



What Children Should Know About Bullying

Bullying is the act of a person or group purposely trying to hurt or upset a person or group by saying mean and hurtful things repeatedly. Also, some bullies hit or kick another person or force that person to hand over personal belongings. Sometimes, bullies tease or embarrass a person or make a person do humiliating things he/she doesn't want to do. The person who is being bullied has difficulty making this treatment stop and starts to feel terrible. These types of bullying are fairly easy to recognize, but bullying can be more subtle--harder to recognize. Sometimes, a person decides to ostracize another person by making up awful rumors, convincing others to dislike that person, or not including that person in social plans when s/he used to be included.

Bullying most often occurs in school, on the way to or from school, in the lunchroom, on the playground, in hallways, or even in a classroom. It makes the person who is being bullied feel terrible and usually makes the other children who are witnessing this situation feel terrible, sad, or uncomfortable. In one research study, children were asked what they did when they witnessed another child being bullied. Some of them said they tried to intervene and help the person. Many said they thought they should help the person but didn't know what they should do, and others said they would do nothing because it was "none of their business." What happens at school is most certainly a student's business. A school should be a safe place to learn. Every child has a right to feel respected and secure at school. The presence of bullies interferes with those rights. Bullying is everybody's business: students, teachers, administrators, custodians, cafeteria workers, and parents. A child should not be left to deal with this humiliation and fear by him/herself.

There are several different ideas about why some people are bullies. Sometimes, a child is bullied at home by an adult, a brother, or a sister and repeats the behavior with his/her peers. Sometimes, a bully does things to other children because it makes him/her feel powerful or to get attention. This behavior is destructive and unacceptable regardless of why a person is a bully.