

What If Your Child IS the Bully?

It can be scary enough if your child is being bullied, but what happens if you find out your child is bullying other kids? There is hope to correcting and putting an end to their behavior.

Signs Your Child Might Be A Bully:

- They get into physical or verbal fights
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office and/or receive detention frequently
- Have unexplained money or belongings
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Lack of empathy
- Hot-tempered/impulsive
- Hard time following rules
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation and/or popularity

(stopbullying.gov)

Ways To Stop Your Child From Bullying:

- **Ask your child if they can explain what happened and why.** Seek to understand first, before criticizing the behavior.
- **Confirm that your child's behavior is bullying and not the result of a disability.** Sometimes children with underdeveloped social skills, or disabilities can act in ways that seem like bullying.
- **Criticize the behavior, but don't reject your child.** Make sure your child knows they are still loved, even though their behavior is not desirable.
- **Teach empathy, respect, and compassion.** Sometimes children who bully lack awareness of how others feel. Help your child to appreciate how others feel when they are bullied. Everyone has feelings that matter.
- **Make your expectations clear.** Let your child know that bullying is not ok under any circumstances, and that you will not tolerate it. Take immediate action if you learn that he or she is involved in a bullying situation.
- **Provide clear, consistent consequences for bullying.** Be specific about what will happen if the bullying continues.
- **Teach by example.** Model nonviolent behavior and encourage cooperative, noncompetitive play. Help your child learn different ways of resolving conflict and safe ways to deal with feelings of anger.
- **Role Play.** Help your child practice different ways of handling situations. You can take turns playing the part of the child who bullies and the child who is bullied.
- **Express confidence in your child's ability to change.** Always see your child as able to move past this difficult point. If you have hope for them, they will have hope for themselves. If your child handles conflict well, reward them and provide praise and recognition.
- **Be realistic.** It takes time to change behavior. Keep your love and support visible.
- **Seek help.** Your child's doctor, teacher, school principal, psychologist, etc. can help you and your child learn about and deal with bullying behavior.

(pacer.org)

Teaching Empathy to Children

Empathy is an important part in being able to understand where people are coming from. It's not condoning behavior or feeling bad for others (sympathy), but it's an emotion that is vital to having successful relationships (of all kinds), loving well, acting ethically, and for professional success. It's key to preventing bullying and many other forms of cruelty.

1. Empathize with your child and model empathy for others.

- *Ask them:* Do you have a friend that you especially respect? Why do you respect that person? If you could do anything, how would you most like to spend a day? Etc.
- *Consider volunteering, or engaging in community service with your child.*
- *Engage in self care and self-reflection.* Find time to de-stress, or talk to some one if you're having a hard time empathizing with your child.

2. Make caring for others a priority and set high ethical expectations.

- *Keep to a clear message:* Instead of saying: "The most important thing is that you are happy" try: "The most important thing is that you're kind and that you're happy."
- *Prioritize caring when you talk with other important adults in your children's lives:* Ask their teachers/coaches whether your children are caring community members in addition to asking about their grades, etc.
- *Help your children understand that the world doesn't always revolve around them.* Ex.: insisting at times that children turn off the T.V. and help around the house; also that your child behaves politely even if their are in a bad mood, etc.

3. Provide opportunities for children to practice empathy.

- *Hold family meetings.* Discuss conflicts, life, challenges. Give your children a voice and encourage them.
- *Encourage empathy for peers.* Ask children to consider their peer's perspective when they aren't getting along.
- *Reflect on empathy and caring.* Discuss why empathy is important, and why a lack of empathy is harmful. Character's from a story or a T.V. show as examples.
- *Discuss ethical dilemmas.* Example: "Should I invite a new neighbor to my birthday party when my best friend doesn't like her?" This helps children appreciate a variety of perspectives.

4. Expand your child's area of concern

- *Zooming in and out.* help them learn to empathize with others around them, but also use the media as a way to "zoom out" their scope of empathy.
- *Understanding those who are different or struggling:* Emphasize the important of really listening, to those who may be having a hard time in their lives.

5. Help children develop self control and manage their feelings effectively.

- *Identify feelings:* Help them name their difficult feelings and discuss why they feel that way.
- *3 steps to self-control.* 1) Stop. 2) Take a deep, slow breath-in through the nose, out through the mouth. 3) Count to five.
- *Resolving conflicts:* Practice with them how to resolve conflicts; role play. Try using a conflict you both have experienced.



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