



Wee Learn

Wee Learners

(4 - 5 years):

Bully-Proof Your Child –
How to Deal With Bullies



Bullying is the act of wilfully causing harm to others through verbal harassment (teasing and name-calling), physical assault (hitting, kicking, and biting), or social exclusion (intentionally rejecting a child from a group). Bullying used to be something parents didn't need to worry about until their child was a tween, but now it has trickled down to even the youngest students. In fact, some research shows that bullying has become even more common between 2 to 6 year-olds than among tweens and teens. "Young kids are mimicking the aggressive behaviour they see on TV shows, in video games, and from older siblings," explains Susan Swearer, Ph.D., coauthor of *Bullying Prevention & Intervention*. "Being bullied can have traumatic consequences for a child, leading to poor school performance, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression," says Parents advisor David Fassler, M.D.

The Right Steps to Deal with Bullying

1. Talk to your child's teacher. If the harassment is happening at preschool or kindergarten, make administrators aware of the problem right away. Many schools have a specific protocol for intervening. When you report an incident, be specific about what happened and who was involved.
2. Contact the offender's parents. This is the right approach only for persistent acts of intimidation, and when you feel these parents will be receptive to working in a cooperative manner with you. Call or e-mail them in a non-confrontational way, making it clear that your goal is to resolve the matter together. You might say something like, "I'm phoning because my daughter has come home from school feeling upset every day this week. She tells me that Suzy has called her names and excluded her from games at the playground. I don't know whether Suzy has mentioned any of this, but I'd like us to help them get along better. Do you have any suggestions?"
3. Coach him to get help. No matter how your child is being targeted, fighting back usually isn't the best solution. Rather, teach him to walk away and seek help from a teacher or a supervising adult. To avoid being harassed on the school bus, suggest that he sit next to friends, since a bully is less likely to pick on a kid in a group. But you may need to get involved.





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Encourage Positive Behavior

1. Promote positive body language. By age 3, your child is ready to learn tricks that will make her a less inviting target. "Tell your child to practice looking at the colour of her friends' eyes and to do the same thing when she's talking to a child who's bothering her," says Michele Borba, Ed.D., a *Parents* advisor and author of *The Big Book of Parenting Solutions*. This will force her to hold her head up so she'll appear more confident. Also practice making sad, brave, and happy faces and tell her to switch to "brave" if she's being bothered. "How you look when you encounter a bully is more important than what you say," says Dr. Borba.

2. Practice a script. Rehearse the right way to respond to a tough kid (you might even use a stuffed animal as a stand-in) so your child will feel better prepared. Teach him to speak in a strong, firm voice -- whining or crying will only encourage a bully. Suggest that he say something like, "Stop bothering me!" or "I'm not going to play with you if you act mean." "The key is that a comeback shouldn't be a put-down, because that aggravates a bully," says Dr. Borba.

3. Praise progress. When your child tells you how she defused a harasser, let her know you're proud. If you witness another child standing up to a bully in the park, point it out to your child so she can copy that approach. Above all, emphasize the idea that your own mom may have told you when you were a kid: If your child shows that she can't be bothered, a bully will usually move on.

Is Your Kid the Problem?

When your child is the one teasing and threatening, you need to take action right away – not just for the sake of the victims but to nip this behavior in the bud. If you're unsure, watch for these warning signs:

1. She's impulsive and gets very angry quickly
2. He takes out his frustration by hitting or pushing other kids
3. She hangs out with other kids who behave aggressively
4. He fights bitterly or physically with his siblings
5. She has difficulty understanding how her actions affect others
6. He gets into trouble at school frequently



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If one or more of the above fits your child, have him practice techniques, such as taking deep breaths or counting to ten, to help control his negative emotions. When you see your child acting in a hurtful way, tell him to stop, remove him from the situation, and then talk about what he can do instead next time. However, if your efforts don't make a dent in his behaviour, ask your doctor to recommend an appropriate mental-health professional

<http://bit.ly/2i2X0oh>



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