



bullying

Problems with bullying can start from as young as three years, writes psychologist Jutta Dempsey

The chances that your child will be affected by bullying are greater than 25%. And this percentage is higher if your child is female.

Bullying has serious ramifications. If your child is bullied they are more likely to develop problems such as anxiety, depression and even drug use, so parents need to take it seriously. But whilst many parents have to deal with the heart breaking experience of their child coming home with stories of social rejection and aggression, how do you tell if it's bullying?

Bullying is defined as the repeated and intentional abuse of power to intimidate, hurt, oppress or damage. It includes:

- ☒ Physical Bullying – hitting, poking, tripping, pushing or damaging ones property.
- ☒ Verbal Bullying – the use of negative words and name calling to intentionally upset.
- ☒ Social Bullying – the use of lies, rumours, mimicking and deliberate exclusion or isolation
- ☒ Psychological Bullying – the use of words or actions causing emotional harm as intimidation and manipulation.
- ☒ Cyber Bullying – the use of technology to verbally, socially or psychologically bully, usually occurring in social networking sites as Facebook, Twitter, SMS, emails.

There are a number of typical symptoms that

children display when they're being bullied. Parents should look out for signs such as trying to avoid school by faking illness or vague excuses, wanting to change schools, general unhappiness, moodiness and tension after school, deteriorating school work, not wanting to talk about their day, showing anger when you talk about what's going on in their life, changes in friendships, acting anti-social, becoming teary on a Sunday night or Monday morning, loss of confidence, nightmares, bed wetting, restless sleep, loss of weight or overeating, unexplained physical injuries, bruises and scratches, torn clothing and getting in to trouble more often.

When children are bullied they feel scared, lonely and hopeless. They also often feel ashamed that they have brought the bullying on themselves so it's important to handle the situation carefully. If your child tells you about their experiences of being bullied follow these tips:

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. LISTEN carefully and take what they say seriously. Comments such as "I'm sure she didn't mean it" are not helpful and will often close down the line of communication between you and your child.
2. EMPATHISE so that your child knows without any doubt that they are not to blame. This is particularly difficult for parents as quite often they can see what their child could have done

better to avoid the situation. Comments such as "did you tell him to leave you alone?" diminish the child's self worth.

3. PROBLEM-SOLVE with your child to develop some alternative coping strategies so they are better equipped to deal with the problem on their own if possible. Often they know what to do and only require reassurance that they are capable. Ask questions such as "what is a good thing for you to do if it happens again?" to show them you have confidence that they can solve this problems.

4. EDUCATE your child to develop the social and emotional skills necessary for social connectivity. Many children need to be taught friendship and resilience skills for better social functioning. Courses at school and professionally are available.

5. RESIST contacting the other parent or child or becoming emotionally reactive. Contact the teacher only with the child's permission since it may make the situation more difficult for them. If the bullying continues the school will need to be contacted and it is important to work with them in a calm and receptive manner, making sure you know their plan of action.

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