

School signs of bullying

- Doesn't want to go to school
- Changes their route to school or are frightened of walking to school
- Doesn't want to go to school on the bus/tram/train
- School grades begin to fall.

HOW TO STOP BULLYING

The big question is how to stop bullying? The first recommended step is to try to get your child to open up about what's happening in their life by showing them that you understand, and won't judge them.

Listen: Try to listen to the whole story without interrupting. Be empathetic, calm and show you understand what the child is saying. They might need to tell their story more than once.

Talk: Have a conversation about what happened. Try not to let your very understandable emotions (anger, distress...) show. Your feelings can intensify the child's or make it worse for them and might even deter your child from talking to you another time.

Remind your child it's normal to feel hurt, it's never OK to be bullied.

Tell them the behaviour was intentional, meant to hurt and won't just go away.

Ask your child what they would like to happen. Often all they want to know is how to stop the bullying. Children may feel that if the perpetrator is punished, it will be worse for them in the long run.

Find out what is happening: Note what, when and where the bullying occurred, who was involved, how often and if anybody else witnessed it. Don't offer to confront the young person or their parents yourself. This might make things worse for your child.

Contact your child's school

Bullying arises from social situations - family, school, clubs, and work - and if possible, cases of bullying are best dealt with where they occur. In children's lives, school is the most common location for bullying. It's therefore important you alert the school to the situation, as they may not be aware of it.

Don't assume the school will know about the situation, because your child may not have told them. The majority of children and teenagers do not disclose to teachers or parents. Be confident that once alerted the school will want to stop bullying behaviour as much as you.

Here are some tips to guide your discussions with the school:

- Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher or coordinator.
- Check your school's bullying/online bullying policy. This may be contained within the behaviour or wellbeing policy. It might be available on the school's website or printed in the school diary. Note what the policy promises to do to keep children safe from harm and respond to the situation.
- Take along your notes about the situation or screen-shots, texts etc. It's often difficult to remember specific details.
- Find out if the school is aware of the bullying.
- Ask what is being done to ensure your child's safety.
- Ask for a follow-up appointment to ensure the situation is being addressed. The school may ask you to attend a restorative conference. If so, they will explain to you what is involved.
- If your child asks to stay home from school, explain it won't help - and may make things worse.

Give Sensible Advice: Encourage your child not to fight back, but coach them to use neutral, or (if appropriate) joking language in response and help them explore other possible responses. [You can read about a technique called 'fogging' here.](#)

FOGGING

Fogging is a technique that can be used by children when they are being verbally teased or taunted in an unpleasant way. It would not be used with physical or group bullying.

The idea with 'fogging' is to acknowledge that what the bully says may be true or seem true to him or her, without getting defensive and upset. Getting practically no expected reaction, the bully is often discouraged. To use this technique effectively children commonly need assistance from a teacher or counselor who can help them to think about what they can say or do when they are verbally harassed - all the time remaining calm and self-possessed. Here is an example:

Bully: You have a great big nose

Target: *True, it is large*

Bully: It looks like a beak

Target: *True, it does stand out*

Bully: You are the ugliest kid in the school

Target: *That's your opinion*

Bully: You are wearing pov shoes

Target: You are not wrong

With growing confidence, the target might start asking the bully to explain. This can come as a surprise and put the bully on the back foot. Whatever the bully says, the target just listen.

Bully: You are such an idiot.

Target: *Why do you think so ? (Wait for the answer)*

Bully: Everybody hates you.

Target: *That's interesting. Why do you think that ? (Wait for the answer)*

Bully: You are always in the library at lunch time

Target: *That's right. Why does that concern you ? (Wait for an answer)*

Bully: All those kids in the library are nerds

Target: *It may seem like that to you.*

Bully: You have no friends

Target: Well, that's what you think.

Joshua 1:9

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

The shirts, hats, flyers are constant reminders that people being bullied are never alone. They just need to reach out and embrace help.