
The bully

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone keeps doing or saying things to have power over another person. Some of the ways they bully other people are by: calling them names, saying or writing nasty things about them, leaving them out of activities, not talking to them, threatening them, making them feel uncomfortable or scared, taking or damaging their things, hitting or kicking them, or making them do things they don't want to do.

Have any of these things happened to your child? Has your child done any of these things to someone else? Really, bullying is wrong behavior, which makes the person being bullied feel afraid or uncomfortable.

Why do some people bully?

There are a lot of reasons why some people bully. They may see it as a way of being popular, or making themselves look tough and in charge. Some bullies do it to get attention, or to make other people afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may not even understand how wrong their behavior is, and how it makes the person being bullied feel.

Why is bullying harmful?

Some people think bullying is just a part of growing up and a way for young people to learn to stick up for themselves. But bullying can make young people feel lonely, unhappy and frightened. It makes them feel unsafe and think there must be something wrong with them. They lose confidence and may not want to go to school anymore. It may make them sick.

Suggestions for handling teasing and put-downs:

1. If the child knows ahead of time that he may be teased, he may be able to use some problem-solving skills to come to a solution. Role-playing situations at home or at school can be an effective way of giving a child an opportunity to practice new behaviors.
2. If a behavior is offensive, the child may say, "Do not do that."
3. Teaching children exactly how to ignore someone is a very important skill. Give them opportunities to practice this skill.
4. Humor can be used effectively. For example, the boy who is called "shrimp" because of his size may smile and say, "I love shrimp."
5. Remember that all people get teased at one time or another. Everyone has to learn to handle it.
6. Consider the source. Some children bother everyone. Do not take it personally.
7. Disagree with the person if they have put you down. "That is your opinion. I happen to think I am OK."
8. Try to understand that put-downs come from people who have a low sense of self-esteem, so they need to be taught why some people put others down.

9. Use positive self-talk. "No matter what you say to me, I am still a worthwhile person." "I am lovable and capable."

Remember that the two reactions that generally reinforce bullying are fear and anger. Try to think of ways of responding that exclude reactions.

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For more information or help, please call:
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