Facts For Families

Bullying

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Teasing, ignoring or intentionally hurting another child are all types of bullying. Harassment and sexual harassment are also considered forms of bullying. Bullies may be large and aggressive, but they also could be small and cunning. Victims of bullying have poor self-confidence and typically react to threats by avoiding the bully. Both bullies and their victims make up a fringe group within schools. Those children who bully want power over others. Both bullies and their victims feel insecure in school. Boys typically bully by using physical intimidation. Girls bully in a less obvious manner by using social intimidation to exclude others from peer interactions.

How if affects my child

Children who are bullied by their peers are:

- more likely to show signs of depression and anxiety, have increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, experience changes in sleep and eating patterns, and lose interest in activities they used to enjoy
- more likely to have health complaints
- less likely to do well in school, miss, skip or drop out of class

When compared to their developmental peers, children who bully their peers are:

- more likely to engage in criminal activity as adults
- abuse alcohol and drugs
- less likely to do well in school

Types of bullying

- Verbal bullying is saying or writing cruel things about another person. Verbal bullying includes:
  - teasing
  - name-calling
  - inappropriate sexual comments
  - taunting
  - threatening to cause harm

- Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  - leaving someone out on purpose
  - telling other children not to be friends with someone
  - spreading rumors about someone
  - embarrassing someone in public

- Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  - hitting/kicking/pinching
  - spitting
  - tripping/pushing
  - taking or breaking someone's things
  - making mean or rude hand gestures

- Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology such as cell phones or computers as well as social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include:
  - cruel text messages or email
  - rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites
  - embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles

What Can We Do About It?

Know your child's routines and pay attention to any changes to that routine. Does your child arrive home later than usual, take alternate routes to school (in order to avoid confrontation with a bully), or appear more overwhelmed or sad?

Maintain close contact with teachers to see if your child avoids certain classes or school settings. This may also help you to understand bullying.

Empower your child by showing how much you value him/her. Spend time talking with him/her personal self-worth and the importance of sticking up for himself/herself.

Help your child understand the difference between aggression and passive communication by showing different examples of each. Ask your school psychologist or social worker to explain the different forms of communication: aggressive (typical of bullying), passive (typical of bullying victims) and assertive (most effective means of communication).

Discuss with your child the impact of being a bully and how bullying is hurtful and harmful. Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.

If you suspect your child is being bullied at school, talk with your child's teacher or principal. Children should not be afraid to go to school or play in their neighborhood.

If your child sees another child being bullied, help your child report the bully to a teacher or another adult. Saying nothing could make it worse for everyone.

Become familiar with the bullying prevention curriculum at your child's school. For example, in Maryland, state law requires that all public schools include a bullying prevention component within their curriculum. See Maryland State Department of Education website for more information: http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/SSSP/Bullying/index.aspx

Resources/Links

Children's Mental Health Matters!
Facts for Families — First Steps in Seeking Help
www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
This site contains resources for families to promote an understanding of mental illnesses.
AACAP Facts for Families - Bullying
https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families_and_youth/facts_for_families/FFF-Guide/Bullying-080.aspx

Kidscape
What is bullying?
https://www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/facts-about-bullying/what-is-bullying/

Maryland State Department of Education
MSDE bullying report
http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Bullying/MSDEReportBullyingHarassment.pdf

Maryland Suicide & Crisis Hotlines
http://suicidehotlines.com/maryland.html

StopBullying.Gov
A federal website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
http://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html
Bullying and LGBT Youth
www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/index.html

Kids Resources/Links

StopBullying.gov
This federal website has a link just for kids.
www.stopbullying.gov/kids/index.html