

REPORT to PARENTS

RP 35:8

Eliminating Bullying

The latest research shows that one in three children is directly involved in bullying as a perpetrator, victim, or both. Many of those who are not directly involved witness others being bullied on a regular basis. No child is immune—kids of every race, gender, grade, and socio-economic sector are impacted. But it doesn't have to be this way. Parents, as well as schools, have the power to help reduce bullying. Here are some tips on how you can help:

Talk with and listen to your kids. Spend a few minutes every day asking open-ended questions about who they spend time with at school and in the neighborhood, what they do in between classes and at recess, who they have lunch with, or what happens on the way to and from school. If your children feel comfortable talking to you about their peers before they're involved in a bullying event, they'll be more likely to get you involved after.

Be an example of kindness and leadership. When you get angry at a sales clerk, another driver on the road, or even your child, you have an opportunity to model effective communication techniques. Any time you speak to another person in a mean or abusive way, you're teaching your child that bullying is OK.

Learn the signs. Most children don't tell anyone that they've been bullied. Learn to recognize possible signs of victimization, such as frequent loss of personal belongings, complaints of stomachaches, avoiding recess or school activities, and getting to school very late or very early. Talk to your child



and the teacher about what is going on at school and find ways to observe your child's interactions to determine whether your suspicions might be correct.

Create healthy anti-bullying habits early. Help develop anti-bullying and anti-victimization habits in your child as early as preschool. Coach your child on what not to do—hitting, pushing, teasing, or being mean to others. Help your child to focus on how such actions might feel to the child on the receiving end. Equally important, teach your children what to do—kindness, empathy, fair play, and turn-taking are critical skills for good peer relations. Children also need to learn how to say “no” firmly if they experience or witness bullying behavior. Role play with your child about what to do if other kids are mean—get an adult right away, tell the child who is teasing or bullying to “stop,” ignore the perpetrator and find someone else to play with.

Establish household rules. Make sure your child knows that if he or she is bullied physically, verbally, or socially, it's safe and important to tell you about it—and that you will help. Kids also need to know what bullying is (many children do not know that they are bullying others), and that

such behavior is harmful to others and unacceptable.

Teach your child how to be a positive bystander. Although it's never children's responsibility to put themselves in danger, kids can often effectively diffuse a bullying situation by yelling “Stop! You're bullying” or “Hey, that's not cool.” Kids can also help each other by providing support to the victim, not giving extra attention to the bullying behavior, and/or reporting what they witnessed to an adult.

Teach your child about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes sending mean, rude, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and intentionally excluding someone from an online group. These acts are as harmful as physical violence. You can teach your children a simple litmus test about online posting: If you wouldn't say it to someone's face or you would not feel comfortable having your parents see it—don't post it (or take it down now).

Efforts to effectively address bullying require the collaboration of school, home, and community. Bullying is a serious problem, but if we all work together, it's one we can impact.

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