

Bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is intentional, unwanted, and aggressive behavior directed against a person. A bully uses their power (such as physical strength, popularity, or access to embarrassing information) to intentionally bother another child. The child who is bullied feels powerless to stop the behavior. 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.



What are the types of bullying?

Bullying usually falls into three categories:

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. This includes teasing, name-calling, taunting, making threats to cause harm, or making sexually inappropriate comments.
- **Social bullying** hurts a child's reputation or social relationships. This includes purposely 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 toward a person or their belongings, such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, shoving, pinching, or tripping another child. Physical bullying also includes making 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: in the school building or on the playground; after school or on the bus; on the way 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, self-esteem, and 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 gain prestige among 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 spend time with peers who bully or 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 lunchroom, or after school. Schools without anti-bullying programs or staff committed to addressing and stopping bullying are more likely to have a bullying problem.

What are the signs of bullying?

Unless your child has obvious signs of bullying, it may be difficult to tell. Be sensitive to signs that may include:

- Physical harm, such as bruises or injuries
- Stress or anxiety
- Changes in behavior or the way your child acts
- Not eating or sleeping well
- Struggling in school
- Avoiding school or the bus

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 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.
- If possible, your child should walk away from the bully and report the situation to a trusted adult.
- Model and enforce respectful, nonviolent 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 get a mediator involved.
- Monitor your child's ability to cope with bullying.
- Schedule a visit with a child psychologist or therapist if your child is struggling with depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem because of bullying.
- Educate yourself about your school's anti-bullying policies and local laws. In severe cases, you may need to contact legal authorities.

Resources and References:

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

<https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/bullies.html>

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