

Newsletter



THIS ISSUE

- What is Bullying?
- Prevention and Education Tips

Dear Friends,

Part of creating a safe environment is addressing all of the issues that effect the space where we live. Bullying is one of those issues and is an occurrence that happens in all of our lives. In order for our schools and neighborhoods to remain safe, there is a need to recognize and identify the various issues that can cause harm to our children. Once we do this, we can empower our children to stand up for themselves and for others.

It is our responsibility as parents, educators, and adults to continually teach our children acceptance, tolerance, and mutual respect for everyone and everything around them. In this issue of the newsletter we will give information and tips for parents, schools, adults, children, and youth regarding what we can do to help resolve any problems of bullying so that we can continue to create safe and healthy environments.

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Safe Environment Coordinator

All of the information in this newsletter was obtained from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information on this subject, please go to www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.

What is Bullying?

Bullying involves behavior that is intentional and creates an imbalance of power and strength. Bullying is behavior that is considered aggressive and deliberate. Bullying is a way for individuals to gain attention. Bullies have unequal power over their targets and often times intend to humiliate, harm or embarrass their targets. Bullies are generally "matter-of-fact" about their behavior while often times the person being bullied finds it difficult to defend himself or herself. Unlike fighting, which often takes place in a single episode, most instances of bullying occur repeatedly.

Bullying can take on many different forms, some are easy to notice like hitting or name calling, other times it's hard to identify, like not including a person or saying things behind their back. Boys and girls alike get bullied, and boys and girls alike are bullies.

Forms of Bullying

Some forms of bullying include:

- Physical bullying (hitting and/or punching)
- Verbal bullying (teasing or name-calling)
- Emotional bullying (intimidation using gestures or social exclusion)
- Cyberbullying (sending insulting messages by phone or email)

Many children, particularly boys and older children, will not confide in a parent or other adult when they are being bullied. That is why it is important for all parents and adults to be able to recognize possible warning signs of bullying.

Warning signs

Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- Has torn clothes or damaged or missing belongings
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Has few, if any friends that they spend time with
- Is afraid of going to school or takes the "long, out-of-the-way" route to and from school
- Not taking part in extra-curricular activities
- Vague physical complaints (headache or stomachache) on school days
- Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed when he or she comes home
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self esteem

What to do if you suspect your child is being bullied.

If you find your child is showing any of these signs it does not necessarily mean that they are being bullied, but it is a possibility worth exploring. You should take the time to talk to your child and to their teacher at school to learn more.

When talking to your child it is important to let them know that you are concerned and that you are there to help. When talking to your child's teacher it is important to share your concerns. Also ask the teacher to talk to other adults at the school who interact with your child to see if they have observed any bullying behavior. If you find that your child has been bullied, take quick action; bullying can have serious effects on a child. If you find that you do not suspect your child of being bullied, you should remain observant to other possible problems that your child may be having. Some of the warning signs above could be an indication of other serious problems.

As a child what should you do if you are bullied?

- Tell your parents or other trusted adults. They can help stop the bullying.
- If you are bullied at school, tell your teacher, school counselor or principal. Telling is not tattling.
- Don't fight back. Don't try to bully those who bully you.
- Try not to show anger or fear. Students who bully like to see that they can upset you.
- Calmly tell the student to stop...or say nothing and then walk away.
- Try to avoid situations in which bullying is likely to happen. You might want to:
 - Avoid areas of the school where there are not many students or teachers around or take a different route through hallways or walk with friends or a teacher.
 - Make sure you aren't alone in the bathroom or locker room.
 - Sit near the front of the bus.
 - Don't bring expensive things or lots of money to school.
 - Sit with a group of friends at lunch

What can principals, teachers, staff and other adults do to prevent bullying?

As adults, we may not always feel certain about how to handle bullying. In order to respond to bullying in the best possible, most effective way we should use the opportunity to teach the young person the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Below are some possible ways for you to make the best use of a "teachable moment" with all children.

When you see or hear bullying:

- Immediately stop the bullying.
- Refer to the bullying behavior and to the relevant school rules against bullying.
- Support the bullied child in a way that allows him or her to regain self-control, to "save face" and to feel supported and safe from retaliation.
- Include bystanders in the conversation and give them guidance about how they might appropriately intervene or get help next time.
- If appropriate, impose immediate consequences for students who bully others.

Don't be a bystander.

Chances are your child has had an encounter with a bully. They may not be a bully or haven't been bullied themselves, but if they see it happen to others, they can help put a stop to it. In order to stop bullying everyone needs to help.

What to tell your child to do if they are a witness to bullying.

Even though it may be easier to stand by or ignore the situation when bullying occurs your child could play an important role in bringing an end to bullying in their school. Talk to your child; ask them to think of how they might feel if the bullying was happening to them and encourage them to help out when they see someone being bullied.

How children can be empowered to speak up for their friends and classmates:

- Speak up. Kids who bully may think they're being funny or "cool." If you feel safe, tell the person to stop the bullying behavior. Say you don't like it and it's not funny.
- Do not bully back. It won't help if you use mean names or actions, and it could make things worse.
- If you do not feel comfortable or safe speaking to the child who is bullying, you can say some kind words to the child who is being bullied. For example, they can say, "I'm sorry about what happened." Help them understand that it is not their fault. Be a friend, invite them to do something with you.
- Tell the student who is being bullied to talk about what happened. Offer to help by going along.
- Pay attention to the others kids who see the bullying. If these kids are laughing or joining in, they are also part of the problem. Let those students know they are not helping and don't be one of them.
- Tell an adult! Often times bullying does not get reported. There are many adults you can report to: teacher, school counselor, principal, volunteer, coach, and other adults you feel comfortable telling.

Why don't some kids tell when they see bullying?

- They may not want others to think they are "tattling."
- They may be afraid that the kids who bully will pick on them next.
- They may think that their friends will make fun of them for trying to help.

Assure your children that telling is not "tattling" and that it is very important. The adults in the school are there to help and will keep them safe if they tell on a bully. Children should also explain to their friends that bullying is not fair and to encourage them to help as well.



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A copy of this Newsletter can be found on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee website www.archmil.org/safeguarding under Resources.