

How to know if your child is a victim of Bullying

Article made possible by the National PTA

Author: Tara L. Kuther

Children who are bullied often tell no one about their misery out of shame, fear of retaliation, and feelings of hopelessness. Be aware of the following signs of victimization:

- Subtle changes in behavior (withdrawn, anxious, preoccupied, demonstrates loss of interest in school and in favorite activities)
- Comes home from school with bruises and scratches, torn or dirtied clothing, or with missing or damaged books and property
- Loss of appetite
- Excessive trips to the school nurse
- Inability to sleep, bad dreams, crying in sleep
- Repeatedly loses clothing, money, or other valuables
- Appears afraid or reluctant to go to school in the morning
- Repeated headaches or stomachaches—particularly in the morning
- Chooses a roundabout or strange route to and from school
- Feels lonely
- Sensitive or withdrawn when asked about his or her day
- Big appetite after school (perhaps because lunch or lunch money was taken)
- Reluctant to take the school bus

Most children will not display every warning sign. The most important thing to look for is a change in a child's behavior. When determining what action to take, consider the specific warning signs the child shows: How serious are they? How frequently do they occur?

For more information about how to stop bullying, become a National PTA member.

National PTA www.pta.org

Safeguarding Your Children at School

Helping Children Deal with a School Bully

Bullying is often considered a "kids will be kids" problem. According to the National School Safety Center, however, bullying has become a pervasive and serious form of harassment in many schools. Dr. Dan Olweus, a professor of psychology and leading expert on bully-victim problems, reports that one child in 10 is regularly attacked either verbally or physically by bullies. Elementary school-age children are the most frequent target of bullying by older students. The best way to safeguard your children from becoming a victim of a bully is to teach them how to be assertive. This involves encouraging your children to express their feelings clearly, to say no when they feel pressured or uncomfortable, to stand up for themselves verbally without fighting, and to walk away in more dangerous situations. Bullies are less likely to intimidate children who are confident and resourceful.

Tips for Helping Children Deal with Bullies

- Teach your children early on to steer clear of youth with bullying behavior.
- Teach your children to be assertive rather than aggressive or violent when confronted by a bully. Instruct them to walk away and get help from an adult in more dangerous situations. Practice various responses with your children through role-playing.
- Teach your children to never defend themselves from bullies with a gun or other weapon.
- Keep communication lines open with your children. Encourage your children to share information about school and school-related activities.
- Pay attention to the following symptoms that may indicate your child is being bullied: withdrawal, abrupt lack of interest in school, a drop in grades, or signs of physical abuse.
- If your child is a victim of bullying at school, inform school officials immediately. Keep your own written records of the names, dates, times, and circumstances of bullying incidents. Submit a copy of this report to the school principal.
- Respond to your children's concerns and fears with patience, love, and support.

Profile on Bullies

The following are traits common to bullies:

- They are concerned with their own pleasure rather than thinking about anyone else.
- They want power.
- They are willing to use other people to get what they want.
- They feel hurt inside.
- They find it difficult to see things from someone else's perspective.

From Helping Kids Handle Conflict, National Crime Prevention Council in association with the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

For More Information

Safe at School: Awareness and Action for Parents of Kids K-12

by Carol Silverman Saunders

Free Spirit Publishing Inc. 400 First Ave. N., Suite 616 Minneapolis, MN 55401-1730 (612) 338-2068

The tips in this book help parents deal with bullying, gangs, sexual harassment, and other school safety issues.

Set Straight on Bullies

by Stuart Greenbaum with Brenda Turner and Ronald D. Stephens

National School Safety Center 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290 Westlake Village, CA 91362 (805) 373-9977

The problem of bullying is examined in this book. It offers prevention and intervention strategies for parents, teachers, and students.

Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me? A Guide to Handle Bullies

by Terrence Webster-Doyle

Atrium Society Publications P.O. Box 816 Middlebury, VT 05753 (800) 966-1998 or (802) 388-0922

This book helps children and teens to develop the confidence needed to resolve conflicts without fighting and to cope with bullies.

National PTA www.pta.org