

10 questions
about bullying and
how to deal with it

#ImAgainstBullying



What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of intentional and repeated aggressive behaviour by a child or a group of children towards another child. Bullying can take multiple forms, including spreading rumors, threatening, physical or verbal assault, leaving out a child from a group to hurt him/her, or any other gestures or actions that directly or indirectly hurt the bullied child.



1.

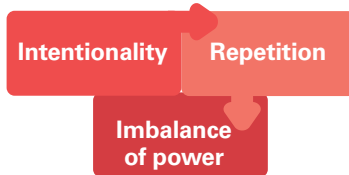
Are all forms of teasing considered bullying?

Not a single child/adolescent has escaped being teased or provoked by a sibling or a friend. This is not harmful if it occurs in a humorous, mutually-acceptable manner.

Teasing turns into bullying if the unaccepted behavior occurs in an intentional and repeated manner, and when the bullying child misuses their power (that may include their physical strength, knowledge of sensitive or embarrassing information about the child being bullied, or their popularity and fame) to control or harm the bullied child.

Therefore, there are three features that distinguish bullying from other forms of negative behaviors and actions:

1. Intentionality.
2. Repetition.
3. Imbalance of power.



2.

What are the warning signs of bullying?

Signs may not be easy to spot, but the following should ring an alarm bell:

1. Physical marks (such as cuts and bruises) with no logical explanation, especially if frequently occurring.
2. The child no longer wants to go to school or to spend time at social gatherings.
3. Frequent loss of belongings with no good justification, or disappearance of items from the house.
4. The child mentions feeling lonely.
5. An evident change in their behaviour (excessive anxiety or clinging to parents) or showing resistance to their everyday routines (such as refusal to eat or take a certain road, etc.).
6. Unusual aggressive and hostile behaviour.
7. Complains about physical pains with no medical reason (such as headaches, sleeping problems, etc.).
8. The child begins to bully others (such as for example, siblings).
9. A sudden decline in academic performance and difficulty in concentration.
10. Complaining about things that did not concern him/her before (such as for example their own appearance/physical features or the new place they have moved to).



3.

How do I encourage my child to speak up if I feel like that they are avoiding to share with me what is going on?

You can try to seize or create an opportunity to speak with your child. For instance, you may opt to watch a movie or a TV show in which bullying is addressed, and use this a chance to ask about what they think the bullied character feels, and what could have been their reaction. Other follow-up questions include: 'Have you ever seen something like this in reality?' or 'Have you or any of your friends ever experienced a similar situation?'





4.

What do I need to do if I learn that my child is being bullied at school?

There are actions that you can take with your child and with the school:

With the child:

1. Listen. Just listen, with no haste and without jumping to conclusions or passing judgements. Thank the child for telling you and acknowledge that it is both the right and brave thing to do. 
2. Show empathy and understanding of his/her feelings, even if the child gets into details that may sound scary for you. This experience is hard enough for the child. If the child feels that you are anxious, perhaps s/he would feel discouraged to share the details with you.
3. Avoid blaming the child or making statements like, 'Why didn't you tell me earlier?' or "I told you to stand up for yourself!", or 'You must have done something wrong to make them outraged against you!' This will discourage the child from talking to you again.
4. Try to collect as much information as possible, about the problem and who is involved by asking questions (make sure you ask and listen, more than you speak and judge).
5. Assure the child that you are by his/her side, and that together you will find a solution. Include the child in the problem-solving process, through:
 - a. Asking him/her about what they would like to do. 

5.

- b. Explain to him/her how to stay safe and protect themselves (see question 2). It would be a good idea to demonstrate your point with some role-playing.
- c. Help him/her identify who to refer to at school and how to report the incident, which includes mentioning:
 - What actually happened.
 - The child/children who hurt him/her.
 - What did he/she do.
6. Monitor your child regularly and how the plan you put together is unfolding.
7. If you feel the problem has seriously affected your child emotionally or psychologically, seek the professional help of a child psychologist.



With the school:

8. Report this incident to the teacher and explain how you are handling it.
9. Stay calm and avoid overreacting. Keep an open communication channel with the school to emphasize the importance of the issue and the need for follow up.
10. Acknowledge and show appreciation when you see any progress towards what you have agreed upon with the school.
11. If you believe that your child is at risk at any time, take an action immediately through the school.



5.

What can I teach my child about responding to bullying?

Children at ages 3-4 need to start learning what to do when someone is being unkind to them. Abusive behavior sometimes takes subtle and invisible forms, in a way that can make it seem normal. Before your children get bullied:

- Make sure that they know what bullying is and what are the different forms it may take. Help them distinguish between bullying and childish acts/teasing that may be considered acceptable.
- Tell them that if someone says, 'do not tell anyone else about this!', then this person must be doing something wrong.
- Teach them that it is an act of bravery to tell the truth and report incidents of bullying and harassment.
- Advise them to avoid groups that are involved in bullying others, even if they are popular or fun.
- If the child is worried about getting hurt, advise them to avoid being alone or being in a place where there is no adult supervision.



6.

If your child experienced bullying, share the following tips with him/her:

- Do not let the bullying child exercise power or control over you. Try to remain calm. Look at them in the eye and firmly say “Stop doing this”, or walk away without showing a facial reaction or response (smiling may provoke the bully and make them more abusive).
- If the abuse is verbal, keep it short and avoid arguments. Engaging in an argument with bullies, drives them to continue their aggression, which can make the situation worse.
- If the abuse is physical, stay safe. Stop the bully and defend yourself (hold back the bully’s arm firmly). If you cannot do this, leave the place immediately and seek the help of an adult.
- Talk to someone you trust. Tell your parents or teacher, or sibling, or friend. Seek help.



Why shouldn't I teach my child to hit back?

There is a big difference between defending oneself and hitting back. Teach your child to defend themselves. They need to do whatever it takes to stop the harm. Once the harm has been halted, they need to seek help or report the incident to an adult.

Why shouldn't we teach our child to hit back?

If children/ adolescents learn to hit back, they would tend to:

- Start showing aggressive behavior, like hitting their sibling or friend.
- Expose themselves to danger, by possibly escalating fights, or hitting someone who is physically stronger.
- Resort to violence to solve the problems they face and become bullies.



My child is physically weak and cannot defend himself/herself. What do I need to do?

1. Educate your child about bullying and how to stand up for himself/herself.
2. Engage your child martial arts or any other sports that may help develop their confidence and stability.
3. Remind them to ask for help when needed.



How do I help my child regain their self-confidence after being bullied?

1. Encourage your child to spend time with friends who have a positive impact on them.
2. Engage your child in activities, sports and anything that can build their character and strengthen their friendships.
3. Listen actively to what your child says. Also, ask with equal interest about the positive events of his/her day, and pay attention to what he/she says.
4. Show trust in the child and his/her ability to address different situations. At the same time, assure him/her that you will spare no effort to protect them from any bullying in the future.



What should I teach my child about cyberbullying?

1. This type of bullying has many forms and can be practiced by anyone, who could be a stranger, an anonymous person, or someone you know.
2. It can be helpful for you to talk to someone about cyberbullying to find a solution.
3. Do not respond to any threats or any forms of intimidation. Tell an adult about it.
4. Block anyone bullying you. It might be a good idea to keep a record of the messages they sent.
5. Do not under any circumstances, get into a conversation with a stranger or exchange any information with them, or accept friend requests from someone you do not know.



10.



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For help and advice, call the Child Helpline 16000



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The national campaign to end violence against children, under the auspices of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, in cooperation with UNICEF and funded by the European Union

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