



# Bullies

*“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” — Mahatma Gandhi*

Teasing at bus stops, threats on playgrounds, throwing rocks, kicking or shoving—it’s all fair play to a bully. Children know who the bullies are long before teachers and parents do. Yet children do not tell on bullies. They are afraid the bullying will become worse if they tell or that they might become the next victim if they speak up for someone else. And sadly, most victims believe no one will help them or be able to stop the bully even if they do tell.

Children are naturally self-centered, and hurtful remarks are part of conflict at any age. A quarrel or a one-time fight is not bullying. *Bullying is when a child is the target of repeated negative actions by someone else. The bully displays more power than the victim does.*

## What can we do?

Bullying behavior in elementary school can easily turn into violence by middle and high school. A boy who is a bully at age eight is three times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age thirty and less likely than others to finish college and locate a good job. Girls who bully are more likely to raise children who bully (Eron, 1987).

Parents and teachers should stop bullying before someone gets hurt. It is important to teach children bullying prevention strategies, such as:

- ignoring the bullying.
- pretending not to hear.
- walking away quickly.
- using body language to look

determined, strong, and positive even if you feel frightened.

- shouting, “NO, GO AWAY” as loudly as possible.
- always telling a trusted adult if you are bullied.

## Which statements are true?

True False

1. Bullies are boys.
2. Victims usually bring the trouble upon themselves.
3. Bullies are usually failing in school.
4. Bullies are larger than their victims.
5. Bullies don’t really mean to hurt their victims.
6. Looking different is the main reason children get bullied.
7. If the victim fights back, the bully will back down.
8. Other children should stay away from bullying situations or they’ll get bullied as well.
9. Bringing the parents of the victim and of the bully together for a discussion is a good idea.
10. Bullies are insecure and have low self-esteem.

*(answers on page 2)*

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1. **False.** Both boys and girls bully, but their tactics are usually different. Boys usually bully with physical aggression, girls with social alienation or humiliation.

2. **False.** Bullies are responsible for the aggression. Rather than randomly target victims, bullies choose them because of characteristics and behaviors that make them easier targets. These traits include being physically weak, crying easily, being anxious and insecure, and lacking age-appropriate social skills.

3. **False.** Bullies tend to be at least average or only slightly below average academically.

4. **False.** Bullies come in all sizes, and bullies can even intimidate victims who are larger than they if there is an imbalance of power (bully is older or is part of a group).

5. **False.** Bullies lack compassion for their victims and feel justified in their actions.

6. **False.** Looking different is one reason children are victimized, but not the main reason. Isolation (being alone, appearing to have no friends) and personality type are more often determining factors.

7. **False.** Returned aggression is not usually effective and, in fact, may incite the bully to further attacks. Assertion (verbally telling how you feel, getting an adult to help), rather than aggression, is effective, however.

8. **False.** When bullies are confronted with a united front of their peers who support the victims and show that bullying behavior is not socially acceptable, their power is taken away.

9. **False.** It is not a good strategy to bring the parent(s) of a bully and the parent(s) of a victim together. There are several reasons. The parents may be a partial cause of the bully's misbehavior. Parents may feel a need to lash out at each other or may feel embarrassed if brought together. Meet with each set of parents individually to provide them the specific assistance they need to help their child.

10. **False.** Bullies are not anxious, insecure children, but have overly positive (often unrealistic) self-images that reflect a strong need to dominate with power and threat.

If a child cannot get rid of a bully him/herself, an adult may have to intervene by talking with the bullying child and the child's family. Replacing the bully's negative actions with positive activities is critical.

#### *Parents:*

- Listen to your children. Encourage them to talk about school, social events, other kids in class, the walk or ride to and from school so you can identify any problems they may be having.
- Take children's complaints of bullying seriously. Probe even minor complaints. Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell anyone that they are being bullied, so listen to their complaints.
- Watch for symptoms that your children may be bullying victims, such as withdrawal, a drop in grades, torn clothes, or a need for extra money or supplies.
- Tell the school or organization immediately if you think your children are being bullied so that adults can monitor the children's activities.
- Work with other parents to ensure that the neighborhood children are supervised closely on their way to and from school.
- Don't bully your children physically or verbally. Do not yell at or ignore your children when they misbehave. Praise their kindness toward others. Let them know that kindness is valued.



- Help your children find ways to manage their anger (exercise, drawing, using clay, talking). Make it clear that bullying behavior will not be tolerated.
- Spend extra time with your children and monitor their activities. Involve your children in volunteer work so they can learn about helping others.
- Teach your children ways to solve arguments without violent words or actions. Teach self-protection skills—how to walk confidently, to stay alert to what’s going on around them, and to stand up for themselves verbally.
- Provide healthy, nonviolent entertainment. Violence on TV, in the movies, and in games and toys promotes aggression and increases hostile behavior.
- Involve children with high energy or aggressive tendencies in some kind of special activity, such as sports, karate, or music, that will help them gain self-confidence and the respect of other children.
- Tell the bully, “NO” and teach children to tell the bully, “NO” to limit his or her power.
- Arrange for the bully to:
  - call his or her parent(s) to explain the inappropriate behavior.
  - have lunch with or do something nice for the student who was bullied. (This requires adult supervision and willingness on both children’s parts.)
  - help others, such as by assisting a younger child with schoolwork. (It is best to coach and supervise the bully in this activity and to match him or her with a child who has not been bullied and is willing to accept help.)

### Summary

Children cannot thrive when they are afraid. In the end, all children are affected when bullying goes unaddressed. The victims feel humiliated and fearful, and some are physically tormented and hurt. The silent majority of children, those who stand by and watch, are affected as well. Some are secretly afraid of being targeted themselves. The bullies also lose. Parents and schools together can stop this cycle by providing safe, nurturing environments for all children at school and at home.

### Teachers:

- Read a book on bullying to the class.
- Observe when children are playing. Praise children who display caring, kind behaviors.
- Encourage students to use energy in a positive way through healthy physical activities.
- Encourage children to develop a network of trusted friends.

### Books on Bullying:

*Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain*, by Trevor Romain

*How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies: A Book That Takes the Nuisance Out of Name Calling and Other Nonsense*, by Kate Cohen-Posey

*Simon’s Hook; A Story About Teases and Put-downs*, by Karen Gedig Burnett

*Nobody Knew What to Do: A Story About Bullying*, by Becky Ray McCain

## For additional information

Youth Violence: Beginning with Bullying

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/famlf2/mf2413.pdf>

Youth Violence Scavenger Hunt

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/FAMLF2/MF2233B.PDF>

Childhood Aggression

[http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/humandev/docs/fcs\\_504.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/humandev/docs/fcs_504.pdf)

Understanding Violent Behavior in Children and Teens

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/behavior.htm>

Bullying at School Information

<http://www.scre.ac.uk/bully/>

North Carolina Parenting Education Network newsletter on bullying

<http://www.ncpen.org/newsV3-3.pdf>

Center for the Prevention of School Violence

[www.cpsv.org](http://www.cpsv.org)

Take A Stand® - Stop the Violence

<http://www.takeastand.com>

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.safeyouth.org/>

Conflict Resolution

[http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/nowg/sc\\_conflict.html](http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/nowg/sc_conflict.html)

Children's Threats: When Are They Serious?

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/65.htm>

Partnerships Against Violence Network

<http://www.pavnet.org/>

National Crime Prevention Council

[www.ncpc.org/10adu3.htm](http://www.ncpc.org/10adu3.htm)

The Child Who Bullies by Bruce A. Epstein, M.D.

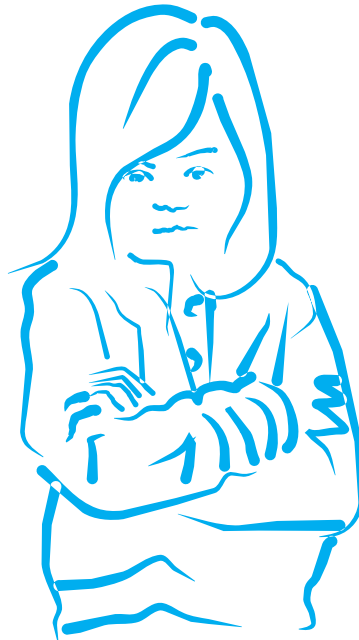
[www.allkids.org/Epstein/Articles/Bullies.html](http://www.allkids.org/Epstein/Articles/Bullies.html)

please STOP.com

<http://www.pleaseSTOP.com/bullying.html>

## Reference

Eron, L. "Aggression through the ages," *School Safety*, fall (1987): 12-16.



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