

A Parent's Guide to Bullying

At some point in their childhood, many children will encounter a bully. Being targeted, picked on, or harassed by another child (or group of children) is an unfortunate but common rite of passage.

Kids who are bullied often have feelings of low self-worth, symptoms of depression, and poorer mental and physical health than their non-bullied peers. The effects of ongoing bullying often worsen over time.

While physical injuries are the most obvious indication of bullying, other signs include:

- ▶ Inventing reasons to avoid school or activities
- ▶ Changing routines or not wanting take the bus
- ▶ Sudden disappearance of favorite belongings
- ▶ Dropping grades or poor performance in school

If you are concerned about the impact bullying could have on your child, these steps may help:

- ▶ Teach your child the difference between normal teasing and bullying behavior.
- ▶ Encourage your child to tell you about bullying. Some children may be reluctant to talk about these experiences because they feel embarrassed.

- ▶ If your child tells you they have been bullied, let them know that you are on their side. Stay calm, even if you feel angry or frustrated. Avoid making promises you can't keep.
- ▶ Explain to your child that kids who bully are taking their unhappiness out on others. Make it clear that the bullying is not your child's fault.
- ▶ Help your child rehearse appropriate responses to a bully's taunts. Having language to fall back on, such as "Please stop" or "This is not okay" may be helpful. Encourage your child to stay calm and walk away from the bully whenever possible.
- ▶ Remind your child that it is okay to ask for help from a teacher, coach, or other adult.
- ▶ If the bullying is becoming more than your child can handle, notify your child's teacher or principal. If you know the other child's parents, you may want to have a conversation with them as well. Remain calm and respectful to avoid escalating the situation.

For more ideas on how to help your child handle bullying, contact LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.



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