

5 Stereotypes

#1 My son/daughter doesn't have a problem with bullying

About thirty percent of students admit to being involved in bullying, but in reality, almost every kid has seen bullying go on in their school or community. About 5% of students miss school because of bullying, and another 5% say their concentration and grades are effected.

#2 There's something wrong with my child if he or she is involved in bullying

Shame is an element of bullying—especially if your child is the victim, or the abuse is occurring through the computer. Children who get trapped in the bullying way of life as either a victim (target), bully (aggressor), or bystander (witness) need to learn more positive relationship skills, but there is nothing inherently “flawed” about them.

#3 Once a bully, always a bully

Most kids (like most adults) can be too aggressive, too passive, or caught in the role of bystander. The roles can change from day to day, and hour to hour.

#4 It's a part of growing up all kids must learn to put up with

Wrong! Getting along with others is a life skill children need to learn, but hurting others or being hurt yourself is not.

#5 It's all the school's fault

If that was true, there would be no bullying on sports teams, in neighborhoods or community activities, or during the summer.

“Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.”

– Albert Schweitzer

“Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends with them?”

– Abraham Lincoln

“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”

– Dale Carnegie

“The only way to have a friend is to be one.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Hold a true friend with both of your hands.”

– Nigerian Proverb

Five Helpful Books on Bullying

Your Child: Bully or Victim? Understanding and Ending Schoolyard Tyranny by Peter Sheras (Fireside, 2002)

Bullies, Targets, and Witnesses: Helping Children Break the Pain Chain by SuEllen Fried (M. Evans and Company, Inc., 2004)

Easing the Teasing: Helping Your Child Cope with Name-Calling, Ridicule, and Verbal Bullying by Judy S. Freedman (McGraw-Hill, 2002)

And Words Can Hurt Forever: How to Protect Adolescents from Bullying, Harassment, and Emotional Violence by James Garbarino & Ellen deLara (Free Press 2003)

Teaching Your Child the Language of Social Success by Marshall P. Duke, Elisabeth A. Martin, Stephen Nowicki Jr. (Peachtree Publishers; 1996)

Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Penn State College of Medicine
Department of Humanities present

What you need to know about Bullying

PENNSTATE



What Parents can do

About Bullying

© Cheryl Dellasega, Ph.D., 2007
Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Penn State College of Medicine
Department of Humanities

Proactive approach

Develop Your Own Plan to Make a Difference:

Early on, decide how you will help all children you come in contact with learn to relate in more positive ways. This includes your children as well as their friends.

Discernment:

Teach children effective decision making skills by involving him/her in brainstorming early on. Present pretend situations, or allow him/her help resolve real ones.

Prepare:

Talk about relationship issues children might confront before they happen, and get them thinking ahead on how to respond.

A Toolkit of Options:

When issues occur, don't rely on just one strategy to resolve conflict. Have children identify as many alternatives as possible, and get them to describe how they can use them in real life.

Walk-Talk-Tell:

A slogan suggested by girls from Club Ophelia™ that means: "Walk away, Talk it out, or Tell someone who can help."

Identify "Trouble Spots":

Bullying occurs more often in areas where there is less adult supervision, like the bus, the bathroom, and the hallways. Get children to think of a "Safe Place, Safe Person" where he or she can always go when overwhelmed.

Identity Formation:

Give children many possible opportunities for success so their identity isn't based on friendships. Don't rely on school to build self esteem—involve them in other activities to build self confidence and integrity.

If My Friends Wanted Me To, I Would:

Talk about what is reasonable and safe to do at a friend's urging, and what is not. Practice saying "No" in an assertive not aggressive way, with body language to match.

Friendship Skills:

Friends are not automatic! Discuss behaviors that make or break friendships and identify ways children can connect with others. It's the "To have a friend, be a friend" concept.

Volunteer Work:

Success in another arena can come when a child offers his or her time to those who welcome his or her energy or love. This can include animals!

Role Model Tolerance and Respect:

Share stories from your own life where you acted on your beliefs in a positive way, and demonstrate the behaviors you want all children to use when conflict occurs.

Stay Connected:

Be creative in maintaining contact with children. Sticky notes, emails, neutral activities, and conversations during car rides are just a few ways to keep communication going. If you make it a point to talk during times of peace, they're more likely to come to you during times of trouble.

In the Schools:

Ask how you can help create a positive learning environment for all students, not just your children

uned2no:

Keep your computer skills current so you know what's going on online.



Reactive approach

Avoid Blaming:

Blaming teachers, parents, or others for the behavior of a child is non-productive and is likely to prompt defensive behavior. Talk factually about situations rather than emotionally about other children.

Identify Shared Anxieties & Concerns:

Be an ally with others and present yourself as someone who is there to help, rather than create more problems. Discuss bullying issues in general, and look at how everyone can work together to resolve them.

Don't Label or Stereotype

Treating your own or another child as a bully or victim can lead them to believe you expect such behavior from them. Discuss the need to "improve relationship skills" rather than end bullying/victimization.

Keep Engaged Rather than Isolated:

If a child is having problems in one arena, get him/her involved in others where there are fresh opportunities for success. Be creative in identifying places other than school where his or her talents and abilities will be welcomed.

Influence of Adults:

Never underestimate the power of one adult who cares. Connect your kid with other concerned relatives or acquaintances who can bolster self esteem and signal acceptance.