



BULLYING:

Recognize it Early and Stop it

Created for Wildwood CACFP 2021, provides 1½ hours Social and Emotional Education

What is bullying? By definition, a bully is a person who seeks to harm, intimidate, or coerce another person (often the victim is perceived as vulnerable by the perpetrator). Bullying is seldom a one-time occurrence. Instead, it usually happens repeatedly and over time and may follow a pattern which includes negative words and/or actions toward one or more persons, who have difficulty defending themselves.

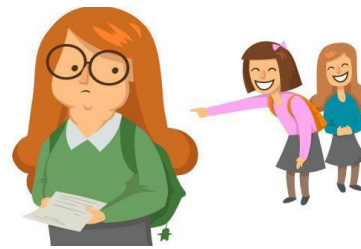
Recognizing a bully or someone who is being bullied is not always easy. There is a difference between someone being bullied and children who are not getting along or having a misunderstanding among themselves. Recognizing bullying behavior takes a lot of patience, understanding and persistence.

A consensus is that bullying can be a part of children's developing social skills and behavior and emotion skills. These skills are very fluid among young children, with the result being a range of challenging behaviors, which could include bullying as a means to express their dominance over other (often younger) children. As children build social and regulatory skills and see positive behavior modeling by the adults in their life, challenging behaviors tend to decline.

The most common type of bullying for young children is physical. This may include pinching, hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, or a myriad of other actions. Verbal bullying includes name calling, taunting, or spreading rumors (whether true or fictional). Social isolation occurs when children are excluded from activities. Cyber bullying uses technology, like text messaging, social media platforms, or other electronic means.

Physical bullying is probably the easiest to recognize, and it should be addressed immediately. Not all children will “tattle on friends” when they are being physically bullied. When children have unexplained injuries, lost/damaged clothes or toys, this could be a sign of physical bullying.

Verbal bullying should be addressed any time you hear a child being made fun of or being called inappropriate, or unkind names. Children who verbally bully others could be making fun of another person’s behavior, development, habits, clothing, religion, beliefs, appearance, ethnicity, or race. The victim of verbal bullying could lose interest in learning, feel helpless or depressed and could become self-destructive in their behavior.



Social Isolation Children who have few friends tend to be vulnerable to being bullied. If children are frequently excluded from group games, or playdates they may feel sad and lonely.

It is very important for children to feel secure in letting an adult know that they are being bullied. Regardless of how hurtful it is to hear about a child bullying another child in your care, you must refrain from showing your anger. If the victim sees you as distraught, they may refrain from telling you when they have a problem in the future.

How to respond to bullying

First, try to find out exactly what is going on. Ask questions like, “Has someone hurt you?” Let the child complete his entire story without interrupting. Keep your emotions under control and reassure the child that you are there to help and take care of the situation.

Second, after you investigate, act. Make sure the bully is aware that bullying is not tolerated. That his actions are hurtful, and that he is making others feel sad. Have a discussion with the parent of the child who is bullying. Unfortunately, some parents won’t believe that their child is

bullying, so it is important to make it clear that your childcare does not tolerate this type of behavior.

Children become bullies for different reasons – they may be mirroring this behavior because someone they are close to bullies' others. They may simply be trying to get the attention of other adults, friends or classmates even though it's the wrong type of attention.

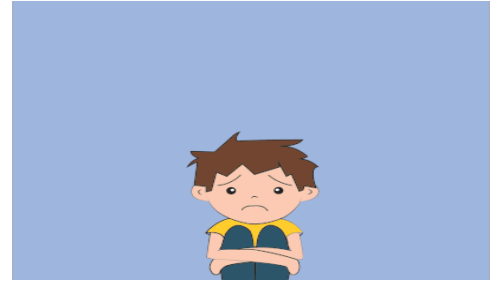
Some children learn inappropriate behavior and prejudices which cause bullying from their home environment. This might not be taught, but children are sponges and if they see something, they will attempt to imitate the behavior.



Children with disabilities, such as physical, developmental, intellectual, emotional, and sensory disabilities are at an increased risk of being bullied. Most children do not bully to be hurtful, as they are still learning what is acceptable and what is not. Children may stare at disabled children, but that behavior may simply be driven by curiosity, not necessarily being a bully. Children with special needs may have difficulties with mobility, communication, or social interactions. These challenges can be perceived as different and increase their risk of being teased. Teasing can lead to bullying. Civil Rights laws protect Americans with Disabilities, from being harassed, excluded or treated differently. Educating children about acceptance and inclusion of children with special needs is important to the safety and wellbeing of everyone. Every attempt to include all children in any activities is important. Depending on the severity of the disability, children should be allowed to try all activities. A good way to help children with special needs to feel included is the "buddy system". This not only helps the child with special needs, but it also encourages understand the needs of others and is a great way to teach/learn empathy.

Racially motivated bullying is another unacceptable behavior. Racist bullying can relate to a person's physical appearance, cultural practices, language, or dress. It is important for all children to feel included. Racial prejudice can range from casual, but hurtful remarks, to deliberate

physical and verbal attacks. Many children don't realize that they are being hurtful but have a tendency to copy others in their actions. It is crucial to address all the children when inappropriate behavior is recognized so all children understand what is acceptable and what is not.



Explain to children that words can hurt as much as physical injuries. Children don't always realize what they are saying. Sometimes children just follow along with others and say things that they would normally never say, or in some instances may not even understand what they're saying. This is why it's important to find the originator of the hurtful words.

Like most behaviors, children need to be taught right from wrong, and this is no different. Shaming the bully is not a way of correcting the situation. Try to reverse the situation and ask the child how they would feel if someone picked on him/her the way he/she was picking on that child. How would he/she feel? When the child understands what he/she did was hurtful or unkind, there is a better chance they will feel empathy for the child that was being picked on. It is important that the child who bullies to take responsibility for his/her actions. Bullying will never be corrected if the child doing the bullying doesn't understand what he/she did wrong.

If a child is bullying others, you need to look for the reason for the behavior. Ask and explore "why" the bullying is occurring. Is it because he wants to be a part of a "clique"? Talk to all the children about healthy friendships and resisting peer pressure. Don't give the child an excuse for his behavior but address his poor choices and how he will be disciplined appropriately. Bullying is a choice, and the child needs to accept that his poor choice has consequences. Remember that every bullying situation is different and, as a result, the consequences will be different.

A child should make restitution. Once he takes responsibility and acknowledges what he did and the hurt that was caused, he needs to make amends for the situation, whether it's a personal apology, maybe in front of the other children so they too learn a valuable lesson or maybe an apology to a parent whose child was being bullied, and/or the child directly, so that the parent is comfortable that the resolution.

Summary

Bullying can make the lives of victims a misery, regardless of the type. It can undermine a child's confidence and self-esteem, and it can destroy their sense of security. Most adults have been through some sort of bullying in their lives and most people are able to move on. However, some people never received help to recover from the trauma caused by the experience. This can refer to the bully or the victim. Timely support and intervention by caring adults are essential for the success of our children.

Resources:

Bullying - American Psychological Association
Stomp Out Bullying
Stop Bullying
Racist Bullying
Preventing Bullying in Early Childhood
Kids Health Information: Bullying
National Bullying Prevention Center

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