

TOGETHER WE CAN BE BULLY FREE[®]

A MINI-GUIDE FOR PARENTS BY ALLAN L. BEANE, PH.D.

BULLYING . . .

- Is the most common form of school violence today.
- Creates a fearful school climate.
- Leads to absenteeism.
- Causes loneliness, depression, anxiety problems, and eating disorders.
- Increases the risk of suicide.
- Hurts everyone: targets, kids who bully, and bystanders.

Bullying can be found in every school in the world. At our school, we take the position that bullying, in any form, is not a “normal” part of growing up—it is a very serious matter. The effects of bullying on students’ health and learning are far-reaching.

And bullying will NOT stop without adult intervention.

Every student has the right to feel safe, respected, and accepted at school—to work, learn, and enjoy activities without fear of physical or emotional harm. Our school is committed to eliminating the problem of bullying. We’ve enlisted school personnel and students to help make this happen, and we need your support as well. Working together, it is our goal to ensure that the classrooms, halls, bathrooms, playgrounds, and gathering areas at school are always peaceful and safe. This brochure offers information and strategies you can use to talk with your child about bullying and to deal with problems you suspect or know about. Thank you for your help.

Together we can be bully free!

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when a person or group of people hurts, embarrasses, or frightens another person on purpose over and over again. They do this in many ways, including:

- Pushing, shoving
- Tripping
- Kicking
- Hitting, slapping
- Making racist, sexist, or bigoted remarks
- Name-calling
- Teasing
- Making put-downs
- Making threats and intimidating
- Pinching
- Spreading rumors or lies
- Stealing or breaking someone’s things
- Leaving someone out
- Sending mean emails or texts
- Harassment
- Creating mean websites or cruelly using social media

IS YOUR CHILD BEING BULLIED? HERE ARE SOME WARNING SIGNS

- Loses interest in school, refuses to go
- Wants to take a different route to school
- Seems happy on weekends but not on weekdays
- Suddenly prefers adult company
- Has frequent illness, nightmares, or insomnia
- Comes home with unexplained scratches, bruises, or damaged clothing
- Seems withdrawn, anxious, or fearful—won’t say what’s wrong
- Develops sudden behavior changes (such as bed-wetting, tics, appetite loss, stuttering)
- Wants to carry “protection”
- Has few or no friends; is rarely invited to social events
- Has started bullying others; is aggressive, rebellious, or unreasonable
- Develops sudden interest in violent movies, video games
- Talks about being picked on or avoiding certain areas of school
- Talks about running away or committing suicide

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BULLIED

Do:

- **Stay calm.** Project confidence that you, your child, and the school will be able to work together to resolve the bullying situation.
- **Find out what has happened and keep a log of who, what, when, and where.** Ask questions and believe what your child tells you.
- **Contact your child's teacher as soon as possible.** Ask for a private meeting. Share the written record of what your child has told you. Talk through specifics of what the teacher, the school, your child, and you will do to stop the bullying.
- **Help your child learn to be "bully proof."** Practice ways to stand, walk, talk, and cope with bullying. Help your child build skills for making and keeping friends. Ask the teacher or school counselor for suggestions.



IMPORTANT! It takes time to resolve bullying problems. Try to be patient. The teacher will need to talk with your child, the child who is bullying, and other children who may have witnessed it, and then decide what's best to do for everyone involved.

DON'T:

- **Promise to keep the bullying a secret.** It's critical to inform teachers so everyone can work together to get the bullying to stop.
- **Call the bullying student's parents.** Parents of children who bully often become defensive. Confronting them will nearly always make things worse.
- **Encourage your child to fight back.** This will only put your child in further danger. Instead, tell your child to talk to a teacher when bullying occurs.
- **Blame your child for the bullying.** Blaming closes off communication and leaves your child feeling helpless. Communicate clearly that your child did nothing to ask for or deserve the bullying.

WHAT TO TELL BYSTANDERS

Bullying involves not only kids who bully and kids who are bullied but also bystanders. Enlist this important group of participants to be "bully busters." Make it clear that you—and the school—want every student to do the following when others are bullied:

- Refuse to join in.
- Do not ignore bullying you see or know about. By doing nothing, you are participating in the bullying.
- If possible, stand up for the bullied student. Tell the bully, "Don't treat him that way!" "Stop hitting her."
- Report all bullying to a teacher or school official.
- Never fight the person who bullies. It's not safe and it will make the bullying problem worse, not better.

RULES FOR A BULLY FREE CLASSROOM

1. Bullying is not allowed in our classroom. (Or anywhere else in the school.)
2. We don't tease, call names, or put people down.
3. We don't hit, shove, kick, or punch.
4. If we see someone being bullied, we speak up and stop it (if we can) or get help right away.
5. When we do things as a group, we include everyone and make sure no one is left out.
6. We make new students feel welcome.
7. We listen to each other's opinions.
8. We treat each other with kindness and respect.
9. We respect each other's property. (School property, too.)
10. We look for the good in others and value differences.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

BullyFree.com (www.bullyfree.com). A website with additional tips for parents, teachers, and students along with statistics, resources, and useful links to information about bullying, discipline, and suicide prevention.

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (www2.ed.gov/osdfs). This website of the office of the U.S. Department of Education offers a great deal of information, including an action plan for decreasing instances of bullying and school violence.

IS YOUR CHILD BULLYING OTHERS? SOME WARNING SIGNS

- Has money/possessions that can't be explained (or claims they belong to a friend)
- Ignores or breaks rules, pushes boundaries
- Behaves aggressively toward siblings
- Is always determined to win, has trouble losing
- Gets excited when conflicts arise between others and stays cool during own conflicts
- Hides negative behaviors, denies responsibility when discovered, or blames others for personal problems
- Seeks to dominate or manipulate others
- Seems to enjoy other people's fear, discomfort, or pain; shows little or no empathy for others
- Has difficulty fitting into groups

WHAT TO DO IF THE TEACHER TELLS YOU YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

- **Talk with your child**, knowing that she or he might deny the bullying. Remain calm and make it clear that bullying is not acceptable to you.
- **Talk privately with the teacher** and other school personnel. Get the facts and ask to be kept informed. Work with the school, and maintain contact about your child's progress.
- **Apply reasonable, age-appropriate consequences** (such as time-outs or withdrawn privileges). Don't threaten, yell, hit, or withhold affection—these actions say that "might is right"; they hurt, rather than help.
- **Encourage your child's efforts to change**. Offer praise for following home and school rules.
- **Reassure your child of your love**. Say that you'll work together to change the behavior—and that you won't give up on your child.
- **Also** follow the "What to Do If You Think Your Child Is Bullying Others" guidelines.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

- **Spend positive time with your child**. Show interest in what's going on at school, with friends, and in the neighborhood. Encourage open talk about strong feelings and tough issues.
- **Monitor screen time**. Research shows violent television, websites, and video games have a negative impact on children.
- **Supervise**. Set reasonable limits; make a point to always know where your child is and who he or she is with.
- **Help with social skills**. Ask the school about an anger management or conflict resolution group your child can join. Practice new skills through role-play.
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