



## BULLYING: IT'S NOT OK

### BULLYING AFFECTS ALL CHILDREN

- Victims of bullying can learn how to respond safely to physical, verbal, and social bullying.
- Children who are bullies can change their behavior. When bullies are allowed to continue, it often leads to future problems.
- Bystanders—children who watch the bullies pick on others—can help stop bullying.
- Concerned and involved adults can reduce bullying in schools and neighborhoods.

**B**ullying is when one child picks on another child **again and again**. Usually children who are being bullied are either weaker or smaller, are shy, and generally feel helpless.

### FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

- Both girls and boys can be bullies.
- Bullies target children who cry, get mad, or easily give in to them.
- There are 3 types of bullying.
  - Physical**—hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, punching
  - Verbal**—threatening, taunting, teasing, hate speech
  - Social**—excluding victims from activities or starting rumors about them

### ■ Bullying happens:

**At school**—in the halls, at lunch, or in the bathroom, when teachers are not there to see what is going on.

**When adults are not watching**—going to and from school, on the playground, or in the neighborhood.

**Through e-mail or instant messaging**—rumors are spread or nasty notes are sent.

### BULLYING IS DIFFERENT FROM FIGHTING OR TEASING

- A bully has power over another child.
- Bullies try to control other children by scaring them.
- Being picked on over and over can make your child a victim.
- Bullying usually happens when other children are watching.

### TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT BULLYING

Even if you don't think your child is bullied, a bully, or a bystander, you will be helping to protect your child just by asking these questions:

- "How are things going at school?"
- "What do you think of the other kids in your class?"
- "Does anyone get picked on or bullied?"

### WHEN YOUR CHILD IS BULLIED

Talk with your child about how to stay safe. Bullies always pick on smaller or weaker children. If there is a fight, and the bully "wins," this will only make matters worse for your child.



### **Help your child learn how to respond.**

“Let’s talk about what you can do and say if this happens again.”

Teach your child how to:

- Look the bully in the eye.
- Stand tall and stay calm in a difficult situation.
- Walk away.

Teach your child how to say in a firm voice:

- “I don’t like what you are doing.”
- “Please do NOT talk to me like that.”
- “Why would you say that?”

Just telling your child to do and say these things is not enough. For many children, these skills do not come naturally. It is like learning a new language—lots of practice is needed. Practice so that, in the heat of the moment, these skills will come to your child naturally.

### **Teach your child when and how to ask for help.**

Your child should not be afraid to ask an adult for help when bullying happens. Since some children are embarrassed about being bullied, parents need to let their children know that being bullied is not their fault.

### **Encourage your child to make friends with other children.**

There are many adult-supervised groups, in and out of school, that your child can join. Invite your child’s friends over to your home. Children who are loners are more likely to get picked on.

### **Support activities that interest your child.**

By participating in activities such as team sports, music groups, or social clubs, your child will develop new abilities and social skills. When children feel good about how they relate to others, they are less likely to be picked on.

### **Alert school officials to the problems and work with them on solutions.**

- Since bullying often occurs outside the classroom, talk with the principal, guidance counselor, or playground monitors, as well as your child’s teachers. When school officials know about bullying, they can help stop it.
- Write down and report all bullying to your child’s school. By knowing when and where the bullying occurs, you and your child can better plan what to do if it happens again.

- Some children who are bullied will fear going to school, have difficulty paying attention at school, or develop symptoms like headaches or stomach pains.

**Make sure an adult who knows about the bullying can watch out for your child’s safety and well-being when you cannot be there.**

## **WHEN YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY**

If you know that your child is bullying others, take it very seriously. *Now is the time when you can change your child’s behavior.*

In the long run, bullies continue to have problems. These problems often get worse. If the bullying behavior is allowed to continue, then when these children become adults, they are much less successful in their work and family lives and may even get in trouble with the law.

### **Set firm and consistent limits on your child’s aggressive behavior.**

Be sure your child knows that bullying is never OK.

### **Be a positive role model.**

Children need to develop new and constructive strategies for getting what they want. Show children that they can get what they want without teasing, threatening, or hurting someone. All children can learn to treat others with respect.

### **Use effective, nonphysical discipline, such as loss of privileges.**

When your child needs discipline, explain why the behavior was wrong and how your child can change it.

### **Help your child understand how bullying hurts other children.**

Give real examples of the good and bad results of your child’s actions.

### **Develop practical solutions with others.**

Together with the school principal, teachers, counselors, and parents of the children your child has bullied, find positive ways to stop the bullying.

**Supervise your child and help develop individual skills and interests.**

Children with too much “time on their hands” are more likely to find themselves in violent or dangerous situations.

**Ask for help.**

If you find it difficult to change the behavior, reach out to a professional, like a teacher, counselor, or pediatrician.

**WHEN YOUR CHILD IS A BYSTANDER**

Most children are neither bullied nor bullies—they just watch. There are things that your child can do to help stop bullying.

**Tell your child not to cheer on or even quietly watch bullying.**

This only encourages the bully who is trying to be the center of attention.

**Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult about the bullying.**

Talking to an adult is not “tattling.” Standing up for another child by getting help is an act of courage and safety. To make it easier, suggest taking a friend.

**Help your child support other children who may be bullied.**

Encourage your child to include these children in activities.

**Encourage your child to join with others in telling bullies to stop.**

Knowing what to say is important. If your child feels safe, the following statement may help to stop the bully: “Cool it! This isn’t going to solve anything.”

Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-JN-FX-0011 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. Adapted with permission from the Massachusetts Medical Society’s “Bullying—It’s Not OK” Parent Education Card, Copyright 2000.

All rights reserved.  
HE50390

Graphic design and illustrations by Artists For Humanity, a non profit arts and entrepreneurship program for Boston teens.

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™