

# A Parent's Guide to **BULLYING**

## Clear and Concise Ways to Prevent Bullying

Bullying is one of the negative aspects of daily school life for children as early as preschool. It is difficult for many parents to comprehend the damage that it causes.

Bullying happens to most children at one time or the other. It can turn an average school year into misery for the student receiving the torment. It is not always easy to discern if a child is a victim but bullying has certain characteristics that differentiate it from normal schoolyard playing.

**It's *intentional*** – It is done with the intent to cause harm and hurt feelings.

**It's *hurtful*** – It often involves an act of physical violence. Which includes verbal attacks, being ignored, threats, insults and leaving others out of social situations.

## Different Types of Bullying

Bullying comes in many forms, including:

- **Physical** – hitting, pushing, shoving, kicking, poling, bumping, tripping, and pulling hair.
- **Verbal** – teasing, name-calling, insulting, mimicking, threatening, blackmailing.
- **Mental** – gossiping, ignoring, isolating, excluding, taking things, spreading rumors.

A new term that has been coined in the past decade is cyber-bullying – the internet is used to torment, tease, harass, and threaten with email, text messages, message boards and chat rooms.

## Types of People Involved in Bullying

Three types of people make up this equation.

- **People who bully** start the trouble by physically, verbally, or mentally harassing someone.

- **The person who is bullied** (referred to as targets or victims) is chosen for what is perceived as a weakness or a difference. They may be smaller, disabled, shy/quiet or have a different sexual orientation. Or they may just have few friends that will stick up for them.
- **Bystanders** are people who are neither bullies nor victims. A bystander *is* involved when they stand by and do nothing to stop the act. *Because bystanders outnumber bullies and victims in school they are the ones who hold the power to make their school a bully-free zone.*

## Consequences of Being Bullied

While bullying may seem like a rite of passage to many parents the effects can be serious. A repeated target of bullies may have several issues: Trouble sleeping and/or studying, depression, thoughts of violence or revenge and suicidal thoughts and tendencies. These problems do not necessarily cease when the bullying is stopped. Many times they are carried over into adulthood. Repeated targets of bullies can have long-term self-esteem issues, depression, and many times vent their anger on others.

## Traits of Bullies

- They like power.
- They're intolerant of people who are different from them in some way.
- They are self-centered and they don't think or care about how others feel.
- They want to impress and/or be accepted by their peers.
- They have experienced or seen violence in their home.

## Ways to Avoid Conflict

Parents should teach their child these strategies if and when confronted by bullies.

- **Don't fight back.** This only escalates the situation and could end in someone getting seriously hurt.
- **Show that it doesn't bother you.** Because it is a power issue for the bully, a reaction is the biggest thrill. The bully wants to see his victim cry, shake or beg. Try not to show any of these reactions.
- **Walk away.** Go somewhere else. Walk toward a teacher, counselor or a group of friends. This does not mean the child is a coward. He is doing what is best for him and the school.
- **Tell the bully to stop.** Remain calm and with good eye contact and a clear voice, tell him to stop.

## Tips for Bystanders

Bystanders can use these hints to help prevent bullying.

- Don't encourage the bully by laughing, teasing, or tormenting the victim.
- Don't spread rumors or gossip.
- Don't give the bully approval in the antagonistic behavior.
- Bystanders who feel uncomfortable saying anything out loud can use body language and facial expressions to show disapproval.

Both victim and bystander should never hesitate to report the bullying. This is not tattling or snitching. Take a stand to make the school a safer place for everyone.

## Strategies for Success

Parents must realize they have the greatest potential to help their child. Parents can incorporate the following strategies to cope with bullying.

- Help the child discover strengths and weaknesses in his own personality.
- Teach children what bullying means.
- Ask on a regular basis how the child's day went and if he feels safe.
- Do not allow bullying at home. (This often happens between siblings)
- Define for the child what positive and negative friendship means.
- Teach and practice courtesy as a family.
- Consistently discipline the child if bullying is observed in the home
- Carefully listen to the child and be aware of changes in his behavior.

The different types of bullies and the damage they can do cause many children to dread what should be a happy experience. Looking for traits and signs along with using strategies to stop bullying before it starts will help parents feel more at ease when sending their children off to school.