

Cyber-Bullying Tip Sheet

What is cyber-bullying?

Cyber-bullying occurs when a bully or group of bullies use communication technologies – such as cell phones and computers – in a way that meets the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullies use voice messages, e-mail, text messages, photo images, videos, polling web sites and/or personal web pages to repeatedly harass, intimidate or embarrass another person or group of people.

Children Who Witness Bullying Can Help

Bystanders often feel uncomfortable when they see another child bullied. Many do nothing to stop the bullying. They may even join in the bullying to avoid becoming targets themselves. Adults can help by persuading children to become “heroes” by standing up for others or by reporting the bullying to a parent or teacher. Research shows that most bullying incidents end when bystanders speak up for the victim.

What to do if you suspect that your child is being bullied?

1. Talk with your child. Tell your child that you are concerned and that you'd like to help.
2. Talk with staff at your child's school. Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child's teacher. He or she will probably be in the best position to understand the relationships between your child and other peers at school.

If you are not comfortable talking with your child's teacher, or if you are not satisfied with the conversation, make an appointment to meet with your child's guidance counselor or principal to discuss your concerns.

If, after talking with your child and staff at his or her school, you don't suspect that your child is being bullied, stay vigilant to other possible problems that your child may be having. Some of the warning signs above (e.g., depression, social isolation, and loss of interest in school) may be signs of other serious problems. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child's school.

Warning Signs

Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- Has few, if any friends, with whom he or she spends time;
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers (such as clubs);
- Takes a long, “illogical” route when walking to or from the bus stop or school;
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school;
- Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home;
- Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches, or other physical ailments;
- Comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings;
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams;
- Experiences a loss of appetite; or
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem.

Adults Can Help Stop the Bullying

Adults can take responsibility for providing a safe environment for young children by using these strategies:

- Model respectful treatment of others.
- Protect the child who has been bullied when an incident is witnessed or reported.
- Do not tolerate actions or words that harm others.
- Share books with children about cooperation, empathy and dealing with bullying.
- Use role playing to encourage empathy.

Reference: <http://stopbullyingnow.gov>