

Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. As a last resort, if the above solutions don't work, have your child report the bullying to his teacher. Parents need to know that children sometimes cannot work these problems out themselves and that being bullied will not "toughen them up."

The opposite is usually true; being bullied can leave lasting emotional scars.



If your child is constantly being bullied, try to find out why. Does he know how to talk or play with other children? Help him learn to get along by role-playing. If he has some obvious habits that annoy other children, such as whining or tattling, help him change those behaviors.

Always step in if your child is in danger.

Every child has the right to be safe at school. If you're not satisfied with the teacher's response to bullying, don't give up. Talk to the principal or school board. Keep records of dates, times, and names of people involved.

Encourage your school to adopt a "no tolerance" policy toward bullying. That means teachers, bullies, victims, and bystanders all know that bullying is not acceptable at school. This more caring climate at school will protect everyone and will create a better learning environment for everyone.

Putting Knowledge to Work



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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Dealing with the School Bully



The University of Georgia

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Dealing with the School Bully

You can probably think of a time when you were bullied at school, or you saw someone else being bullied. But parents are often the last to know when their own children are dealing with a bully at school.

What is bullying?

Physical bullying includes kicking, hitting, punching, tripping, vandalizing, stealing, chasing, writing graffiti, etc.

Emotional bullying includes teasing, name-calling, threatening, mocking, putting down, ignoring, lying, shunning, excluding, making offensive racial or sexual comments, ganging up on others, etc.

Boys tend to use physical bullying, while girls use more emotional bullying.

In the worst cases, bullying can be very harmful to a child. It can lead to:

- depression
- low self-esteem
- shyness
- poor grades
- isolation
- threatened or attempted suicide

How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

Be aware if your child:

- suddenly is scared to go to school
- begins doing poorly in school
- comes home with clothes or books destroyed or missing
- becomes withdrawn, afraid, upset, or nervous
- threatens or tries to commit suicide
- has unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- begins to bully other children or siblings



What can you do?

If you think your child is being bullied, ask him. He may be scared to tell you about it, so at first he may deny that anything is wrong. Take whatever he says seriously, even if it seems small, and find out exactly what has been going on.

You can teach your child to:

Practice positive self-talk. Teach your child to give himself a silent pep talk when he's picked on. For example, he can tell himself, "I know what you're saying isn't true. I don't feel that way about myself." Positive self-talk

boosts your child's self-esteem and makes him less of a target for bullies.

Know when to stand up for himself. Your child should tell the bully that he won't put up with the bullying. It can be as simple as saying, "You can't talk to me like that. Leave me alone," or even just saying, "So what?" Teach your child to act confident and to look the bully in the eye. Some children may need a lot of coaching, role-playing, and encouragement to be able to stand up to a bully.

Be careful! Some bullies actually feed on getting a response. Tell your child to stand up for himself this way just once. If it doesn't work, move on to something else. Never encourage your child to fight with the bully! Most bullies pick on smaller children, so your 80-pound "David" could end up fighting a 130-pound "Goliath."

Use humor to distract the bully. Doing or saying something funny or unexpected is another good way to distract a bully. Help your child come up with a silly one-liner ("you yellow-bellied school bus") that could throw the bully off-balance. It might be enough to make him stop.

"Never let him see you sweat." Teach your child not to let a bully see that he's upset or scared. Bullies want to feel powerful, and that is exactly how they feel when they see their target is afraid.

Avoid, when necessary. One of the best ways to avoid bullying is to avoid the bully. Tell your child to find a different route to school or walk down a different hallway. This is not a long-term solution, but it offers your child safety in the short run.