

# BULLYING



## What is bullying?

Bullying is intentional, unwanted, and aggressive behavior directed against a school-aged child. A bully uses their power—such as physical strength, popularity, or access to embarrassing information—to intentionally torment another child. The child who is bullied feels powerless to stop the bullying. The bullying behaviors are repeated, or have the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, physically or verbally attacking a child, spreading rumors, or deliberately excluding a child from a group.

## Types of bullying

- Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. This includes teasing, name calling, taunting, threats to cause harm, or inappropriate sexual comments.
- Social bullying hurts a child's reputation or social relationships. This includes purposefully embarrassing a child, deliberately excluding them from a group, spreading rumors or gossip, or telling other children not to be friends with a child.
- Physical bullying includes any aggression towards a person or their belongings, and includes hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, shoving, pinching, or tripping another child. Physical bullying also includes rude hand gestures or facial expressions, taking or damaging another child's things, or deliberately touching a child who does not want to be touched.

## Where and when does bullying occur?

### Why does it matter?

Bullying can occur almost anywhere. Bullying can occur in the school building or playground, after school or on the bus, traveling to and from school, in the child's neighborhood, on the internet or through phone messaging, and sometimes even in a child's home. Up to 30% of children report being involved in bullying, whether acting as a bully, being bullied, or witnessing bullying against a peer. Bullying can have serious effects on a child's safety, as well as their self-esteem social and academic functioning. In severe cases, bullying has contributed to tragedies, such as suicide and school shootings.

### Why do kids bully?

There is no single reason why kids bully. Some children bully to feel more in control, gain attention, or to gain

prestige amongst their peers. Some bullies have learned aggressive or violent behaviors at home, have been bullied themselves, or have inadequate parental supervision and involvement in their lives.

Bullying is more common when children associate with peers who bully, or who have positive attitudes about violence. Bullying is also much more likely to occur in schools where children are not closely supervised, especially on the playground, in the lunch room, or after school. Schools without anti-bullying programs or staff committed to addressing and stopping bullying, are more likely to have a bullying problem.

## Signs of bullying

Unless your child has obvious signs of bullying, such as bruises or injuries, it may be difficult to tell. Be sensitive to signs of stress or anxiety in your child. If they are acting differently, seem anxious, aren't sleeping or eating well, are struggling in school, or are avoiding school or the bus, bullying might be a cause.

## How can I help my child when they are being bullied?

Listen calmly and offer support. Praise your child for sharing with you. Reassure them that you will help them solve the problem together. Do not encourage your child to "fight back", as this can escalate violence and place children at risk. Your child should walk away from the bully, if possible, and report the situation to a trusted adult. Model and enforce respectful, non-violent behaviors in your home. Let someone at school, such as a teacher, counselor, or principal, know what is happening and ask them to help stop the bullying. If you must speak with the bully's parents, try to have a mediator involved. Monitor your child's ability to cope with bullying. A child psychologist or therapist may be helpful if your child is struggling with depression, anxiety or low self-esteem as a result of bullying. Educate yourself about your school's anti-bullying policies and local laws. In severe cases, you may need to contact legal authorities.

## References and resources:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/bullies.html>

<http://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/>

