



## Bullying

Bullying is an intentional act of aggression, based on an imbalance of power that is meant to harm a victim either physically or psychologically. Bullies usually operate alone or in small groups and choose to victimize individuals who they perceive as vulnerable. Bullies may target their victims because of their small stature, their younger age, or lower social status. The intent of the bully is to satisfy his/her own personal needs, such as obtaining money, homework, or simply using intimidation to prove one's status.

Bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere. It is not a phase children have to go through, it is not "just messing around," and it is not something to grow out of. Bullying can cause serious and lasting harm.

Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:

- **Imbalance of Power:** people who bully use their power to control or harm and the victims may have a hard time defending themselves
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** accidental actions are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm
- **Repetition:** incidents of bullying happen to the same person over and over by the same person or group

### Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms. Examples include:

- **Verbal:** name-calling, teasing
- **Social:** spreading rumors, leaving people out of a social group on purpose, breaking up friendships
- **Physical:** hitting, punching, shoving
- **Cyberbullying:** using the Internet, mobile phones, or other digital technologies to harm others

### How to Deal With/Prevent Bullying

#### *Students*

- Tell them to stop.
- Do not blame yourself. Remember that no matter what someone says, you should not be ashamed of who you are or what you feel.
- Be proud of who you are.
- Talk with someone you trust.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Certain policies and laws may apply to you. Federal, state, and local laws may also offer you protection if the bullying has risen to a certain level.

#### *Teachers*

- **Assess bullying in your school.** Determine where and when bullying occurs.
- **Increase adult supervision in bullying "hot spots."** Work with support staff, such as cafeteria staff, bus stop and playground monitors, and bus drivers, who may observe bullying incidents that unfold outside the classroom.

- **Involve students, parents, teachers, and staff in bullying prevention.** Establish a school safety committee and task force with a coordinator whose job it is to plan, implement, and evaluate your school's bullying prevention program.
- **Encourage teachers and staff to file incident reports of bullying.** Keep track of critical incidents, and assess and evaluate your bullying prevention program.
- **Create policies and rules.** Create a mission statement, code of conduct, and school-wide rules that establishes a climate in which bullying is not acceptable. Disseminate and widely communicate this information.
- **Integrate bullying prevention material into curriculum and school activities.** Implement curriculum-based, class-level discussions and activities about bullying (e.g., role-playing activities) at each grade level.
- **Promote extracurricular activities.** Reinforce positive social interactions in an inclusive environment.
- **Raise awareness about your bullying prevention initiative.** Launch an awareness campaign to make the objectives known to the school, parents, and community members.
- **Establish a school culture of acceptance, tolerance, and respect.** Take advantage of staff meetings, assemblies, class and parent meetings, newsletters to families, the school website, and the student handbook

#### *Parents*

- **Help your child understand bullying.** Explain what bullying is. It is more than physical; it can be done in person or over the phone or computer.
- **Keep open lines of communication with your child.** Check in with your child and listen to any concerns about friends and other students.
- **Encourage your child to pursue their interests.** Doing what they love may help your child be more confident among their peers and make friends with similar interests.
- **Teach your child to take a stand against bullying.** Give guidance about how to safely stand up to those who bully.
- **Talk to your child about seeking help from a trusted adult when feeling threatened by a bully.** Talk about who they should go to for help and role-play what they should say. Assure your child that they should not be afraid to tell an adult when someone they know is being bullied.
- **Know what is going on in your child's school.** Visit the school website, subscribe to the student paper, and join the PTA listserv or mailing list. Get to know other parents, school counselors, and staff. Contact the school by phone or e-mail if you have suggestions to make the school a safer and better environment for learning.

#### **Helping Build Confidence and Self-Esteem**

- Teach kids to solve problems without using violence and praise them when they do.
- Give children positive feedback when they behave well to help build their self-esteem. Help give them the self-confidence to stand up for what they believe in.
- Ask your children about their day and listen to them talk about school, social events, their classmates, and any problems they have.
- Take bullying seriously. Many kids are embarrassed to say they have been bullied. You may only have one chance to step in and help.
- If you see any bullying, stop it right away, even if your child is the one doing the bullying.
- Encourage your child to help others who need it.

- Don't bully your children or bully others in front of them. Many times kids who are bullied at home react by bullying other kids. If your children see you hit, ridicule, or gossip about someone else, they are also more likely to do so themselves.
- Support bully prevention programs in your child's school. If your school doesn't have one, consider starting one with other parents, teachers, and concerned adults.
- Talk to your child's teacher about it instead of confronting the bully's parents. If the teacher doesn't act to stop the bullying, talk to the principal.
- Teach your child nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, like walking away, playing with friends, or talking it out.
- Help your child act with self-confidence. With him or her, practice walking upright, looking people in the eye, and speaking clearly.
- Don't encourage your child to fight. This could lead to him or her getting hurt, getting in trouble, and beginning more serious problems with the bully.
- Involve your child in activities outside of school. This way he or she can make friends in a different social circle.

## **Cyberbullying**

Instead of happening face-to-face, cyberbullying happens through the use of technology such as computers, cell phones, and other devices. Cyberbullying peaks around the end of middle school and the beginning of high school.

### **Examples:**

- sending hurtful, rude, or mean text messages to others
- Spreading rumors or lies about others by e-mail or on social networks
- Creating websites, videos, or social media profiles that embarrass, humiliate, or make fun of others

Cyberbullying is very different from face-to face bullying because messages and images can be:

- sent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week , 365 days a year
- shared to a very wide audience
- sent anonymously

### **How to Deal/Prevent Cyberbullying**

#### *Kids, Teens and Young Adults*

- Always think about what you post or say. Do not share secrets, photos, or anything that might be embarrassing to you or others. What seems funny or innocent at the time could be used against you. You do not have complete control over what others forward or post.
- Set privacy settings on your accounts. Make sure that you are only sharing information with people you know and trust. Pay attention to notices from social networks, because sometimes privacy settings change.

If you or someone you know is being cyberbullied, know that it does not have to be this way. There are things you can do to help you and your friends:

- Do not respond to cyberbullying. Sometimes people post or text teasing or name-calling to get a reaction. If someone has posted or sent a message that could be hurtful to others, refuse to pass it along or respond to it.

- Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, e-mails, and text messages.
- Block person who is cyberbullying you.
- Report the incident to your school
- Ask for help.

#### *Parents*

- Communicate with your children.
- Be aware of where your children go online.
- Develop and enforce rules about technology.

If you know or suspect your children are being cyberbullied, take quick action.

- Talk with your children.
- Tell your child not to respond to cyberbullying.
- Empathize with your child.
- Work together to find solutions.
- Document ongoing cyberbullying.
- Block the person who is cyberbullying your children.
- Contact law enforcement. Police can respond if the aggressive behavior is criminal. The following may constitute a crime:
  - Threats of violence
  - Child pornography and sexting
  - Taking a photo image of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy
  - Harassment, stalking, or hate crimes
  - Obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Extortion
- Be persistent

#### *Schools*

Safe School Ambassadors Programs (<http://www.community-matters.org/safe-school-ambassadors>) are being successfully implemented by school districts across the country. In urban, rural and suburban schools, the Safe School Ambassadors program is effectively waking up the courage of young people, equipping 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade student leaders with the skills to speak up and intervene on behalf of their peers.

- Educate students, teachers, and other staff members about cyberbullying, its dangers, and what to do if someone is cyberbullied.
- Discuss cyberbullying with students.
- Be sure that your school's rules and policies address cyberbullying.
- Closely monitor students' use of computers at school.
- Investigate reports of cyberbullying immediately.

## **Tragedies of bullying**

**Phoebe Prince**- A 15 year old girl who committed suicide January 14, 2010 after being constantly bullied in school by two groups of girls.

**Ashley Rogers**- A sophomore at Glenn High School committed suicide April 14, 2010 after receiving taunting text messages after school.

**Tyler Clementi**- An 18 year old freshman at Rutgers University who committed suicide September 22, 2010 after his roommate streamed video of him kissing another man over the internet.

**Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold**- Two high school seniors who committed the Columbine High School Massacre which killed 15 people including themselves and injured 24 others. They were said to be bullied throughout high school.

**Carl Walker-Hoover**- An 11 year old in Springfield, MA who hung himself from a banister with an electric cord after repeatedly being called "gay" at school.

**Jaheem Herrera**- An 11 year old in Dekalb, GA who hung himself after constantly being called "gay" in school.

**Lawrence King**- A 15 year old in Oxnard, CA who was shot by another student because he was gay.

Resources:

[www.internetsafety.com](http://www.internetsafety.com)

Cyberbullying Research Center

[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)