



Tips for parents and schools

Bullying at School

Read this



basic education

Department:
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School bullying is a type of bullying that occurs either inside or outside of school.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, or emotional and is usually repeated over a period of time.

In schools, bullying occurs in all areas. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs during school breaks, in 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 learners taking advantage of or isolating one learner in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders who want to avoid becoming the next victim.

What schools can do !

Strategies to combat bullying in schools.

- Make sure an adult knows what is happening to their children;
- Enforce anti bully laws as part of the Code of Conduct for learners;
- Make it clear that bullying is never acceptable;
- Recognize that bullying can occur at all levels within the school;
- Hold a school conference day or forum devoted to bullying/victim problems;
- Increase adult supervision in the schoolyard, halls and toilets;
- Emphasize caring, respect and safety.
- Emphasize consequences of hurting others;
- Enforce consistent and immediate consequences for aggressive behaviours;
- Improve communication among school administrators, teachers, parents and learners;
- Have a school problem box where learners can report problems, concerns and offer suggestions;
- Help bullies with anger control and the development of empathy;
- Encourage positive peer relations;
- Offer a variety of extra-curricular activities which appeal to a range of interests;
- Keep in mind the range of possible causes: e.g., medical, psychological, developmental, family problems, etc.

What Parents can do !

Remember: For behaviour to be labelled as bullying, it has to be persistent (repeated over time) and intentionally designed to hurt or frighten your child.

Remember the bully has power and control over your child!

- Assure children that you will immediately investigate and report the situation with the school principal or senior teacher;
- Check if your child needs to avoid certain areas on school property at certain times;
- Suggest that your school increases supervision in the high-risk areas where the child has to go or more closely monitor the child's interactions with other learners;
- Encourage your child to talk to an adult, such as a supportive teacher, every day to provide an update on the mistreatment;
- Stay calm;
- Be sensitive to the fact that your child may feel embarrassed and ashamed;
- Find out **what** happened, **who** was involved, and **when** and **where** it happened, and **keep a record** of this information;
- Express confidence that you, the adults at school, and your child will be able to find a solution.
- Ask your child to express his/ her thoughts and feelings about what happened;
- Explain that bullies seek to hurt and control. So your child must not let them know he is hurt by their behaviour.
- Let your child know that it is normal to feel hurt, fear, and anger;
- Avoid being a "fix-it" dad or mom by calling the bully's parents. Most of the time, this action is not effective. However, not all parents of bullies respond in a protective manner.
- Don't tell your child to retaliate. It's against the rules, and retaliation frequently makes the bullying worse and more persistent.
- Don't tell your child to ignore the bully. Most of the time, ignoring doesn't work;
- Teach your child to be assertive, but not aggressive;
- Don't promise that you will not tell anyone;.
- Ask for a copy of the school's policy.
- Involve your child in activities inside and outside school. Involvement in activities he or she enjoys increases the chances of high-quality friendships;
- Monitor your child's whereabouts and his friendships;
- Watch for signs of depression and anxiety in your child, and do not hesitate to seek professional counselling;
- Don't give up.

Warning Signs of being bullied

These are some of the warning signs victims of bullying might display.

- Sudden decreased interest in school (wants to stay at home);
- Sudden loss of interest in favourite school activities;
- Sudden decrease in quality of school work;
- Wants the parent to take her to school instead of riding the bus;
- Seems happy on weekends, but unhappy, preoccupied, or tense on Sundays;
- Suddenly prefers the company of adults;
- Frequent illnesses such as headaches and stomach aches;
- Sleep issues such as nightmares and sleeplessness;
- Comes home with unexplained scratches, bruises, and torn clothing;
- Talks about avoiding certain areas of the school or neighbourhood;
- Suddenly becomes moody, irritable, or angry and starts bullying others (e.g., siblings, children in neighbourhood)
- Seeks the wrong friends in the wrong places (e.g., drug users, gangs, etc)
- Talks about being sad, anxious, depressed, or having panic attacks;
- Wants to stay home on weekends;
- Talks about suicide

These tips can help parents understand the problems their children may face when harassed at school. Parents and educators must stay vigilant, look for these warning signs, and attempt to address problems quickly. Learners must feel safe at school; parents and other adults can help learners who suffer at the hands of bullies.

