

BULLYING – HELPING YOUR CHILD

If your child is a victim of bullying, try helping him with the following strategies:

- Listen carefully to your child's reports of being bullied. Be sympathetic and take the problem seriously. Be careful not to overreact or under-react.
- Do not blame the victim. When a child finally works up the courage to report bullying, it isn't appropriate to criticize him for causing it or not handling the situation correctly. For example, don't ask, "Well, what did you do to bring it on?"
- Realize that for a child who is being bullied, home is his refuge. Expect him to have some difficult times in dealing with victimization. Get professional help if you think your child needs it.
- Encourage your child to keep talking to you. Spend extra time with him. Provide constant support and encouragement, and tell him that you love him often!

Teaching Your Child Safety Strategies

- Remember that hitting back is not a choice at school and shouldn't be encouraged. In a school with a "zero tolerance policy" for physical aggression, encouraging your child to hit back may just get him expelled.
- Encourage your child to walk away and tell an adult if he feels someone is about to hurt him.
- Talk about safe ways to act in situations that might be dangerous. For example, identify a "safe house" or store or where he can find sanctuary if pursued by bullies. Encourage him to walk with an adult or older child. Give him a telephone number of an available adult to call if he's afraid and needs help dealing with a bullying situation.
- Teach your child how to report bullying incidents to adults in an effective way. Adults are less likely to discount a child's report as "tattling" if the report includes:
 - What is being done to him that makes him fearful or uncomfortable
 - Who is doing it
 - What he has done to try to resolve the problem or to get the bully to quit
 - A clear explanation of what he needs from the adult (or what he wants the adult to do) to get the bully to quit.
- Brainstorm and practice strategies with your child to avoid further victimization.

Nurturing your child's self-esteem

- Educate your child about bullying and bullies. Help him put the problem in perspective and not take it personally.
- Teach your child how to walk in a confident manner.
- If needed, help him pay particular attention to personal grooming and [social skills](#).
- Identify and encourage your child's talents and positive attributes; doing so may help him better assert himself among his peers.
- Encourage your child to make new friends. A new environment can provide a "new chance" for a victimized student, as he won't be subjected to the negative stereotype other classmates have of him. **Encourage him to make contact with calm and friendly students in his school.** Such action may require some assistance on your part, or perhaps a school mental health

professional, to develop the child's skills at initiating contact and maintaining a friendship relationship. This is especially true if your child's learning problems make his **social interactions** difficult. Be sure to provide ongoing support and encouragement, because your child, due to earlier failures, will tend to give up in the face of even slight adversities.

- Encourage your child to participate in physical training or sports, even if he's reluctant. Physical exercise can result in better physical coordination and less body anxiety, which, in turn, is likely to increase self-confidence and improve peer relationships.

When should the victim's parents contact school authorities?

If the bullying occurs at school, then the main responsibility for achieving this goal lies with the school officials. It's important, however, that the parents of the victim collaborate with the school to implement an agreed-upon plan for solving the problem.

If your child has been the victim of bullying at school, here are some suggestions for reporting the problem to school authorities:

- After talking to your child, but before contacting school personnel, write down the details of the bullying situations reported to you by your child. Note the dates and the names of the kids involved. Try to view the situation objectively and determine the how serious it is.
- Your child may resist your involvement if he fears retaliation by the bully. If so, explain to your child that most bullying situations require adult intervention to resolve the problem. Let him know exactly who you plan to talk to.
- Contact school personnel for assistance in ending the bullying. First share the problem with your child's teacher(s), and work together to decide how to approach the problem. If the teacher isn't able to get the bullying under control, go to the principal and make a formal request in writing that he get the bullying to stop.
- Do not contact the bully or the bully's family directly.
- Keep an ongoing log of the dates of any further bullying incidents and the actions you take to help your child deal with the bullying. Inform the school of ongoing bullying incidents.

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