

BULLYING

Just Kids Being Kids Or A Deadly Epidemic?



IMBALANCE OF POWER

Bullying can begin at a young age, frequently affecting loved ones and peers. It is often thought that teen and preteen cruelty is a “normal” part of a growing up and that “everyone goes through it.” It can begin with a look or innocent joke and escalate over time, leading to depression, addictions, mental disorders, low self-esteem, problems in school, and even criminal activity. Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of power, unwanted aggressive behavior, or intention to harm, and is carried out repeatedly over time. A target can be victimized by an individual or group of peers who intentionally inflict injury or discomfort upon the victim through physical contact, words, body language, social exclusion, or other means.

The classic schoolyard bully has always been there. But now, bullying is beefed up electronically; anonymous cyber-bullying is also a possibility. Adolescents and even small children communicate through social media and texting; this provides a 24/7 opportunity to do damage to one another. Kids and teenagers who have experienced victimization by this type of inescapable exposure, report an overwhelming sense of helplessness and isolation. One sensitive bystander or group of independent observers can have the most control over the dynamics involved in bullying. When a community takes a stand, deciding to be a positive influence with no tolerance for bullying, there is a drastic drop in bullying cases.

TAKE ACTION

- **Make time and listen!** If your child is being bullied, it is important that they feel as though you are concerned and empathetic about their situation. They do not need to be lectured, they already have enough stress. Utilize this time to reassure them that they are loved and that you will support them through this time in their life.
- **Document and report every incident of bullying to your school administration**, and if need be, the police. Make sure to save all communications and include dates, locations, and names of the people you reported the incident to.
- **Do not stand by and hope it gets better.** Get involved in your child’s life by encouraging positive activities such as sports, music, family outings, and by modeling appropriate conflict resolution. Utilize your school administration as a resource to follow up with every incident.
- **Communication is key.** Children that communicate their problems are more likely to recover. Create opportunities for open dialog, encourage them to continually speak with school staff and reinforce a positive self-image.
- **Monitor your child’s behavior on and offline.** It is easy for a child to switch roles from a victim to a bully and vice versa. Know your child’s peer groups, monitor their internet use and online posts, check their room and car, and discuss family values and boundaries.

- **If your child begins bullying others, calmly let them know that you will not tolerate their behavior.** Most states have taken a strong stand against bullying; discuss the legal ramifications.
- **Make your child's behavior your responsibility.** If your child is the bully, work with your school administration and hold your child accountable to predetermined consequences.
- **Seek professional help when needed.** Many times there are underlying causes of bullying and a victim can suffer from lasting emotional consequences. Regardless of whether your child is the bully or the victim, utilize resources like your school, Boys and Girls Clubs, local church, and health care professionals to bring the issue to resolution. If the problem persists, or becomes violent in nature, contact your local police.

TEACH YOUR CHILD

To become a healthy bystander, by:

1. Coming to the aid of others. This can be done by removing the target from the situation (tell the target that a teacher needs to see them) or by taking the opportunity to speak positively about the victim, on or offline. If your child feels safe, they also have the option to tell the bully to stop.
2. Documenting and reporting everything that they observed. It is important that they understand that, telling is not snitching. Tragically, no one intervenes in bullying 85% of the time. Your child can make a big impact by communicating the problem to school administration.
3. Becoming the difference. Teach your child not to support bullying by watching or joining in. Instead they can become involved in the community and school by creating or joining an anti-bullying

campaign. Encourage them to be creative in finding ways to speak positively in the lives of their peers, even if they are the victim.

WARNING SIGNS

Target (Victim):

- Comes home hurt and/or with damaged or missing belongings
- Has trouble sleeping or begins sleeping all the time
- Shows a sudden change in eating habits
- Avoids certain places, school, or other activities with peers
- Appears sad, moody, angry, anxious, or depressed when they come home
- Feels helpless and/or talks about suicide
- Experiences a loss of friends or loss of interest in peer groups

Bully:

- Becomes violent with and/or frequently blames others
- Frequently involved in physical or verbal fights with others
- Commonly sent to the Principal's office or detention
- Suddenly has extra money or new belongings
- Has friends that bully others
- Is overly competitive
- Exhibits low or hyper self-esteem

RESOURCES

notMYkid – Bullying
www.notmykid.org/bullying/

HelpGuide.org - Teen Depression
www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm

www.StopBullying.gov

Suicide/Crisis (Maricopa County)
 (480) 784-1500

Terros Crisis (602) 222-9444

Samaritan Crisis Service (602) 254-HELP

Empact Crisis Hotline (480) 784-1500

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notMYkid[®]
 INSPIRING POSITIVE LIFE CHOICES

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**If a life-threatening emergency arises, contact 911
 or go to the nearest emergency room**