



PREVENT BULLYING BEFORE IT STARTS

Bullying can occur in schools and anywhere children interact. Bullying is *aggressive behavior that is intended to cause harm or distress and occurs repeatedly over time*. When the victim of bullying is a child, bullying is child abuse, regardless of the age or role of the bully. Cyberbullying is the same behavior carried over into online environments and aided by new technologies. Bullying takes multiple forms:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings, etc.
- **Verbal:** taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, making threats, posting negative information on the Internet, etc.
- **Psychological:** spreading rumors, manipulating relationships, extortion, intimidation, etc.
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact, abusive comments about physical development, etc.

STEPS TO BULLY PREVENTION

Build a Solid and Supportive Relationship with a Child

Warm, supportive relationships with adults are important as positive influences in a child's life. Being aware of changes in a child's life, celebrating successes and helping a child through tough times all contribute to a child's overall well-being.

Model and Teach Empathy to the Children in Your Life

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's place and understand what that person is feeling. For younger children, you can teach empathy through your actions that demonstrate empathy. You can join in children's play and identify emotions that come out as they play. Even when a child's play is aggressive, identify and describe the emotions. "Those monsters are very angry with one another." Get down on the child's level and join in the game. You can also introduce positive characters into action like a bystander who helps victims of the monster. Older children will be more capable of discussing what is happening and what they are imitating. They can also benefit from opportunities to nurture others, particularly younger children. We can ask about what a child thinks another is feeling. Be careful not to judge the child and demand change. Children learn by watching the adults in their lives.

Be Aware of Media Influence

All media is not equal, and what happens on-screen does make a big difference. Children imitate the behaviors they see on television. For instance, when a child sees a cartoon where a superhero solves a problem with violence, the child will imitate that in his or her play. Educational shows that illustrate mutual cooperation and helping others also influence children's actions. This effect can be increased if television viewing is paired with role-playing and discussion about the show afterward.

Prepare For and Value Academic Achievement

When children do not do well in school, it is easy for them to become disconnected and act out. When children are prepared to do well and their accomplishments are celebrated, they will continue to do well in school and are less likely to find unhealthy ways of getting attention.

Encourage Healthy Friendships

Kids with a strong network of friends are less vulnerable to bullying.

For More Help

Call our Helpline at 1-800-CHILDREN to talk about these and other ways to prevent bullying. The Helpline is available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m to 8 p.m. You can also e-mail the Helpline at helpline@pcageorgia.org.

**Helpline:
1-800-CHILDREN
(244-5373)**

E-mail: helpline@pcageorgia.org