

How to support a child who is being bullied

What is bullying?

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace, and comes in many different forms:

Verbal: Name calling, persistent teasing, mocking, taunting and threats.

Physical: Any form of physical violence, intimidating behaviour, theft or the intentional damage of possessions. This includes hitting, kicking and pushing.

Emotional: Excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation, setting people up and spreading rumours.

Cyber: Cyber bullying is the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or a group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.

Signs of a child being bullied

Changes in a child's behaviour and body language cannot indicate for certain that bullying is happening. However, the following signs will certainly tell you that something may be wrong.

- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or broken possessions
- Low self-esteem
- A loss of friends
- Withdrawing from social situations
- Change in attitude or behaviour
- Difficulty sleeping or bed wetting
- Truancy or feigning sickness
- Declining grades and a lack of interest in school
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Refusal to talk about what is wrong.

Why do people bully?

Although it is not fair, people usually bully others because they feel bad about themselves. Their aggression is often an attempt to hide their own unhappiness. Most commonly people who bully feel;

- Rejected by somebody
- Jealous about other people's talents and abilities
- Different or inadequate
- Overcome by stress or pressure.

Their behaviour can also be an indication of more serious problems.

Supporting a bullied child

If you suspect that your child is being bullied, or they have already told you of an incident, the first thing to do is have an open conversation. Try and follow these guidelines;

Speak in private: Find a quiet time when you won't be disturbed to discuss the different types of bullying. Ask if they have ever experienced or witnessed any of the examples and encourage them to give specific details.

Be patient, calm and understanding: Do not make assumptions or interrupt. Put your feelings aside and really listen to what your child is telling you.

Reassure them: Make it clear that the bullying is not their fault and praise them for being brave enough to confide in you. Assure them that now you know what is happening, the issues can be resolved.

Give support and trust: Let your child know that you will need to talk to the school, but promise not to take action without discussing it with them first. Openly explore the options together, and come to an agreed course of action

Useful information

Information about how to contact your school nurse is available at:

www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/school-nursing/
www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/facts-about-bullying/what-is-bullying/

Chat Health is a new texting service available to young people 11-19 years

<http://www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/school-nursing/>

www.mind.org.uk/