



REPORT TO PARENTS

Bullying

Whether as direct as a punch or as subtle as a smirk, bullying is a serious problem in American schools, where many children have been bullied, and many children bully others. Bullying can leave permanent physical and emotional injuries.

Here are things to consider about bullying:

Know what bullying looks like.

Most bullying is verbal, not physical, like teasing, mocking, name-calling, and spreading hurtful rumors. Boys do the majority of the bullying and are more physical. Girls tend to bully by using verbal abuse and by excluding others. This form of bullying can be equally devastating to physical bullying because it is quick and often invisible to others.

Bullies enjoy bullying.

Don't feel sorry for children who bully because they are "sad on the inside." New research shows that they enjoy the power of bullying and making other people suffer. Far from regretting their acts, they often rationalize them by saying the victims provoked them in some way.

Children "go along to get along."

Victims of bullying are often avoided and rarely defended by their classmates because they don't want to chance becoming the bully's next victim.

Victims keep mum.

Children who are bullied usually suffer in silence because they feel that nothing can be done to help them. Some become isolated and depressed, and may even resort to violence against themselves or others.

Never be a bully and don't allow your kids to be.

Bullying often begins at home. Parents who bully model behavior that may lead to children doing the same. If you observe your child being cruel to others, including siblings, explain why their actions were wrong and require change.

Finally, let your children know that you are always available to discuss problems such as bullying with them. Ask if they or their friends are experiencing it at school. Talk to them about how to cope with them and the dangers of letting bullies "get away with it." And don't hesitate to alert the school as well.

Schools are aware of bullying and are always looking for ways to reduce or eliminate it. There are ways for parents to help as well. Teach your children to:



Be assertive. Every child should be taught how to respond to malicious comments. It works better to tell bullies to stop than to just laugh like it is funny, a natural reaction from embarrassment. If telling the bully to stop does not work, ignoring it once or twice may be the key as they will see they are not getting the reaction they desire. If it still does not go away, they need to get help. Bullies thrive on the results they get by hurting others. Help your children to understand that they can deprive bullies of satisfaction by not openly reacting to their taunts and insults.

Be a friend in need. Stress to your children the importance of looking out for their friends and supporting students who are being bullied. Encourage them to notify a responsible adult when they know of a child who is being seriously bullied, either physically or verbally.

Have strong self-esteem. Children who feel good about themselves, and show it, aren't as likely to become victims of bullies, who prefer easier targets. Build children's self-esteem by genuine praise, unconditional love and character education to help them walk tall.