



Bullies and their Victims

By Pat Blackwell, Ph.D.



Bullying defined

- “repeated physical or verbal abuse that causes a power imbalance”
- “A person who uses strength or power to control or intimidate those who are weaker”



Remember....

- A good deal of conflict is mutual and two sided
- Some conflict between peers is actually a normal part of social-emotional development
- Hovering and over involvement of adults can be damaging



What are some characteristics of children who are bullied?

- Children who are bullied are usually passive, timid, shy, unsure of themselves
- Lacks social skills
- Easily intimidated



- They tend to be smaller or in some way weaker than the bully
- Different in some way-racial minority, gay, learning or physically disabled, quirky

Some victims are provocative

- Anxious and aggressive, irritating
- Causes irritation and disruption around him
- Is emotionally reactive
- Prolongs conflicts
 - Children who are impulsive may provoke bullying in others



What are some characteristics of children who bully others?

- Bullies have a desire to dominate others, possibly because they have low self-esteem.
- They pick on others as a means of dealing with their own negative feelings. In many cases bullies have themselves been victims of bullying.



characteristics of children who bully others?

- Sometimes bullies are acting out uncomfortable feelings they have such as depression or frustration.
- Bullies often move on to more destructive and anti-social behavior as teens or adults so it requires attention.





Three kinds of bullying

Verbal

Name calling, taunting, threatening are common. Most bullying starts off as verbal then escalates to physical

Physical

Beating, hitting pushing, stealing, spitting are some examples

Psychological

Spreading rumors, excluding the child from activities and ridicule are ways that bullies intimidate or terrorize a victim. Berating someone based on their race, sexual preference, physical, mental or psychological state may also be a form of psychological bullying. This can be direct or via social media
(Cyber-bullying)



How does bullying affect a child?

- A child who is bullied may begin to feel bad about him or her self. His or her self-esteem may decrease.
- A victim may become depressed and withdrawn. He/she may stop trusting others and fail to make friends.
- Sometimes victims hold in these negative feelings and eventually lash out in a very strong way, against themselves or others.

The effects of being bullied

- Two FBI studies have found that approximately 70% of school shooters were the victims of bullies.....





Some signs that a child is being bullied include

- Bed-wetting, sleep problems, nightmares, cries in sleep- for young children
- Irritability or withdrawal or aggression
- Depression or sadness
- Doesn't want to go out of the house, or is clingy with parents. Your child may claim he has headaches to avoid going to school. He/she may lose interest in schoolwork.

How can parents help the child who is being bullied?





What not to do:

- Show your anger- Focus on helping the child regain or develop positive feelings about him or herself.
- Encourage the child to fight back with violence. This usually leads to more aggression and the victim is at high risk of being beaten up. It also encourages the child to use bully behavior himself.

What not to do... Ignore the situation.

- Tell your child calmly that you “hear him”. Give him time to talk about his feelings.



- Ask how he/she wants to deal with the situation. Also do not tell the child “just to ignore the situation”.

Don't Do all of the problem solving.

- Give your child an opportunity (with your coaching and support) to try and solve the problem.
- Do only as much as you have to do and leave the rest to the child. This will build his confidence and mastery.
- Always discuss with your child what you plan to do and what he/she will be expected to do.
- Teach social skills



Get information

- Make sure that what your child is reporting is actually bullying...





What to do:

If your child is being seriously abused immediate action is necessary

Listen- If you have observed your child being bullied, or if you suspect it, get your child talking about his feelings. If the bullying is happening at school look for some signs like refusing to go to school, ripped or torn clothing, bruises or cuts. Also observe the above signs that a child is being bullied. Ask general questions like “Who do you sit with at lunch? Who do you play with at recess? What do you like best/least about school and why”.



What to do:

- Build his self esteem- Tell him it is not his fault. If he is picked on because he is small or different, tell him you love him the way he is. Talk to him about bullies and help him put the situation in that context.
- Remind him that it is not his fault and you are in no way ashamed of him.

What to do:

- Help your child identify some things she is good at and encourage her participation in these things.
- Also encourage physical activity, martial arts and sports



What to do:

- Recognize what she does well and tell her.
- Praise should be sincere and specific for it to matter.



What to do:

- Teach him how to make friends. Invite friends over to the house to play.



What to do:

- Stay calm- If he admits to being bullied, resist becoming too upset. This may make him feel sad and he may stop talking. He may even feel as though he has let you down by being a bully victim.





Provide strategies-

- Teach your child to stand up for herself without violence or aggression
- If the abuse is just verbal tell her to walk away
- Teach your child to say “NO; or Stop that”; also encourage her to tell the bully how she feels.
- Encourage him to tell an adult if he feels he is in danger.
- Encourage your child to stay in a group if she is being bullied at school or in the neighborhood.
- Help your child identify some safe places to retreat from bullying.

Practice

- Help your child practice what he can do or say when he is bullied.



● ● ● | Encourage your child to speak and walk in an assertive manner.



Read about it

- There are several books available on the topic of bullies and bullying.
- Reading and talking about it will make your child feel less alone.
- Ask your librarian for some references.



● ● ●

When bullying occurs in a family what can parents do?





When bullying occurs in a family-Siblings

- First, acknowledge that both the bully and the victim in the situation require your attention.
- Next, increase supervision as well as structure of routines and activities at home.
- Observe and record when bullying usually occurs. If it can be isolated to a specific situation or time of day, look at ways of increasing your supervision at those times.
- Make sure you maintain a predictable routine at home
- Some children “fall apart” when their time is unstructured. Give them chores and structured activities (games, art projects, physical activities).



When bullying occurs in a family

- Refrain from name calling of any sort in your home and have zero tolerance if kids name call.
- Put limits on roughhousing and make physical contact limits (i.e. rules about ways family members can and cannot touch each other; this may include family pets)



Bullying at home

- Recognize that parents are models of behavior. Never bully your spouse or children or other family members. In other words, never hit, tease, or ridicule your child or spouse- even if it is “in fun”.
- Parents must make sure they are in no way condoning bullying by laughing at or telling jokes that berate someone because of their race, religion or sexual orientation- or allowing their child to tell such jokes.



When bullying occurs in a family

- Explore spirituality as a means of teaching about empathy, good will and mindfulness. This may or may not involve formal religion.
- Create a culture of respectfulness in the home. Do good deeds for each other, nurture and encourage each other, spend more time together as a family, do community service as a family.
- Model respectfulness as you supervise domestic workers or staff that you supervise

● ● ●

What can parents do to help a child who is a bully?



Helping the bully

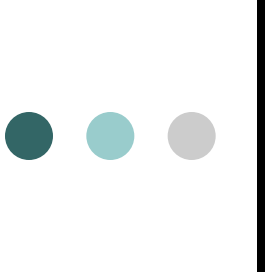
- Recognize that the child who is the bully is as much in need of your attention and sensitivity as the victim.
- Try to get a handle on why the child is bullying, while staying calm.





Get him talking by asking the following questions:

- *How do you feel about yourself?*
- *How do you think things are going at home or school?*
- *Who are your friends and what do you like to do together? Are you being bullied?*
- *What do you think about being thought of as a bully? Why do you think you are bullying?*
- *What might help you stop bullying?*



Emphasize that you consider the bullying a problem that needs to stop.

- Tell your child that you will help him in whatever way he suggests to stop bullying. Then have him list several ways he can learn new behavior. Teach him that he can be powerful in other ways.
- Practice these strategies with him and tell him you will be there to help him until he has learned to control himself. Set clear limits about his behavior. When you observe him being violent, stop him immediately.



Helping the bully

- When you observe him behaving well praise him immediately- is specific with your praise.
- Give him opportunities to help others or do pro-social activities such as volunteering or community service.

● ● ● | Helping the bully

- If the bullying is happening in the family, have a family meeting so everyone is aware of the problem.
- Enlist everyone's support, and make it clear that it is not okay to bully the child who has been bullying.



Helping the bully

- If the bullying is happening in the family, have a family meeting so everyone is aware of the problem.
- Enlist everyone's support, and make it clear that it is not okay to bully the child who has been bullying.





Helping the bully

- If the bullying has been happening at school, meet with teachers or other adults about the behavior and what your child is going to do to improve his behavior.
- Also ask them how they might help your child exercise self-control and build self esteem and a sense of poer in a pre-social way (responsibilities, leadership opportunities in the school or community).



Helping the bully

- Recognize that often bullies have low self-esteem or even depression.
- Build his self esteem with praise and recognition for good behavior and skills. Make sure he has plenty of structured time, but that he does not feel overwhelmed.
- Look for sources of frustration that may be making him feel bad about him self.



Helping the bully

- Seek mental health counseling if the child is depressed, hurts animals, or cannot curb his aggressive behavior. In rare cases bullies may be showing signs of emotional disturbance or sociopathic tendencies. These problems often run in families- do not delay get help.



Bystanders





Why do others stand by and do nothing?

- Diffusion of responsibility
- Fear of being victimized or seen as a fink
- Roles, pressure to conform to powerful models
- Absorbing a “culture” of tolerance in a school or other environment (i.e. bullying is acceptable, even cool)

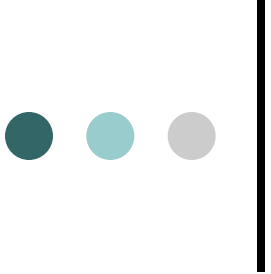
Parents and teachers can empower bystanders

- Schools send clear message of zero tolerance for bullying
- No one is powerless
- What to do if bullying is observed- What is the bystander's role...



● ● ● | It helps to get involved....





Parents have a role in empowering bystanders

- Educate their children about their role and responsibility
- Provide tools for safe intervention
- Encourage non violence
- Actively partner with schools to develop anti-bullying policies and initiatives that involve student body in leadership positions



Schools and bullying



Thoughtful development of anti-bullying policies

- Thoughtful
 - Definition
 - Policy
 - Intervention
 - Prevention



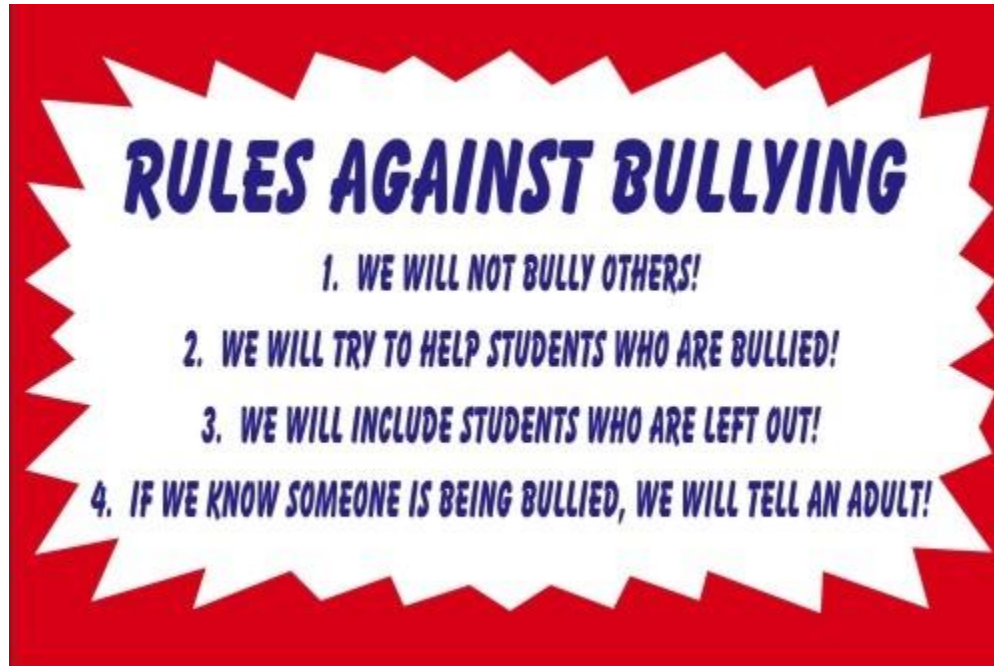


Schools and policing

- Careful interpretation of what bullying is and is not
- Avoid over policing and under policing
- Avoid hovering but provide adequate supervision and intervention
- Skills building for bullies and victims as well as bystanders versus punishment only initiatives



Students helping students





Communities and violence



We all have a role....



We all have a role...

- Get active in community organizations that address violence
- Monitor aggressive models in your home (TV, games and direct models of aggression)
- Model respect and tolerance for all people
- Support leaders who promote non-violence