

Tips for Parents to Help Prevent Bullying

Parents can play a pivotal role in assisting the school district in preventing bullying (including cyber-bullying, which seems to be the preferred choice among teens). School staff and parents can learn what can be done together to create a school environment that is free of bullying.

There are certain behaviors a child may exhibit at home that may be a warning sign or symptom that they have been bullied.

Some examples of these behaviors may be:

Possible signs and symptoms of a bullied child:

- Is the child afraid to walk to or from school?
- Does the child not want to ride the school bus?
- Does the child appear apprehensive about going to school, complains of headaches or feeling ill prior to leaving for school in the morning?
- Does the child come home with clothing or personal items damaged?
- Does the child appear sad or depressed about going to school?
- Does the child come home from school with any physical injuries such as bruises, cuts, or scratches?
- Does it appear the child is either losing money or frequently requesting money?
- Does the child seem socially isolated with few, if any, friends?
- Does it appear the child is sleeping more than usual, or does the child appear tired as if they have not gotten enough sleep?

Warning signs that a child may be a bully:

- Does the child have a strong need to dominate and subdue others?
- Is the child intimidating his/her siblings or children in the neighborhood?
- Does the child brag about his/her actual or imagined superiority over other children?
- Is the child hot-tempered, easily angered, and/or impulsive with a low frustration level?
- Does the child have difficulty conforming to rules and tolerating adversity or delays?
- Does the child cheat on games while playing with friends?
- Is the child defiant or aggressive towards adults including teachers or parents?
- Is the child anti-social?
- Is the child hanging out with the wrong crowd?

Positive approaches for parents:

- Take time each day to have a conversation with your child about day-to-day life and activities. If a child is comfortable talking to you about school, friends, and activities, they will feel comfortable talking to you if they become a target of bullying.
- Be a part of the school community when opportunities are available. PTO membership and volunteering can be a valuable way to connect with the school community.
- Lead by example with signs and expressions of kindness. Children learn from watching and observing their parents.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of bullying and the signs and symptoms of a bully.
- Establish and enforce family rules that let children know bullying behavior is harmful to others and is not acceptable.

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- Encourage your child to stand-up to help those who are being bullied. Bystander students can be very effective in stopping bullying behavior.
- Teach your children about cyber-bullying and the impact of sending mean, cruel, or threatening internet messages. Discuss with them the importance of responsible social networking and the dangerous consequences of every negative message or response they make on-line. Their words are kept forever on the internet and remain a reflection of their character!

Ways parents can respond to children who are bullied:

- Do not over-react or under-react when being told by your child he/she has been bullied. Do not dismiss the child's experience. If a child has the courage to tell someone he/she has been bullied, it can be devastating to be told to "work it out for yourself" or "they are just teasing you."
- You should not place blame for the incident.
- Expect your child to have a difficult time dealing with being a target of bullying.
- Encourage your child to keep talking about the incident if needed. Ask them how his/her days are going at school. Provide extra support and encouragement to your child during this time.
- If your child is reluctant to talk to you, encourage your child to talk to another adult, such as a family member, counselor, or trusted teacher.
- Research indicates responding to a bully in an aggressive manner will not make the bully go away. Encourage the child to stay away from the alleged bully and let the school investigate and remedy the problem.

What parents of an alleged bully can do:

- Take the problem as a serious matter.
- Question and listen carefully to your child in your investigation of the allegations.
- Try to find out the reasons for your child's bullying behavior and seek help from the school.
- Upon receiving such a report that your child has been bullying, make it clear that this conduct must stop immediately.

Tips to avoid/deal with cyber-bullying:

- Keep computers in an area of the home where your child's actions on the computer can be supervised.
- Establish and enforce reasonable limits for the amount of time children spend on the computer.
- Have access to your children's online accounts including passwords and other security measures for websites.
- Inform your children to report to you if they are a victim of cyber-bullying.
- Have some basic knowledge of the internet sites your children use.
- Discuss on-line chat rooms and what is appropriate for your child to post on these sites.
- Occasionally sit with your child while he/she is working or communicating on-line.