

Bullying



As a new school year begins, many children are excited about what the year will hold for them. Other children dread the thought of going back to school. These are children who are bullied and tormented each day in the school hallways, cafeterias, and bathrooms by other students.

A child who is bullied will exhibit many signs. These are some signs parents and other adults can look out for:

- ✓ A child who comes home with torn or damaged clothing.
- ✓ A child who comes home with missing books or other belongings.
- ✓ A child who has unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches.
- ✓ A child who appears sad, anxious or depressed, when he or she goes to school in the morning or comes home from school.
- ✓ A child who frequently has stomachaches or headaches when it is time to go to school.
- ✓ A child who used to have a great interest in school but now does not.

A child who is bullied may feel they have nowhere to turn. They're depressed children whose self-esteem will be lowered due to the bullying. These are children who often feel like no one cares for them. They may attempt suicide, or seek revenge against those who have hurt them, due to the repeated abuse and torment they receive.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, always support them. Let them know you care about them and what is happening.

- ⇒ Be supportive and ask your child about the bullying incidents. Let your child know you are concerned and you care about them.
- ⇒ Contact the school your child attends. Alert your child's teacher and the school principal about the bullying incidents. You can also ask the teacher and/or principal if they have ever observed students bullying your child.
- ⇒ Keep a journal of the bullying events your child reports to you.
- ⇒ If your child is being bullied, do not wait for the children involved to "work it out themselves." This is rarely effective. Allowing bullying to repeatedly occur, with no intervention, can greatly impact your child's health and mental well-being.

If you are a child who's been bullied:

- * Tell your parents, teachers, school resource officer, or other adults you trust about the bullying.
- * Know that being bullied is not your fault.
- * Do not fight back. Fighting back will get you in trouble.
- * Avoid situations where you may be bullied and use a "buddy system." Do not be alone in hallways, the bathroom, or cafeteria (common places where children are bullied).
- * Sit up front on the school bus where you can be seen.

✖When you're being bullied, tell the bully to stop and walk away. Then immediately tell an adult what has happened. This is telling, not tattling.

If you are a child who witnesses bullying:

- ★Do not laugh at the bully. This only reinforces their behavior.
- ★Tell an adult what you have seen.
- ★Tell the bully to stop, if you feel comfortable doing this.
- ★Give support and encouragement to the person who is being bullied.
- ★Many kids witness bullying, but they do nothing to stop it.

For more information, visit these websites:

Stop Bullying Now, www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp
SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center (Bullying Is Not a Fact of Life),
<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SVP%2D0052/>
Missouri School Violence Hotline, www.schoolviolencehotline.com
Missouri Center for Safe Schools, <http://education.umkc.edu/safe-school/>
National Education Association, <http://www.nea.org/schoolsafety/bullying.html>