

Parent Toolkit to End Bullying

How do you model positive behavior for your kids?

Do you teach respect, kindness and compassion?

What is considered *TRUE* bullying?

Bullying involves **REPEATED** teasing, threatening, physical violence, leaving someone out on purpose, gossiping, taunting, spreading rumors, hitting, taking or breaking someone's things, discrimination or harassment based on race, sex, religion, ethnicity; usually involving an imbalance of power.

Did you know...

- Teaching children about empathy and respect means they will show concern and think about others?
- Teaching children about caring for others is a great lesson in compassion and may promote acceptance and kindness?
- Teaching children how to work hard and be honest in order to fulfill their dreams will lead to greater self acceptance?
- That repeated intimidation, teasing, or picking on someone is a form of violence and bullying?
- Children need to be told "no", because not everyone can have everything they want, at any cost, including hurting others?
- It is a parent's job to ensure their children are treating others respectfully and learn how to be a good citizen?

What can you do to help your child not become a bully or socially aggressive?

1. **Model Respect:** Children learn first and foremost from their parents; learning from your behavior, how you treat others and your values.
2. **Teach Diversity:** Teach your children to accept others for who they are; celebrating differences, not condemning them.
3. **Open Communication:** Talk about their school day and the extra activities they are involved in. Ask questions about their friendships, and be supportive if they need it. Children don't want to talk because they may be embarrassed, don't criticize or blame.
4. **Practice Coping Mechanisms:** Teach them to be assertive and stand up for what they believe in in a non-violent way; use humor, ignoring, or an assertive voice to communicate if they are being bullied. These strategies work!
5. **Create Independence and Confidence:** If parents protect their kids from challenging emotions or situations, kids can't cope appropriately. This may lead to anxiety, victimization, and mental health problems; independent skills are key.
6. **Set Limits:** When your child needs discipline, use appropriate techniques to teach better acceptable behavior. One example is to have them give back to their community (service learning) and grow from their mistakes.
7. **Get Involved:** Host an event or coordinate youth programs and community action activities.

In New York State, the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) holds schools accountable to respond to bullying in accordance with these guidelines:

- Maintain a climate of mutual respect and dignity for all students regardless of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation; which will strengthen students' confidence and promote learning;
- Schools must train their teachers to confront any issues of discrimination or harassment that threatens the emotional or physical health and safety of any student or staff;
- Address personal biases that may prevent equal treatment of all students in the school or classroom setting;
- Report incidents of discrimination and harassment that are witnessed or otherwise brought to a teacher's attention in a timely manner.
- Requires one staff member at every school to be the Dignity Act Coordinator.
- The Dignity Act emphasizes the creation and maintenance of a positive learning environment for all students.
- The Dignity Act requires the development of measured, balanced, and age-appropriate responses to harassment and discrimination of students by students and staff.

Common Misconceptions About Bullying

1. **Myth:** Children are required to have a “right of passage”, they should expect to be mistreated in ways that include: rumors, being left out on purpose, physically harmed, made fun of or teased.
Fact: If children aren’t taught to value kindness and respect, they treat others poorly. If parents value respect and kindness they will likely teach their children to treat others the way they want to be treated.
2. **Myth:** Your child has been bullied because someone was not letting them play with them at recess today.
Fact: The majority of accusations of bullying are simply two or more children who are having a hard time getting along, **NOT** bullying.
3. **Myth:** All children who are victims of bullying want to get back at the bullies and take revenge.
Fact: Some children have appropriate coping skills and can adapt when “bad” things happen to them; they are not all traumatized by bullies.
4. **Myth:** Bullies don’t want to have friends.
Fact: There is usually an inherent need for all humans to want to have some friends. Bullies don’t have the skills to acquire friends in a respectful way; instead they use tactics that do more harm than good.
5. **Myth:** Victims are powerless and can’t create change for themselves.
Fact: Kids have a choice in how they handle bullying; being assertive, passive or aggressive. Teaching children proper coping mechanisms will help them deal with challenging situations.

Does your child....

- Joke about kids that are different from them?
- “Pick on” others for the way they talk, act or look?
- Think it is funny when another child is “picked on”?
- Laugh at other kids when they fail or make a mistake?
- Become overly competitive and only care about winning or being #1?
- Whisper to friends about the kid who is different?
- Purposely exclude the kid who isn’t very good at sports?

Teach compassion and respect, not violence and bullying.

These behaviors might cause another child to...

- Not want to go to school because it’s too painful to “not fit in”.
- Hurt themselves because they don’t feel worthy.
- Want to be invisible and disappear so nobody can pick on them anymore.
- Become depressed and feel like a failure.
- Fear going to school because they will be humiliated and physically hurt.
- Start using drugs or doing other risky behaviors.

Specific steps to help your child with bullying:

1. When your child comes home from school and reports that they were bullied, listen to their story; do not talk too much, interrupt or lead them to say things that you *want* to hear.
2. Ask questions about who, where, when, how often, did they report it, did anyone else see it, what happened next?
3. Determine whether this is a **TRUE** bullying situation or social conflict between peers.
4. Work collaboratively with your child on the specific solutions to the problem. Strategies include: report to an adult immediately, practice scenarios and responses to situations while practicing assertiveness, ignore the bully 100% of the time (no reaction), call the teacher and ask for help navigating the situation, set up a meeting with the principal (if nothing else works), and call the school counselor for support, help create a plan that will keep your child safe.
5. Create a plan and follow up, as often as needed, include school staff in that plan if necessary.
6. Do not give up, it will get better! It is our job to help kids feel safe emotionally and physically.
7. Never force the victim to meet or confront the bully, re-victimization needs to be avoided, only meet together if the victim is comfortable with that and they are supported by other trusting people in that meeting.
8. Teach your child how to problem solve early on and cope with difficult situations.



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