



### **JUST DON'T STAND THERE - END BULLYING**

Every child has the right to feel safe at home, at school and in their community. Bullying should not be viewed as normal part of growing up, yet it has become a pervasive problem facing youth today. Bullying will not go away on its own and without intervening action often worsens over time. Parents, students, school administrators, classroom educators, D.A.R.E. officers need to join forces to bring incidents of bullying to an end.

#### **How many children are affected by bullying?**

- Nine out of 10 elementary school kids have been subjected to physical or psychological bullying. (Thomas P. Tarshis, M.D., director, Bay Area Children's Association, Cupertino, Calif.; Christopher Lucas, M.D., Child Study Center, and director, Early Childhood Service, New York University, New York City; April 2007, *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*)
- As many as seventy-five percent of children have been victims of bullying during their school careers, about half of parents do not consider bullying as a problem for their children. (Are We Safe?: The 2000 National Crime Prevention Survey, National Crime Prevention Council, 2001)
- 39% of middle schools and 20% of elementary schools report incidence of bullying occurring at least weekly. (Institute of Educational Science, Crime, Violence, Discipline and Safety in U.S. Public Schools, Finding From the Survey on Crime and Safety: 2009-10)
- An estimated 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students. (National Education Association)
- One out of every 10 students drops out or changes schools because of repeated bullying. (American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry, March 2011)

#### **What Should Parents Do - Prepare**

##### **What is bullying?**

Bullying is an aggressive or unwanted behavior:

- Repeated over time to isolate, harm or control another person
- Involves an imbalance of power or strength between the bully and the target

## What are the different types of bullying?

**Physical bullying** - includes any physical contact (punching, hitting, kicking, throwing objects) that may hurt or injure a person. It is estimated that in elementary and middle schools, 30.5% of all bullying is physical. Taking, damaging or destroying someone's property may be a part of physical bullying.

**Verbal bullying** - verbal threats of violence or aggression against someone. Name calling, making offensive remarks, or joking about a person's religion, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or the way they look. Approximately 46.5% of all bullying in schools is of the verbal type.

**Indirect bullying** - spreading rumors or stories about someone, telling others about something that was told to you in private and excluding others from groups for the purpose of being harmful or causing harm. About 18.5% of all bullying is of the indirect type.

**Social isolation**- purposely excluding someone from a group to cause harm or hurt. It also may include spreading rumors, and making fun of someone by pointing out their differences.

**Intimidation** - causing a person to submit by issuance of a threat or creating fear.

**Cyberbullying** – intentionally intimidating, issuing threats, harming a person or their reputation via electronic media.

## Educate your child

Teach your child:

- That bullying isn't an acceptable behavior
- The difference between:
  - Tattling – Attempting to get someone in trouble for what may be harmless behavior.
  - Telling – Providing information to a trusted adult to help someone or keep them safe.
  - Reporting – Telling a responsible adult of the harmful or potentially harmful actions of another.

Emphasize bullying is wrong, and communicate you will not tolerate mistreatment of others.

Help your child develop empathy for others and how they can help if they observe bullying.

Teach your child not to be a bystander, most bullying occurs in front of others and those that observe the situation and do nothing contribute to the continuance of the bullying...

Bystanders often fail to report what they observe and need to understand safe and responsible ways to report to a trusted adult.

Stress development of your child's skills for anger control and management.

Discuss bullying scenarios and positive ways to resolve situations.

Your child needs to understand they are expected to tell a responsible adult if they witness or are the target of bullying. 85% of bullying incidents are witnessed by others.

### **Know the bullying policies in your child's life**

Know what the bullying policy and action plan is for your child's school, social organizations (i.e.: scouts and community service club) and other activities (i.e.: after school clubs and sports teams).

Discuss with your child the plans that are in place at their school, as well as other activities, and how to safely report what they observe.

### **Signs your child is being bullied**

Unless your child tells you about bullying, or has visible bruises or injuries, it can be difficult to detect if bullying is happening. It is therefore important that you are very aware of your child's moods, habits, friends and behaviors.

There are some warning signs of a child being the target of bullying:

- Coming home from school or other activities with damaged or missing clothing, books or other belongings
- Unexplainable cuts, bruises and scratches
- Spending less time with friends and being social
- Exhibiting unexplained fear or reluctance to go to school, walk to and from school, ride the bus or take part in afterschool activities
- Loss of interest in school work or a drop in grades and performance
- Comments of friends and acquaintances
- Appearing sad, moody, teary or depressed after school
- Complaining frequently of headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments
- Having trouble sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Experiencing a loss of appetite

- Appearing anxious, nervous or hypervigilant
- Suffering from low self-esteem
- Decrease in electronic social interaction
- Having or expressing (i.e. writings, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) thoughts of self harm or suicide

### **What if you suspect your child is being bullied, but they won't talk about it**

It is important to listen to your child, they may be telling what you suspect, but are not choosing to use the words you expect to hear.

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

### **What to do if your child is being bullied**

#### **What You Should Do**

- **Talk with your child.** Focus on your child. Express your concern and make it clear that you want to help.
- **Listen to your child.** Make sure you understand what they are telling you or are trying to tell you.
- **Stay calm.** You want your child to feel comfortable in coming to you for assistance. Remember the discussion should focus upon your child and the circumstance they are dealing with.
- **Take the problem seriously.** Unless addressed the bullying may continue and even escalate.
- **Determine if what has occurred constitute a crime.** Assault, vandalism and theft are examples of crimes that may occur in conjunction with incidents involving bullying. If you believe a crime has occurred, report the matter to the concerned law enforcement agency.
- **Do not blame your child.** Do not assume your child contributed to becoming the target of bullying.
- **Empathize with your child.** Confirm your child's feelings that what they have experienced is wrong. Communicate that you are glad they came to you to talk about what has happened...
- **Work together to find solutions.** Involve your child in a discussion about the course of action to be taken to resolve the matter.
- **Document ongoing bullying.** Obtain and record as much information and detail as possible. If the bullying your child has experienced involves cyberbullying, keep a record of all messages or postings.

- **Be persistent.** Bullying may not be resolved overnight.
- **Stay vigilant to other possible problems that your child may be having.** Some of the warning signs observed may be signs of other problems. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child's school.
- **Open the line of communication.** Call or set up an appointment to talk with the person designated as having authority to resolve the situation.
- **In seeking resolution, be persistent and assertive.** Remember the focus of your action is to seek the successful resolution. Although this will be an emotionally charged situation, do not become overbearing and aggressive, you want the focus of your action to remain upon the bully and their behavior.
- **Get help for your child.** Seek advice from your child's guidance counselor or other school-based health professionals. They may be able to help your child cope with the stress of being bullied.
- **Commit to making the bullying stop.** Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see whether the bullying has stopped. You may need to seek an attorney's help or contact local law enforcement officials if the bullying persists or escalates.
- **Communicate with your child.** Most importantly keep open lines of communication and listen carefully to what your child is sharing about their daily lives.

#### **What you should not do**

- **Do not assume the bullying described cannot occur.** Bullying can take place even in adult supervised environments.
- **Do not tell your child to ignore the bullying.** Be supportive and gather information about the situation. Ignoring the bullying may allow it to escalate...
- **Do not blame your child for being bullied.** Your child is the victim and did something to provoke the bullying.
- **Do not encourage your child to retaliate or harm the person who is bullying them.** Revenge could get your child hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- **Do not directly contact the bully or parents of the bully.** It may make matters worse. School or other concerned officials should contact the child and parents of the child involved.
- **Do not tell your child that you will not inform or involve others.** The remedy for the situation in all likelihood will require others to be notified and to become engaged.