
INSIGHTS

FOR FAMILIES

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Bully-proofing your children

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❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from information provided at StopBullying.gov.

Bullying is not a normal rite of passage. It can have serious consequences. You can help your children learn how to prevent bullying.

- ❖ Help your children understand that bullying is more than physical. It can happen in person or over the phone or computer.
- ❖ Keep open lines of communication with your children. Listen to any concerns about friends and other students.
- ❖ Encourage your children to pursue their interests. Doing what they love may help your children be more confident among their peers and make friends with others with similar interests.
- ❖ Teach your children to take a stand against bullying. Tell them how to stand up to those who bully if it is safe to do so.
- ❖ Talk to your children about seeking help from a trusted adult when feeling threatened by a bully. Talk about whom they should go to for help and role-play what they should say. Assure your children that they should not be afraid to tell an adult when someone they know is being bullied.
- ❖ Know what is going on in your children's schools. Visit the school websites, read the student paper if there is one, and join the parent organization listserv or mailing list. Get to know other parents, school counselors, and staff. Contact the school by phone or e-mail if you have suggestions for making the school a safer and better learning place.

If you suspect your children are being bullied, consider these steps:

- ❖ Express your concern and make it clear that you want to help.
- ❖ Tell your children that bullying is wrong, that it is not their fault, and that you are glad they had the courage to tell you about it.
- ❖ Work together to find solutions. Ask your children what they think can be done to help. Reassure them that the situation can be handled privately.
- ❖ Document ongoing bullying. Work with your children to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If it involves cyberbullying, keep a record of all messages or postings.
- ❖ Help your children develop strategies and skills for handling bullying. Provide suggestions for ways to respond to bullying, and help your children gain confidence by rehearsing their responses.
- ❖ Be persistent. Bullying may not be resolved overnight.
- ❖ Stay vigilant to other possible problems that your children may be having. Some of the warning signs for bullying may be signs of other serious problems. Share your concerns with the counselors at your children's schools.

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If you think that your children may be bullying others, work with your children's schools to address the issues. Remember that children who bully are at high risk for engaging in risky or even criminal behaviors, and it is very important in a bullying situation for the parents to act immediately.

- ❖ Talk with your children. Ask for their account of any situation for which they have been accused of bullying. Be objective and listen carefully.
- ❖ Make it clear to your children that you take bullying seriously. Calmly let them know that you will not tolerate this behavior. Help your children learn that bullying hurts everyone involved.
- ❖ Develop clear and consistent rules for your children's behavior. Praise your children when they follow the rules. Decide on fair consequences and follow through if your children break the rules.
- ❖ Spend more time with your children. Carefully supervise and monitor their activities, including when they are online or texting.
- ❖ Be aware of who your children consider to be their friends. Find out how they spend their free time.
- ❖ Build on your children's talents and positive attributes. Encourage them to get involved in well-supervised social activities.
- ❖ Work with your children's schools to ensure the bullying does not happen again. Ask your children's teachers to keep you informed. Develop strategies together to send clear messages to your children, and all students, that bullying must stop.
- ❖ Talk with a school counselor or health professional. They may be able to provide your children with additional help.