

Signs Your Child Is Being Bullied



Children are growing and changing all the time. We will see variety of moods, temperaments, changing interests, and energy levels. Regardless of all this, if you are paying attention, parents will know when something seems off.

// IMPORTANT TO PAY ATTENTION:

Watch for changes in their overall energy level. Are they “even more” irritable or moody? Are they suddenly avoiding social scenes? Are they isolating more? Are they unusually needy or avoidant?

Do they come home with damaged belongings? Lost items? Cuts? Bruises? Scratches?

Do they seem to be getting a lot of headaches or stomach aches? Trouble sleeping? Are they making excuses not to go to school? Have they lost interest? Do they take even longer to get ready for school? Taking longer to get home from school?

Has their appetite changed? Increased or decreased? Are they covering up their wrists, forearms or thighs? Children who are cutting themselves tend to cover up with bracelets or long sleeves. If you discover this, beware of your reaction. Your action may

create shame for your child without your intention. Without judgement, let them know you want to clean the area and prevent infection. A caring non punishing reaction will help them open up to you. Let them know that ‘you and your child’ will need some help to address this properly.

Are they more anxious? How is their self-esteem? Are they talking less? Withdrawing? Picking on others? Sometimes this is simple growing body changes, and sometimes it is not.

Beware: if your child has a disability, or if English is not their first language, they are at a higher risk of being targeted.

If you suspect your child is a bully, this needs to be addressed. These actions are telling you something is bothering your child. These behaviours will only get worse.

// WHAT DO YOU DO?

We have provided you with ‘some’ of the signs that you need to be aware of. If you see these signs then your child needs your planned attention. Try talking to them about your concerns. Try not to be invasive or intrusive, controlling, or dominating. They need to have a sense of control. Bullying is about the abuse of power. Make it easy for them to talk to you by committing to working through this with them. Don’t take over. Really listen to them. If someone is bullying your child - you will have to intervene. However, take time to listen to your child’s fears and concerns and make your intervention something that they can trust.

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// SUGGESTIONS:

- Educate yourself and your family on bullying. Let your children see that you are reading books, articles and if possible, watch a movie/ documentary or video with them.
- Talk to others about this subject and get different perspectives.
- Find out about school policies. If there are none then request they develop policies ASAP.
- Invite a professional to your community league to talk to parents about how to address bullying.

// START A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR CHILD BY MAKING COMMENTS

Examples To Get You Started

- *"I have seen a lot about bullying in the news, is this going on at your school?"*
- *"Are there any kids bullying at your school? What do you see? Are they picking on you? If yes then what do you want to do about it? Can I help? We need to figure this out together".*
- *"You know an awful lot of schools have a few mean kids. Are there any at your school? What are they doing? Who are they?"*

If your child is being bullied try not to over-react. Remind your child that they are loved and that you will do all you can to protect them. Validate that they do not deserve this and that they have a right to feel safe. Reassure them that you will find solutions together. Remind them that many children are going through this. With your family standing up to bullying you will be helping many other children. That way your child will feel a part of a positive action. Seeing things through their eyes is very important.

Avoid statements like:
suck it up, go punch them first, ignore it, or, you are being too sensitive. These are a big mistake and will cause more damage.

Follow the school policy. Call or set up an appointment to talk with their teacher. If the teacher is not willing to assist you then speak to the principal. Continue to go above the administrators until your child is safe. Don't hesitate. Bullying needs to be stopped immediately and taken seriously.

Follow up on each conversation you have with the teacher and all administrators with an email asking for confirmation on your summary. A paper trail is helpful and important.

Ask the school what they have noticed? How will they pay more attention? What will be put in place to protect your child and also other children? What kind of help will the children who are acting out with bullying behaviours receive? Has teachers and their leaders been trained in this area? Who trained them? How can more training occur?

If you feel your child is suffering in any way from the effects of bullying, seek a counsellor with experience in this area. This may only take 1-2 sessions.

If parents want training, contact a Prevention Specialist. ABRC can help you locate someone.

Always remember (and remind your child), no matter how complicated or difficult a situation may be, there is help available to you and your family members.



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