

Bullying Hurts Everyone



Bullying hurts more than just the targeted child. It also harms the children who witness it and the children who bully. Children have the right to feel safe—and adults have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for them.

Bullying is more than teasing.

Bullying behavior includes repeated, unprovoked, harmful acts and physical attacks against a child. It can also include repeated threats, hurtful talk, or deliberate isolation from the group. Children learn to bully when they see the behavior in others. They may encounter it at home, at school, in the media, or in the neighborhood. Bullying behavior is reinforced when others pay attention to it or react with fear.

Children who are bullied need help, not blame.

Often there is no obvious reason why one child is singled out. Children who become victims may be seen as different in some way, may be new to the group, or may act in more passive and fearful ways than others in the group. Adults can help by teaching the child being bullied to remain calm and to say directly, “Stop that! I don’t like it!” Encourage the child to ask for adult help when needed.

Children who witness bullying can help.

Bystanders often feel uncomfortable when they see another child bullied. Many do nothing to stop the bullying. They may even join in the bullying to avoid becoming targets themselves. Adults can help by persuading children to become “heroes” by standing up for others or by reporting the bullying to a parent or teacher. Research shows that most bullying incidents end when bystanders speak up for the victim.

Children who bully need help, too.

Children who learn to control others through bullying often continue this behavior into adulthood. They are less likely to learn the skills needed to build and maintain positive relationships. Adults can help by teaching them acceptable ways to feel in control and to relate to others.

Adults can help stop the bullying.

Adults can take responsibility for providing a safe environment for young children by using these strategies:

- Model respectful treatment of others.
- Protect the child who has been bullied when an incident is witnessed or reported.
- Do not tolerate actions or words that harm others.
- Involve students in developing a code of conduct with consequences for unacceptable treatment of other children.
- Share books with children about cooperation, empathy, and dealing with bullying.
- Use role playing to encourage empathy.
- Use cooperative work, such as the Project Approach, and noncompetitive games to promote positive relationships.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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