

Bullying of Children in Schools and How to Get Rid of it

Bullying consists of three main types of abuse – emotional, verbal and physical. Bullying behavior may include name calling, verbal or written abuse, exclusion from activities, exclusion from social situations, physical abuse, or coercion.

Those who cause bullying are referred to as “bullies”. Bullies may behave this way to be perceived as popular or tough or to get attention.

Bullying ranges from simple one on one bullying to more complex bullying in which the bully may have friends who are willing to help the primary bully in his bullying activities. It primarily takes place at school but it's important to keep in mind that it can also take place at church, neighborhood etc...

In schools, bullying occurs in all areas of school. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs in PE, recess, hallways, bathrooms, on school buses and waiting for buses, classes that require group work and/or after school activities. Bullying in school sometimes consists of a group of students taking advantage of or isolating one student in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders who want to avoid becoming the next victim. Two of the main reasons people are bullied are because of appearance and social status. Bullies pick on the people they think don't fit in, maybe because of how they look, how they act (for example, kids who are shy and withdrawn), their race or religion, or because the bullies think their target may be gay or lesbian.

Cyberbullying or e-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging

The effects of bullying can be serious.

Unfortunately bullying is often ignored. School principals and managers should pay close attention to any sign of bullying at their school. Parents should also open the eyes of those principals and school directors about bullying in general and specifically if their own kids are being bullied.

Guys and girls who are bullied may find their schoolwork and health suffering.

Real examples of bullying:

- 1- Karim began having stomach pains and diarrhea and was diagnosed with a digestive condition called irritable bowel syndrome as a result of the stress that came from being bullied throughout ninth grade.
- 2- Georges spent his afternoons hungry and unable to concentrate in class because he was too afraid to go to the school cafeteria at lunchtime.
- 3- Ten year-old Carla asked her mom for more and more lunch money. Yet she seemed skinnier than ever and came home from school hungry. It turned out that Carla was handing her lunch money to a fifth-grader, who was threatening to beat her up if she didn't pay.

Studies show that people who are abused by their peers are at risk for mental health problems, such as low self-esteem, stress, depression, or anxiety. They may also think about suicide more.

Ways to deal with bullying

Anti-bullying programs are designed to teach students cooperation, as well as training peer moderators in intervention and dispute resolution techniques, as a form of peer support.

If your child is being bullied, there are ways to help him or her cope with it on a day-to-day basis *and* lessen its lasting impact. And even if bullying isn't an issue right in your house right now, it's important to discuss it so your kids will be prepared if it does happen.

It's important to take bullying seriously and not just brush it off as something that kids have to "tough out." The effects can be serious and affect kids' sense of self-worth and future relationships.

Signs of Bullying

Unless your child tells you about bullying — or has visible bruises or injuries — it can be difficult to figure out if it's happening.

But there are some warning signs. Parents might notice kids acting differently or seeming anxious, or not eating, sleeping well, or doing the things they usually enjoy. When kids seem moodier or more easily upset than usual, or when they start avoiding certain situations, like taking the bus to school, it might be because of a bully.

If you suspect bullying but your child is reluctant to open up, find opportunities to bring up the issue in a more roundabout way. For instance, you might see a situation on a TV show and use it as a conversation starter, asking "What do you think of this?" or "What do you think that person should have done?" This might lead to questions like: "Have you ever seen this happen?" or "Have you ever

experienced this?" You might want to talk about any experiences you or another family member had at that age

If your child tells you about a bully, focus on offering comfort and support, no matter how upset you are. Kids are often reluctant to tell adults about bullying because they feel embarrassed and ashamed that it's happening, or worry that their parents will be disappointed.

Sometimes kids feel like it's their own fault, that if they looked or acted differently it wouldn't be happening. Sometimes they're scared that if the bully finds out that they told, it will get worse. Others are worried that their parents won't believe them or do anything about it. Or kids worry that their parents will urge them to fight back when they're scared to.

Praise your child for being brave enough to talk about it. Remind your child that he or she isn't alone — a lot of people get bullied at some point. Emphasize that it's the bully who is behaving badly — not your child. Reassure your child that you will figure out what to do about it together.

Sometimes an older sibling or friend can help deal with the situation. It may help your daughter to hear how the older sister she idolizes was teased about her braces and how she dealt with it. An older sibling or friend also might be able to give you some perspective on what's happening at school, or wherever the bullying is happening, and help you figure out the best solution.

Take it seriously if you hear that the bullying will get worse if the bully finds out that your child told. Sometimes it's useful to approach the bully's parents. In other cases, teachers or counselors are the best ones to contact first. If you've tried those methods and still want to speak to the bullying child's parents, it's best to do so in a context where a school official, such as a counselor, can mediate.

It's also important to consider consulting a psychologist who will help your child become more self-confident and less anxious in order to face the bully.

Dr. Michel Nawfal
Medical Doctor and Clinical Psychologist
www.nawfalclinics.com