

Help your child beat bullying

Bullying is common

despite heightened public awareness. Recent research shows that 67 per cent of children experience bullying at some stage.

Bullying transgresses a child's fundamental right to feel safe and secure. It is the selective, uninvited, intentional, often repeated oppression of one person by another person or group. It can happen at school, within the neighbourhood and, in some cases, within a family.

Children can be bullied in a number of ways – physically, verbally or through exclusion. Both boys and girls can bully although girls are more likely to use verbal means and exclusion, while boys are more likely to use physical means.

When a child is bullied he or she generally feels powerless and lacks the ability to fend for himself or herself. A child who is bullied over a long period of time can experience significant long term affects, including: learning, peer group relations and self-esteem.

Children who are bullied generally need help. They need someone to believe their story. If you suspect your child is being bullied take him or her seriously.

Sometimes the only thing a child wants is the knowledge they have their parents' support.

Gain a clear picture of what happens and help your child identify any behaviour, such as playing alone or annoying others, that may contribute to the bullying.

If appropriate, provide your child with some ideas based on the information you have gathered that will reduce the likelihood of being bullied. Resist the emotive reaction to confront the bullies yourself as this often causes an escalation and invites retaliation.

Bullying is best handled in partnership between parents and the school or other institution. Present your concerns to the relevant teacher or professional so that you can find a joint solution to the problem.



Quick Parenting Quiz

1. Effective ways to teach your child how to handle a bully are:

- a) Teach him to get even or fight back.
- b) Discuss specific situations where a child is bullied
- c) Discuss ways to avoid conflict
- d) Teach some assertive phrases which a child may use if being bullied

2. Bullying peaks at age seven and decreases as children get older.

True or false

Answers: 1b) c) d)

- 2. False. Bullying others is problematic around the age of nine or ten and peaks at thirteen and fourteen years of age. It declines towards the later years.

Vitamins for parents

Do you know the warning signs of bullying? They include:

- Complaints about stolen items
- Unusual behaviour at home, such as aggression or timidity.
- Physical injuries, such as bruising or repeated accidents
- Reluctance to go to school or lack of interest in school
- Pretend illness or injury
- Sudden or unusual clinginess

Bright idea



Teach your child to take the sail away from the wind of a bully

Children need to react in positive rather than fearful or whining ways when they are teased. It is useful for children to have a comeback line that they can use that negates teasing or bullying tactics. For instance, a child who is teased about her appearance may reply, "Thanks for your opinion, but I happen to think otherwise." Your child should practise their comeback line at home using strong body language, good eye contact and a firm voice.

Wise & Witty Words

"Today we have somehow lost touch with the wisdom...that mothers can and do have a profound impact on the emotional lives of boys, an impact that lasts a lifetime."

William Pollack

"All feelings are acceptable. Certain actions must be limited."

Faber and Mazlish