Prevention

Explain to your child about the different types of bullying and teach them about the importance of empathy. A child who is able to understand what it feels like to be bullied and is able to understand and control their emotions is less likely to bully.

Talk about how to stand-up to bullying safely and make sure that kids know how to get help. Tactics like staying near adults or groups of other kids, using humor and saying “stop” directly and confidently are good tips. Also, talk about what to do if those actions don’t work, like walking away and reporting the incident to a trusted adult.

Urge children to help others who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.

Encourage your kids to do what they love. Activities, sports and hobbies can boost confidence, help them make friends and protect them from bullying behavior.

Keep the lines of communication open. Research tells us that spending 15 minutes a day talking to your kids can reassure them that they can talk to you if they have a problem. Also keep up-to-date on your child’s life by reading school newsletters and flyers, talking to teachers at school events or by email and sharing contact information with other parents.

Parents, caretakers and other important adults in a child’s life model appropriate behavior for children. Children learn from adults’ actions and by treating others with kindness and respect, adults show the kids in their lives there is no place for bullying. Even if they do not seem like they are paying attention, kids watch how adults treat their friends, colleagues and families.

Facts

- We give bullies power through our acceptance of this behavior.
- Research shows bullying will stop when adults in authority and peers get involved.
- Bullying is a learned behavior.
- Gossip, spreading rumors, whispering and social exclusion are types of bullying that girls are more likely to engage in.
- Gesturing, staring, rolling eyes and ignoring are forms of non-verbal bullying.
- Kids who were bullied may become bullies themselves.
- Bullies are more likely to drop out of school.
In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must include an imbalance of power. Examples of power imbalance include physical differences, popularity and access to embarrassing information. In addition, the behavior must happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes: making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally and excluding someone from a group on purpose. The main types of bullying are verbal, physical, emotional, social and cyberbullying. Cyberbullying takes place using electronic technology. Use of cell phones, computers and tablets can be used to spread rumors or send mean text messages, emails, posts on social networking sites, embarrassing pictures, videos or fake profiles.

Kids who are the target of cyberbullying can have a harder time getting away from it. It can happen 24-hours a day, messages can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a large number of people. Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts and pictures is almost impossible once they have been posted or sent.

If you think your child is a victim of bullying, look for the early warning signs. Children cannot learn in a violent environment and it is up to parents and school administrators to work together to keep your child safe.

As a parent, keep good notes about details your child shares with you about any ongoing bullying that takes place, either at school or after school. Also keep copies of any offending text, email or social media message. Administrators should address and investigate bullying incidents taking place at school. Give your school reasonable time to investigate and if the bullying continues, write the school and request a meeting to share evidence from your notes. Putting a complaint in writing is important so there is a record of your concern.

Cyberattacks through social media, texts or emails can have a long lasting effect on your child. Visit informational websites such as wiredsafety.org for education and support for cyberbullying issues. If the bullying, either in person or through texts or social media, escalates to threats you should contact local law enforcement and present your notes and evidence such as text messages or online posts.