 minutes a day talking can reassure kids that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- ◇ What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- ◇ What is lunch time like at your school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- ◇ What is it like to ride the school bus?
- ◇ What are you good at? What would do you like best about yourself?

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these:

- ◇ What does "bullying" mean to you?
- ◇ Describe what kids who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- ◇ Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?

- ◇ Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- ◇ What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- ◇ Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- ◇ What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- ◇ Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel?
- ◇ Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?
- ◇ Get more ideas for talking with children about life and about bullying. If concerns come up, be sure to respond.

There are simple ways that parents and caregivers can keep up-to-date with kids' lives.

- ◇ Read class newsletters and school flyers. Talk about them at home.
- ◇ Check the school website
- ◇ Go to school events
- ◇ Greet the bus driver
- ◇ Meet teachers and counselors at "Back to School" night or reach out by email
- ◇ Share phone numbers with other kids' parents