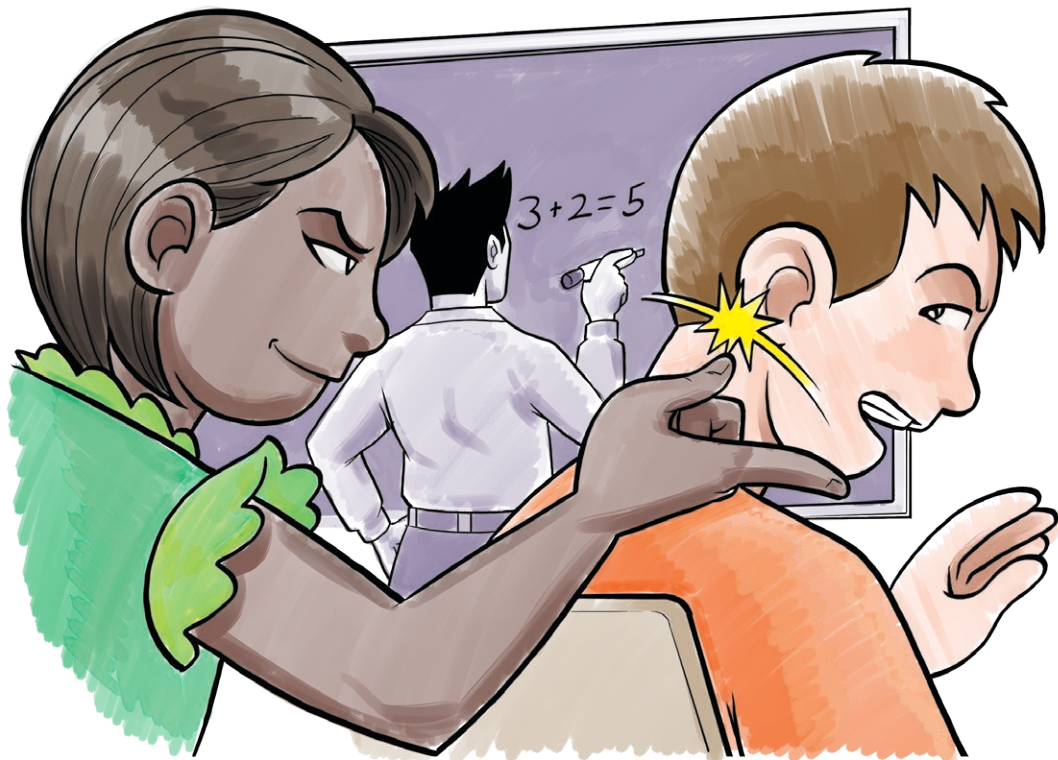


THE ORP
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BULLYING

A Voice against Bullying

Standing Up for Your Child



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Standing Up for Your Child

It is heartbreaking when you realize that your child is being bullied. Most of the time, bullying occurs at school and away from adults who could help. This is why it is important for you to be able to recognize the signs of bullying and pay attention to changes in your child's behavior, proactively practice responses with your child to help him respond correctly when being bullied, and also be well prepared to address the situation with your child's school.

One of the first signs of bullying is a change in your child's behavior. He suddenly seems more anxious, depressed, afraid, or stressed. He might come home from school dirty or disheveled, begin asking for extra money before going to school, or complain of headaches or belly aches in an attempt to avoid school. In the best situations, he may even tell you what is going on. When you begin to notice this behavior or are told about what is going on, it is good practice to keep some detailed notes. Simple journaling is often helpful, or you could use the chart below:

Date	Summary of Event	People Involved	Physical Signs	Emotional Signs



There may be instances when you suspect that bullying is occurring, but your child may not be sure what to tell you, or even understand that bullying is truly happening. You may need to ask open-ended as well as specific questions to really get a good understanding of what is happening. Be careful with specific questioning as it can backfire and affect open communication. Use the questions listed to start a conversation with your child that can help you both better understand if bullying is occurring and how he is doing.

Examples of open questioning:

- » How are things going at school?
- » How are you and the kids getting along? Any problems popping up?
- » What do you think of your teachers?
- » How's the bus ride?

Examples of specific questioning (if open questions suggest a need for follow-up):

- » Do you ever feel afraid at school?
- » Do you think any of the kids leave you out of games on purpose? Has anyone ever threatened to physically hurt you?
- » Do kids call you names?
- » Has someone taken things from you or forced you to do something?

Once you have determined it is likely that your child is being bullied, it is important to take action. First, provide reassurance and let your child know that bullying is not right, that it is not his fault, and that you love him and will help. Second, you need to contact the school. Start with the classroom teacher, or if that particular relationship is strained, contact the grade level administrator. Inform the administrator of your concerns and SPECIFIC information, if you have it, on the bullying behavior toward your child. Tell the administrator you are concerned and would like to schedule a meeting. It is usually best to start with an informal meeting between the teacher or administrator and yourself with a goal to share information, express your concerns, and ask how the school is going to handle the situation. Oftentimes, schools will be responsive and express a solid plan going forward.

However, if your child's school does not have a solid plan, or is not receptive to your concerns, then it is time to request a larger meeting with the administration, teacher, and school counselor. If your child has IEP-related school psychological or school social work services, ask that they attend. This will ensure that all important parties are aware of your child's situation, and of how to best help your child while he is at school. Be prepared with your notes from the chart above or from your journal entries. Be aware of the fact that they may try to brush it off as normal behavior and part of growing up. Do not accept those answers. Stand

your ground. Use the tips below to ensure that something is being done and that you feel comfortable with what is happening when you leave.

- » State exactly what is happening to your child. Give details and names when you know them.
- » Express how it is affecting your child on a daily basis (both in school and at home).
- » Express what your child is saying (i.e., thinking) and how they are doing emotionally.
- » Ask what the school will do to make sure your child feels safe.
- » Mention what you have done at home with your child regarding the situation.
- » Tell the school what you have told your child to do next time he is bullied at school.
- » Ask for a copy of the school policy for bullying and harassment.
- » Come prepared with your own plan just in case the school doesn't have one in place. Present it to the teacher/administrator and explain why you feel it would be helpful to your child.

Document the content of these meetings. Write down the date and time of the meeting, who was present and their role at the school, what was discussed, and the plan determined.

Remember, you are not alone in the fight against bullying—it happens to many kids every day. By remaining vigilant and active in your child's life, at home and school, and keeping the communication lines open, you will be able to more easily help your child when needed.

Once you have established that bullying is happening, you will need to give your child tools to help him when he is being bullied. Explain to him that the things he told you are happening to him are not okay. Having the practice and being prepared will give your child the confidence that he needs when a bully attacks. Use the bullying scenarios below to role-play situations or as discussion starters to help your child know what to do when bullying occurs. You can add your own scenarios on the blank cards.

<p>The Bullying Scenario</p> <p>I always want to buy snacks after school, so I threaten Adam that if he doesn't buy me something, I won't hang out with him anymore.</p>	<p>The Bullying Scenario</p> <p>Every time Jill makes a mistake in class, I laugh and make fun of her.</p>	<p>The Bullying Scenario</p> <p>I ignore Tom every day at recess and won't let him play with us. I tell all of my friends to ignore him, too.</p>
<p>The Bullying Effect</p> <p>The teacher called my parents because I was bullying another student. I got grounded, and Mom says I was raised better than that. How do I stop?</p>	<p>The Bullying Effect</p> <p>Kids are only nice to me because they are afraid of me. I don't have any real friends. Will they find out how sad I really feel?</p>	<p>The Bullying Effect</p> <p>Kids think I'm mean. Nobody came to my birthday party. Am I mean for real?</p>

The Bullied Scenario

I hate going to recess. No one will play with me. They smile and laugh when I ask to play.

The Bullied Scenario

When the teacher is not looking, Alex flicks me in the back of the head and pokes me in the back. Then he acts like I'm crazy and nothing is happening when I get upset.

The Bullied Scenario

I was so excited when my grandparents bought me a new cell phone. I gave my number to my friends, but now I'm receiving mean text messages each day from other kids in the 6th grade who found out my phone number.

The Bullied Effect

I feel so sad and lonely. Some days I don't even want to go to school. Why doesn't anyone like me?

The Bullied Effect

I'm always nervous and worried at school. I never know if someone is going to hurt me. Why are they always messing with me?

The Bullied Effect

It's hard to concentrate in school. My grades are dropping, and my teacher has noticed and called my parents. Why are they so mean to me? What did I do?

The Bystander Scenario

Yesterday, in the cafeteria line, Josh kept shoving Trevor into the wall. The teacher did not see him doing it.

The Bystander Scenario

Kelly ignores the new girl in our class and never lets her play with us at recess. She is making fun of her clothes and hair behind her back.

The Bystander Scenario

Andy makes fun of kids in the class and plays mean jokes on others to get people to laugh. It's not funny to me.

The Bystander Scenario

I'm afraid to speak up and say anything. Plus, Josh is bigger than me. What if I get bullied too? I don't feel safe in my own school.

The Bystander Scenario

It's really difficult to focus and learn when I see others being hurt. But what can I do?

The Bystander Scenario

I feel so upset, and I don't know how to help. Should I do something?