

BULLYING INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

How to help your child survive
and thrive amidst bullying

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REVIEW: WHAT IS BULLYING?

- “A person is bullied when he/she is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions on the part of one or more persons. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another” Owleus, 1996 (p. 10)
 - Physical
 - Hitting, kicking, shoving, etc.
 - Verbal
 - Taunting, teasing, name calling, spreading rumors, etc.
 - Non-verbal
 - Excluding or ignoring others, eye rolling, making faces, etc.

REVIEW: WHAT IS BULLYING? (CONT.)

- ◉ Bullying and victimization are a **common experience** for kids today.
 - 50% of students are affected by bullying (Nansel, et al., 2004)
 - 6-15% of children are bullied weekly or more (Rigby, 2000)
- ◉ Bullying has **serious and lasting implications**.
 - Anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, isolation, decreased academic performance, self harm, etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WHO BULLY

- ◉ Impulsive
- ◉ Easily frustrated
- ◉ Lack empathy
- ◉ Have difficulty following rules
- ◉ View aggression/violence in a positive way

MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN WHO BULLY

- “Children who bully are loners”
 - In fact, research indicates that children and youth who bully are not socially isolated.
 - They report having an easier time making friends than children and youth who do not bully.
 - Children and youth who bully usually have at least a small group of friends who support or encourage their bullying
- “Children who bully have low self-esteem”
 - In fact, most research indicates that children and youth who bully have average or above-average self-esteem.

OPEN THE DIALOGUE ABOUT BULLYING

- Frequent conversations with your children about what goes on at school.
 - Don't wait for them to tell you
 - Fear of repercussions
 - Sense of inadequacy
 - Open ended questions
- Don't be afraid to name it.
 - Call it what it is: bullying, relational aggression, violence
 - Set the stage that while this behavior may be frequent and “normal” among their peers, it is not ok.

WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS

- Ripped, torn, or damaged clothes, books, or other possessions
- Loss of interest in school or decreased academic performance
- Does not spend time with classmates outside of school
- Loss of interest in leisure or extracurricular activities
- Seems afraid or unwilling to go to school in the morning
- Mood swings, increased irritability, anxiety, etc.
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sleep

FIND OUT THE FACTS

- Understand if and how much your child is bullied.
- Listen carefully to what your child tells you about the bullying.
 - Ask him/her to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics being used.
 - When and where did the bullying happened. Can your child name other children or adults who may have witnessed the bullying?

WHAT NOT DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED.

- Do not minimize your child's experience
 - This is likely a very real, painful and difficult situation for your child
- Do not blame your child for being bullied.
 - Don't assume that the child did something to provoke the bullying
- Do not encourage retaliation as a solution.
 - "Just hit them back, call them a name, say something mean about them, etc."
 - This will not only make your child a bully, but will likely escalate the situation.
- Do not tell them to ignore the situation.
 - What the child may "hear" is that you are going to ignore it.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

- Empathize with your child.
 - Tell him/her that bullying is wrong, it is not their fault, and that you are glad he/she had the courage to tell you about it.
- Check your emotions.
 - A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, a parent is wise to step back and consider the next steps carefully.
- Ask your child what he/she thinks needs to be done.
 - Different situations will bring up different emotions and warrant different coping options.
 - Help your child brainstorm different ways to deal with the situation and weight the pros and cons of each.

HELP YOUR CHILD DECIDE AMONG THEIR OPTIONS USING THE RAID MODEL

Resolve
Avoid
Ignore
Diffuse

Taken from the Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP) program

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OPTION 1: AVOID

- ⦿ One strategy in conflict resolution is to avoid those situations and/or people that seem dangerous or likely to lead to conflict.
- ⦿ When we avoid we **stay away from the dangerous situation or person altogether.**
- ⦿ Involves planning ahead, being smart and proactive.
- ⦿ Different from being a “coward” or “chicken.”

OPTION 2: IGNORE

- Another strategy is to ignore the offense. This means more than not responding verbally, it also means using appropriate body language that does not escalate the conflict.
- One important tool for ignoring the offense is the use of “self-talk.”
- Help your child create more positive, balanced self-talk.
 - Rehearsing this with your child can often help them use more positive self-talk when necessary.

OPTION 3: DIFFUSE

- Diffusion involves techniques that reduce the potential for conflict by reducing the tension of a situation.
- Key concepts in diffusion involve: not reacting to emotions, standing in the other person's shoes, keeping it light, and apologizing.
- “I statements” are another important diffusion tool.
 - “I felt mad when you said that” vs. “You made me mad.”
 - “I felt hurt when you said that about me” vs. “You hurt my feelings.”

HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME MORE RESILIENT TO BULLYING

- Help develop talents or positive attributes of your child (sports, art, music, etc.)
 - This may help your child become more confident among his/her peers.
 - This may take some emphasis off of “perfect” peer relationships.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in the class.
- Help your child meet friends outside of their school environment.
- Create a safe and supportive environment at home.
 - This can often serve a haven or “buffer” for children