

Bullying

Millions of students of all races, religions, and classes are being bullied. According to Love Our Children USA, 1 in 4 children are victims of bullying. The number of cases of kids and teens bullying each other is at an all-time high.

Top 3 Tips to Stop Your Kid from Bullying Others

1. **Model positive behavior:** Demonstrate how to constructively solve problems and get along with others by doing so with your kids and your spouse.
2. **House rules:** Be on the lookout for teasing in the home. If an older brother or sister frequently taunts, teases, or bullies your other child or children, he or she may be more likely to model that aggressive behavior outside the home. Also, limit your child's exposure to violent television, movies, and video games.
3. **Set realistic goals:** Apply clear, consistent, escalating consequences for aggressive behavior. But don't expect him or her to change immediately. As children learn to modify their behavior, it's important to assure your children that you still love them -- it's their behavior that you don't like.

A study by Yale University found that bully victims are two to nine times more likely to report having suicidal thoughts than other kids. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people in the United States.

What Moms Can Do about Bullying

Protect your children from bullies with this advice from Ross Ellis, founder and chief executive officer of Love Our Children USA, the national nonprofit leader on child violence prevention.

Kindness starts at home: "The reality is, any kid can become a bully or be victimized themselves, so it's crucial to take preventative measures now," says Ellis. "Bullying is a learned behavior. So when kids see you criticize others ('Can you believe what Jill was wearing?'), they mimic your actions out in the world. What's more, insecurity usually triggers a bully's behavior. So raising confident and empathetic children will have a two-fold effect: Not only will your kids have positive self-esteem, but they'll be more likely to stand up for other kids who are being harassed."

Develop a buddy system: "It's a fact that bullies rarely strike groups -- they just don't have the guts," says Ellis. "If your child is being harassed, make sure he or she walks around school with a friend, or is within earshot of a teacher."

If someone does start bullying your kid, have them look the bully in the eye and say, "I don't like your teasing. Stop it right now." Then they should walk away and report the incident. If the bully pushes, teach your kid not to hit back. "Bullies want a reaction, so if the victim reciprocates, the problem will worsen," says Ellis.

Take action: "As tempting as it is to sit down with the troublemaker's parents, don't," says Ellis. "Most parents are defensive toward criticism of their child or are in denial there's even a problem." A better idea: go to the school directly, and record every incident of harassment. Then ask your school to develop an anti-bullying program and form a watchdog group with other parents.

Preventing your child from being bullied will be mostly your responsibility, according to Ellis, because most schools are not taking the issue seriously enough.

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