

## Seek help

If you are continually working on building friendship skills with your child and the bullying behavior has not stopped, your child may need a therapist's help to work through underlying issues. Especially seek help from a mental health professional in cases of particularly severe offenses.

In some cases, a child's behavior may be due to a disability; sometimes children with limited social skills or behavioral issues bully others. This should be addressed in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

## Bullies can change

Bullies come in every shape and size. They are from every ethnic group, race, socio-economic class, gender and religion. Bullies aren't born; children can change.

It may be helpful for parents and children to think of bullying on a continuum and move toward being a protector.

Bullies: perpetrators of the aggression.

Followers: they encourage the bully but don't actively participate in the bullying.

Watchers: they enjoy watching bullying.

Bystanders: they try to ignore it but don't help or may be fearful of trying to stop it.

Protectors: those who stand up to the bully to protect the victim.

## Sources

Much of the material in this brochure was obtained from two websites: [mindchild.org](http://mindchild.org) and [parents.com](http://parents.com).

Those websites contain much more information, examples and strategies than could be included in this one page document, so we recommend parents visit those sites for more tips and valuable tips and stories.



# What if my child is the bully?



## A guide for parents



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## Your child is labeled a bully

No parents want to hear from another parent or the school that their child has acted like a bully. Parents need support and help in recognizing and stopping their child from verbally, emotionally, or physically harming another child.

## Why do children bully?

Kids don't bully because they are bad children. Kids engage in all kinds of behavior that isn't a reflection of who they are as a person. They are still figuring things out. They can be nice children who have made some mistakes. Here are a few reasons why a child may be unkind to his/her peers:

- \* Low self esteem;
- \* Looking for attention;
- \* Want to be in control;
- \* Trying to impress peers;
- \* May be victims of bullying and are trying to retaliate;
- \* Lacks understanding of the other person's feelings;
- \* Are by nature more assertive or impulsive;
- \* Expressing anger for events in their life like anxiety or trauma;
- \* Do not receive adequate parental attention or supervision;
- \* Come from families where siblings or parents are bullies.

## Tips for parents

- \* Take a deep breath; a common first reaction is to say, "Not my child";
- \* Talk to your child calmly about the situation and get his/her story;
- \* Ask why the incident occurred; why he or she acted out that way;
- \* Discuss and role play alternate ways the situation could have been handled;
- \* Practice respectful language the child can use if another issue arises;
- \* Talk about the perspective of the other child, "How would you feel if something like this happened to you?"
- \* Foster a positive home environment where members of the family treat each other with kindness and respect versus yelling, name-calling, putdowns or picking on or hitting one another.

By talking with your child you will gain understanding on her/his point of view and you can help guide your child in appropriate friendship behaviors.

## Meaningful consequences

The school may have ways they want children to make amends. Parents should also set reasonable consequences for bullying behavior. Removing a privilege for too long may cause kids not to try to improve their behavior.

Also be sure to praise your child when he/she is being a good friend.

## Ways to make it right

Once a child has regained privileges and is calm, the mistake needs to be fixed. Some kids choose to apologize in person, in a letter, via phone or text, etc. Others might do a nice act for the victim, play a game with a peer who has been excluded or invite him/her to a social event.

## Monitor the situation

If a parent approaches you about your child's bullying, notify teachers right away so they can look for problematic behavior. If the school told you about an incident, follow up with educators on a regular basis.

Cyberbullying can be difficult to monitor because it doesn't take place in plain sight. If your child has bullied other kids over the internet or on a cell phone, get passwords to the social media accounts and check them regularly. Be upfront that you will continue to monitor until he/she proves more responsible.

Build an open channel of communication by asking kids a few open-ended questions each day so they are comfortable talking with you now and when they are teens. Ask what they have planned for the day, what great thing or not-so-great thing happened today. Stay connected!