

Bullying Prevention for Parents

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hello, this is Dr. Greta Massetti. I'm a behavioral scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

As parents know from their days on the playground, there is often a bully - an individual who uses intimidation to cause fear, distress, or harm to victims. Victims of bullying may be called nasty names, be rejected or excluded from activities, and may be victims of physical aggression. They may have rumors spread about them, have belongings taken away, or be teased and threatened. In addition, bullying is no longer limited to the schoolyard. Technology, including the Internet, email, and instant and text messaging, provides new arenas for bullying to occur. I don't want my children to experience any form of bullying, and I want them to know what to do when they see bullying happening.

Bullying is not a normal rite of passage; it can have serious consequences. As a parent, you can play an important role in bullying prevention. When it comes to bullying, open communication between you and your children is important. Talk to your child about bullying. If she does not tell you about bullying it does not mean she isn't experiencing or witnessing bullying. Explain what bullying is, listen to your child's concerns, and answer her questions honestly.

Another way to prevent bullying is to encourage your children to pursue their interests. Doing what they love may help them be more confident among their peers and make friends with other kids with similar interests.

It is also important for your child to know that if he is being bullied, he doesn't have to suffer from it or experience it all on his own. Talk to your child about getting help from a trusted adult if he feels threatened by a bully or if he witnesses bullying. You may want to discuss who he should reach out to for help and role-play what he should say. Assure your child that he should not be afraid to tell an adult when he or someone he knows is being bullied. Reporting bullying is not being a "tattle-tale;" bullying is a serious concern.

If your child is being bullied, there are a few do's and don'ts for handling the situation. First, your child will feel reassured if you empathize with her or even share your own story, if you were ever bullied. Tell her that bullying is wrong, that it's not her fault, and that you're glad she had the courage to tell you about it. You don't want to ever blame your child for being bullied. Don't assume she did something to provoke the bullying.

If your child is being bullied, it can be an opportunity for you to work with her to resolve it, working *together* to find solutions. Ask your child what she thinks can be done to help. Reassure her that the situation can be handled privately.

It's important to never tell your child to ignore bullying. What she may "hear" is that you are going to ignore it. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.

Help your child develop strategies and skills for handling bullying. Provide suggestions for ways to respond to bullying, and help him gain confidence by rehearsing his responses. Do not encourage your child to harm the person who is bullying him. It may result with him getting hurt, suspended, or expelled.

Be persistent. Bullying may not be resolved overnight. You may want to document ongoing bullying. Work with your child to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If it involves cyberbullying, keep all messages or postings.

Be aware of other problems your child may be having. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child's school.

Bullying predominantly occurs at school. During the 2007-2008 school year, 25 percent of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students on a daily or weekly basis. If you are concerned about bullying in your child's school, get involved. Get to know other parents and school counselors and staff. Talk to your child's teacher or guidance counselor about bullying prevention at school and how to support your child at home. Do not contact the parents of the students who bullied your child. It may make matters worse. School officials should contact the parents of the children involved. Remember, your opinion matters; make your child's school a safer and better place to learn. You are an essential part of the effort to prevent bullying.

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.