



Watch for signs child is a victim of bully, give help dealing with issue

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According to the program Stop Bullying Now, which is used in many public schools, a bullying incident occurs every seven minutes. Bullying includes threatening, taunting, teasing or physical aggression such as hitting and kicking.

Bullying also includes being systematically excluded by others. Studies show that 15 to 25 percent of U.S. students report they have been bullied and 15 to 20 percent of students report that they bully others.

Verbal bullying is the most frequent form of bullying. Boys are more likely to be physically bullied by peers. Girls are more likely to be the targets of rumor spreading and social exclusion.

Children with disabilities are at the highest risk of being bullied. Bullying creates an atmosphere of disrespect and fear that affects bystanders as well as the person being bullied. This negative climate has a negative impact on all students' ability to learn.

The effects of bullying are numerous. There are more and more news reports of children who have been bullied committing suicide. The effects of being bullied can cause children to have feelings of loneliness, low self esteem, anxiety and depression.

Signs your child may be being bullied can include frequent absenteeism from school, complaints of illness, refusal to ride the bus and suicidal thinking. If your child comes home with torn, damaged or missing belongings, is moody, irritable or tearful, his grades begin to drop or he has few friends, this could be a sign they are being bullied.

If you have concern that your child

is being bullied, the following are tips to help end the bullying:

- Encourage your child to talk with you about it.
- Inform your child that he is not a tattletale and should not be embarrassed or ashamed.
- Be supportive.
- Never tell your child to ignore the bully or hit back.
- Empathize and tell your child that it is not his fault.
- Ask your child what he thinks can be done to stop it.
- Contact your child's school and give factual information of who, what, when, where and why.
- Expect the bullying to stop.
- Ask your child regularly if the bullying has stopped. If it has not stopped, contact the school again.

There are several ways to assist your child in being more resilient to bullying. The main one is self confidence. Increase his confidence by assisting him in developing a talent or interest, such as music or athletics.

Help your child develop friends outside of school, perhaps through youth groups or scouting. Role-play scenarios of things to say and do if he is being bullied.

Teach your child strong body language such as standing straight, making eye contact and speaking with a firm voice. Most of all, always support your child.

Suicides have resulted from youth being bullied. Please seek professional help for any youth who may be at risk of suicide. A 24-hour, 7-day-a-week suicide prevention line also is available

at (812) 422-1100 for those who need immediate help.

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