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For additional information or to help with bullying contact your school counselor, teacher or principal.

This tip card is part of a series originated by R. Sege, MD, PhD, The Floating Hospital for Children and New England Medical Center/Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston, MA and developed with the Massachusetts Medical Society's Committee on Violence, chaired by E. Alpert, MD, MPH, Boston University School of Medicine and Public Health. Author: Carole A. Sousa Co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics and the Massachusetts Medical Society Alliance. Copyright 1997 Massachusetts Medical Society. This card may be duplicated for distribution without profit.



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R.E.S.P.E.C.T.²

Relationship Empowerment for Students, Parents, Educators & Community Through Theatre

BULLYING - It's Not O.K.

**When your child is the
victim, the bully or a bystander**



WHAT IS BULLYING?

- Bullying is when one child repeatedly picks on another child who is weaker, smaller and more vulnerable. Bullying is different from fighting. What makes it different is the power the bully has over the other child. Bullies try to control other children by scare tactics. Being controlled and repeatedly picked on can make your child a victim.
- Girls, as well as boys, can be bullies. The bully will pick on other children by teasing, threatening or attacking them. Bullies can exclude their victims from activities or start rumors about them.
- Bullying often happens at school—in halls, at lunch, while on the playground. It can also occur traveling to and from school or in the neighborhood.
- Bullies often pick on children who make them feel powerful by acting emotional or giving in.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS THE VICTIM

Work with your child on how to stay safe. Do not encourage your child to fight back because a situation can easily escalate and become dangerous.

TIPS

- Teach your child how to look the bully in the eye, stand tall, use a firm voice and stay calm in difficult situations. Practice this at home.
- Teach your child when and how to ask for help. Your child should not be afraid to ask an adult for help when bullying happens.
- Encourage your child to become friends with other children. Your child can join adult-supervised groups in and out of school. Have your child's friends come over to your house. Children who are loners are more likely to get picked on.
- Encourage your child to develop new abilities and interpersonal skills, through such activities as team sports, music groups, or social clubs. When children feel good about how they relate to others, they feel better about themselves and are less likely to be picked on.
- Make sure an adult who knows about the bullying can watch out for your child's safety and well being when you cannot be there.
- Talk with the school principal or guidance counselor, as well as the teachers. Alert them to the problems you see and work with them on solutions. When school officials know about bullying, they can help stop it.
- Write down and report all bullying. By knowing when and where bullying occurs, you and your child can better plan what to do if it happens again.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY

When you hear or see that your child is bullying others—take it seriously. In the long run, bullies continue to have problems and the problems often get worse, even into adulthood. Now is the time when you can change your child's behavior.

TIPS

- Supervise children and help them develop their skills and interests. Children with too much 'time on their hands' are more likely to find themselves in violent or dangerous situations.
- Set firm and consistent limits on your child's aggressive behavior. Be certain your child knows that bullying is never acceptable.
- Help your child develop new and constructive strategies for getting what they want.

- Be a positive role model. Show children how they can get what they want without teasing, threatening or attacking. Children can learn to treat others with respect. Children learn by watching and by what happens to them.
- Use effective, non-physical discipline, such as loss of privileges. When your child needs discipline, explain why the behavior was wrong and how it can be changed.
- Help your child understand how bullying hurts other children. Give real examples of the good and bad results of their actions.
- Develop practical solutions with the school principal, teachers and parents of the children your child has bullied.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS A BYSTANDER

TIPS

- Teach your child how to help without getting hurt. Your child might say, "Cool, it! This isn't going to solve anything."
- Tell your child not to cheer on or even quietly watch a conflict—this only encourages the bully who is trying to be the center of attention.
- Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult about the bullying. Talking to an adult is not 'tattling' - it is an act of courage and safety. Suggest going with a friend to make it easier.
- Help your child support others who tend to be victims. Teach your child to try to include these children in activities.

REMEMBER

Bullying affects ALL children — whether they are victims, bullies or bystanders. Concerned principals, teachers and especially parents can reduce bullying in schools and neighborhoods.

“LET’S TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN SAY—OR DO—IF THIS HAPPENS AGAIN.”

Just telling your child to do things such as standing firm or walking away is not enough. For many victims, these skills do not come naturally. It is like learning a new language. They need lots of practice. Practice with your child so that in the heat of the moment your child can use these skills.