

Keeping children safe at home: Bullying

Preventing bullying among children and youth

What is bullying?

Bullying is not always easy to define. It includes the following kinds of behaviour:

- Physical: Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and other forms of violence or threats
- Verbal: Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing
- Emotional: Excluding, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation
- Racist: Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: Unwanted physical contact or abusive comments
- Homophobic: Any hostile or offensive action against lesbians, gay males or bisexuals or those perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual

Persistent bullying is important because it can result in:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement
- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide

Possible signs of bullying

Children may:

- Be frightened of walking to and from school
- Change their usual route
- Not want you to go on the school bus
- Beg you to drive them to school
- Be unwilling to go to school
- Feel ill in the mornings
- Begin truanting
- Begin doing poorly in their school work
- Come home regularly with clothes or books destroyed
- Come home starving (bully taking lunch money)
- Become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence

- Become distressed and anxious, stop eating
- Attempt or threaten suicide
- Cry themselves to sleep, have nightmares
- Bed wetting
- Have their possessions go missing
- Ask for money or start stealing (to pay the bully)
- Continually 'lose' their pocket money
- Refuse to talk about what's wrong
- Have unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Begin to bully other children, siblings
- Become aggressive and unreasonable
- Give improbable excuses for any of the above

Kidscape gives the following advice:

How you can help

- If you are worried that your child is being bullied, ask him or her directly
- Take bullying seriously and find out the facts when told about an incident of bullying
- Don't agree to keep the bullying a secret
- Find out your school's policy on bullying
- Talk with your child's teacher or head-teacher if the bullying takes place at school
- Help children practise strategies such as shouting no, walking with confidence and running away
- Give your child a chance to vent his/her feelings about being bullied
- Get other parents together and discuss ways to stop the bullying
- Talk to the parent governors at your school and suggest a school policy on bullying
- Arrange to meet your child, if the bullying is happening on the way to or from school
- Ask that the bullies be kept at school until everyone has had a chance to get home
- If you feel it would help your children's confidence, ask them if they would like to take self-defence classes



TIPS



- Keep a written diary of all incidents
- Invite children over to help your child make friends and increase self-confidence

Kidscape: www.kidscape.org.uk

Preventing Other Youth Violence

- Role play real-life situations with your children. For instance, help your child learn to say no to playing with a gun. Help your child learn to recognize and avoid dangerous social situations. And help your child learn to deal with conflicts without resorting to violence.

- Restrict access to firearms. If you own firearms, use firearm safety devices such as personalization devices, loaded chamber indicators, or magazine safeties. Keep your gun locked and unloaded. Keep your ammunition locked and in a separate location from your gun.

More info: <http://www.childsafetyeurope.org>

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