

## Bullying

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Full review/revision Oct 2021 | Modified Sep 2022

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Bullying is a form of youth violence in which repeated verbal, emotional, physical, or psychological attacks are done to dominate or humiliate.

(See also [Overview of Social Issues Affecting Children](#) and see [Violence in Children and Adolescents](#).)

Bullying can occur at all ages, from preschool through adulthood. A survey done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2019 found that 33% of middle school students and 19.5% of high school students reported being bullied on school property, and 15.7% of high school students reported being bullied electronically (called cyberbullying). Females, minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths have an increased risk of bullying. Almost all children will at some time experience bullying behavior as bully, victim, and/or observer of others being bullied. Both boys and girls can be bullies. Although adults have often viewed bullying as a normal part of childhood, it is not normal. Many victims are physically and/or emotionally harmed by bullying. Furthermore, the bullies themselves learn negative behaviors that, if not corrected, can lead to further violence.

### Forms of bullying

Bullying can take several forms, including

Frequent teasing

Damaging property

Threats

Exclusion

Intimidation

Harassment

Violent assault

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is using digital media (such as emails, texts, tweets, and social media sites) to purposely embarrass or communicate false or hostile information about another child. "Sexting," which is the act of sharing sexually charged messages or photographs (usually via cell phone), can be a form of cyberbullying if the messages or photographs are purposefully shared with other people to embarrass or harm the child who originated the message or photograph.

## Bullies

Almost 4 million children bully other children. Bullies are at risk of poor outcomes. Bullies are more likely to be imprisoned in later life. Bullies are less likely to remain in school, be employed, or have stable relationships as adults.

Unfortunately, there are many examples in national and social media of adults behaving as bullies toward other adults. Parents should view these examples as learning opportunities for their children. It is important for parents to identify bullying behavior in politicians, celebrities, other public figures, and ordinary adults and teach their children why that behavior is considered bullying and how they should respond if they encounter it.

## Victims

Victims may tell family members or friends they are being bullied, but they are often too embarrassed and frightened to tell an adult. Teachers are often unaware that bullying is going on. Victims may refuse to go to school, appear sad or withdrawn, or become moody. Victims are also at risk of physical injury, poor self-esteem, and anxiety. Many victims of bullying become bullies themselves.

Victims need reassurance that bullying is always unacceptable. Victims can respond to the bully by

Telling an adult

Walking away

Changing their routines to avoid the bully

Attending counseling

For safety reasons, victims should not directly confront the bully. Victims should be taught to ignore and not be bothered by the bully, which reduces the bully's satisfaction and eventually lessens the bullying. Praising the victim's courage for reporting bullying can begin to rebuild the victim's self-esteem.

If bullying occurs at school, parents should inform school officials. The victim's parents should also inform the bully's parents but should avoid confrontation, which could be counterproductive by making the bully's parents defensive. Victims may fear that telling the bully's parents will worsen bullying, but it often stops bullying, particularly if the discussion is positive and not accusatory, but instead focuses on the harmful behavior.

The bully's parents should make it clear to their child that bullying is not acceptable. Parents should insist that the bully apologize and make amends to the victim. Doing so can help the bully learn right from wrong, can make the bully more sensitive to the victim, and can make others see the bully more sympathetically. The bully's parents should watch their child closely to ensure that bullying stops.

Counseling is recommended for the victim and for the child who is doing the bullying. Often, bullies are expressing their unmet needs or modeling the aggressive behavior of a parent or older sibling.

Bullying should never be ignored. The most important thing a parent, teacher, or other adult can do when observing bullying is to address it immediately. The best way to intervene depends on the children's age and nature of the bullying as well as the adult's relationship to the children. However, whether dealing with young children or high school students, regardless of the type of bullying, adult intervention is needed.

The link to the article: <https://www.msdmanuals.com/home/children-s-health-issues/social-issues-affecting-children-and-their-families/bullying?query=bullying>