

Bullying Overview

Bullying is **unfair** and **one-sided**. It happens when someone or a group of people **keep** hurting, frightening, threatening or leaving someone out **on purpose**.

Questions to ask to determine whether something is bullying:

Is it fair? In order for a situation to be bullying, there must be an imbalance of power and that person must be using their power in a hurtful way. This power is often acquired through physical size, strength, or status. In a normal conflict, power is equal between participants.

Is it one-sided? Did one person just start picking on someone else for no apparent reason?

Is it continuous? Bullying is something that happens repeatedly rather than a singular event.

Was it done on purpose? Bullying is no accident, it is intentional and it is meant to hurt another person.

Types of Bullying Behavior

- Verbal bullying which may include taunting, teasing, name calling, threats, among others.
- Physical bullying is harm to a person or property of another.

- Relational bullying is harm to someone's self-esteem or group acceptance
- Sexual harassment is any inappropriate sexual comment, gesture or behavior including offensive jokes, pictures and rumors that offend others.
- Cyberbullying is using the internet or other digital communication devices to send or post harmful or cruel text or images.

What Should Parents Know About Bullying

What do I do if my child is being bullied?

If your child has told you that he/she is being bullied, inquire more about the situation. If you determine it is bullying, it is very important you let the school know what is going on. It may be that they are unaware of the situation. Once the school is made aware, procedures will then be followed based on the findings.

It is important to remember there are always 3 key elements in bullying situations:

1. Imbalance of Power
2. Intent to Harm
3. Repeated Behavior

How can I help my child if he/she is being bullied?

First, always reassure your child that telling you was the best thing he/she could have done. Let him/her know you will do whatever you can to make sure the situation is resolved. Don't pretend like it isn't a big deal. Then, investigate the situation by asking questions about what is happening. Together, brainstorm ways to solve the problem. Role-playing assertive behavior and different ways to handle bullying situations is always very helpful. Help your child develop a safety plan that includes identifying adults at school that he/she can turn to for help. Finally, always contact the school to let them know what is going on as soon as possible.

There are also lots of resources online that may be able to help in learning more about handling bullying appropriately

What do I do if I find out my child is bullying others?

- Stay Calm; Don't Overreact
- Focus on how to help your child learn positive behavior
- Make it clear that hurting others either mentally or physically is unacceptable
- Hold your child accountable for his/her behavior. Do not make up excuses for him/her.
- Spend quality time with your child and be a positive role model. Make sure **you** are not bullying others.
- Be supportive with your child's teacher and counselor.

It is very important to remember that all children are learning and growing - they will make mistakes. However, if you feel they are bullying, it is very important you help them stop the behavior. Research has shown that as children who bully grow up, they are at a greater risk of dropping out of school, committing more crimes, experiencing more antisocial personality disorders, or even reporting higher incidents of alcoholism. It is important these children receive help when they are young in order to learn appropriate social skills.

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is bullying through email, instant messaging, cell phones or other digital devices. Similar to traditional bullying, cyber bullying involves an imbalance of power. In traditional bullying the imbalance of power is often due to being, bigger, stronger or more popular; whereas in cyber bullying a person can have more power by being able to share negative information with lots of people very quickly via digital devices.

The effect of cyber bullying can be widespread due to the number of people that can be reached. One person can forward an embarrassing photo or degrading email message about someone else, to an entire class or grade level instantaneously.

Additionally, in traditionally bullying, the bullying usually occurs in a certain place and space during the school day. The student can find some reprieve from the bullying by going home or away from school. However, a student can be cyber bullied anytime, day or

night. All he/she has to do is go online or even turn his/her cell phone on. In this way, it makes it very hard for adults to observe.

What can parents do to stop cyber bullying?

- Save all evidence
- Send one clear message stating "Do not communicate with me again or I will contact the appropriate authorities."
- Try to identify the cyber bully
- Notify the website and request removal of inappropriate material
- Discuss bullying and cyber bullying with your children

Information taken from *Cyberbullying. A Prevention Curriculum for Grades 6-12, Step to Respect curriculum* , www.pinellas.us