

Bullying Prevention: 7 Tips Every Parent Should Know

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“Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.” (*Dan Olweus*)

1. Create a positive environment where adults: show warmth & positive involvement; provide consistent & age-appropriate supervision; provide authoritative non-physical discipline; set examples for establishing and maintaining healthy, positive relationships. (*Olweus*)

2. Get the Discussion Started with “Together Time”

- Listen & Communicate
- Observe your child with peers and siblings
- Model healthy interactions and ways of dealing with conflicts

3. Things to Find Out...(Ask, Don't Interrogate)

- What's fun for you at school/outside school?
- Who do you hang out with? What do you like about them?
- How are you spending lunch or recess?
- What's it like walking/riding the bus or carpool to school/waiting for school to begin?
- What do you do/talk about with other kids?
- Tell me about a time when you had a problem with a peer: How'd you handle it?

4. Parents Can Prevent Bullying By...

- Stepping in when you observe or hear about problems when your child plays & interacts
- Praising acts of kindness, empathy, and quiet acts of courage
- Practicing friendship-making & relationship-building skills (i.e. how to initiate & sustain relationships, how to be a “good” friend).
- Practicing “doing the right thing,” standing up for what's right.
- Helping your child “find the line” between teasing and bullying.
- Practicing a variety of possible responses to deal with conflicts & bullying problems.
- Setting clear rules and consequences.
- Teaching genuine ways to make amends.

5. Use Positive Encouragement to Reinforce Behavior or Establish New Behaviors

- Use verbal attention, privileges, cooperative or tangible rewards.
- Use encouragement abundantly, sincerely, and consistently; vary over time (“switch it up”).
- Remember: Verbal praise is more effective than reprimands.

6. Use a Combination of Negative Consequences to Stop Bullying

- Remove positive reinforcement (e.g., loss of privileges or time away from peers).
- Use negative or unpleasant consequence (e.g., reprimand or punishment).
- Use consequences that are: graduated; unpleasant, but not hostile; easy to use & apply; developmentally appropriate; connected to the infraction; consistent.
- Be clear that the behavior (not the child) is unacceptable.
- Include opportunities for reparation.

7. When Bullying Happens to Your Child

- Get the facts: Listen & find out what your child wants/needs.
- Offer support, not criticism. Get outside help as needed.
- Keep a log of details and contact the school.
- Follow up to find out what has been done. Join with other parents and school staff to make school more welcoming for all students.