

# BULLYING: A Guide for PARENTS

**It is estimated that a child or teen is bullied every seven minutes. Often, there is no intervention by an adult or another child.**

Typically, bullying is carried out by someone who has perceived power (or by a group) over someone who is seen as weak or “different.” Among children and teens, common forms of bullying include:

- Hitting, pushing, or shoving
- Name calling or gossip
- Exclusion from activities or conversation
- Any other action that is intended to harm or humiliate the bullied child

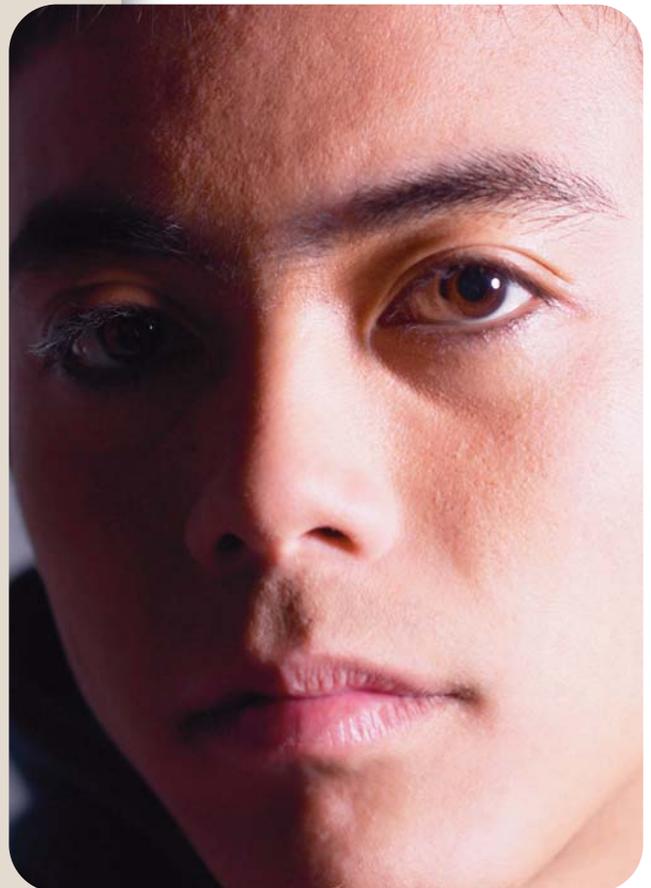
The Internet and cell phones also make it possible to cyber-bully a child by posting lies, gossip, and unflattering or altered photos to social media websites or distribute it via email or text message.

Children who are bullied often experience difficulties as a result of the taunting. They may:

- Have feelings of depression or anxiety, both during the bullying and later in life
- Pretend to be sick or skip school because they want to avoid a bully
- Resort to physical violence as a way of standing up to a bully or making him or her stop

In some instances, bullied children have resorted to suicide to resolve their feelings of isolation and hurt.

While most of the focus on bullying is on children and teens who are being hurt, allowing intimidating behavior to go unchecked can have significant consequences for young people who perpetrate the activity. Studies suggest that bullies may have problems getting along with others in work and social settings later in life and may be more



likely to have difficulties with the law.

## ADDRESSING BULLYING

Parents and people who interact with children and teens regularly should be alert to bullying behavior. Some things to consider include:

- **Be sensitive to a shift in a**

**child's mood or behavior.** Pay attention to mentions of strong feelings of anger or dislike toward another child or teen.

- **Monitor social media sites.** Use your discretion when deciding if a child is old enough to have a social media page. If you do give permission, make certain you monitor your child's page, including comments and postings made by other individuals.
- **Talk to your child about the importance of making good choices in difficult situations.** Your child needs to know that it's okay to dislike someone, but it's not okay to act on those feelings or be deliberately hurtful.
- **Create and enforce house rules.** Discourage bullying behavior between siblings or children who spend a lot of time together with simple, easy to understand rules, such as:
  - No hitting or teasing
  - Listen and be respectful to others
  - Don't lie or make up stories
- **Spend one-on-one time with each of your children.** Having solo time will help you get a sense of what is on your child's mind. If you are a caregiver or teacher, do your best to get to know each child as an individual so you are better able to recognize if something is wrong.
- **Don't tell children who report bullying to stand up for themselves or pretend it doesn't bother them.** Often, a child has already tried both of these strategies. Instead, help your child come up with things to say that will deflect the bully's words or roleplay appropriate ways to react. Keep in mind that your child is counting on you for help in a difficult situation.
- **If you see inappropriate behavior, take action.** If a child is being verbally abusive toward

another, redirect the conversation and point out that polite behavior and language is expected. Intervene when you see physical aggression occur.



**If your child or teen has been involved in a documented bullying incident:**

- Get as much information as you can. Really listen to your child.
- Talk with your child's teacher, principal, or counselor and ask them to help monitor your child's safety and provide guidance.
- If your child perpetrated the hurtful behavior, revoke privileges and make it clear that they will stay revoked if the behavior persists. Focus on your expectations for polite, respectful behavior.

**When your child or teen sees a bully in action, encourage him or her to:**

- Ask the bully to stop.
- Report the bullying behavior to an adult.
- Offer friendship and support to the person who is being bullied.

For more ideas on how to handle a bullying situation, contact LifeMatters.

**LifeMatters®** professionals are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year to discuss a variety of lifestyle concerns.

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