

Bullying

Different ways kids bully

Cyber bullying —Through email, instant messaging, Internet chat rooms, and electronic gadgets like camera cell phones, cyber bullies forward and spread hurtful images and/or messages. Bullies use this technology to harass victims at all hours, in wide circles, at warp speed.

Emotional bullying -- Can be more subtle and can involve isolating or excluding you from activities (i.e., shunning you in the lunchroom or on school outings) or spreading rumors.

Physical bullying -- Can accompany verbal bullying and involves things like kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling, or threats of physical harm.

Racist bullying -- Preys on children through racial slurs, offensive gestures, or making jokes about your cultural traditions.

Sexual bullying -- Involves unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive or inappropriate comments.

Verbal bullying -- Usually involves name-calling, incessant mocking, and laughing at your expense.

What to Do About It

Hold the anger. It's natural to want to get really upset with a bully, but that's exactly the response the bully is aiming for. Not only will getting angry or violent not solve the problem, it will only make it worse. Bullies want to know they have control over your emotions. Each time they get a reaction from you, it adds fuel to the bully's fire — getting angry just makes the bully feel more powerful.

Never get physical or bully back. You should never use physical force (like kicking, hitting, or pushing) to deal with a bully. Not only does that show anger, but you can never be sure what the bully will do in response. It's best to hang out with others, stay safe, and get help from an adult.

Act brave, walk away, and ignore the bully. Look the bully in the eye and say something like, "I want you to stop right now." Then walk away and ignore any further taunts. Walk tall and hold your head up high (using this type of body language sends a message that you aren't vulnerable). Bullies thrive on the reaction they get, and by walking away, or ignoring hurtful emails or instant messages, you will be telling the bully that you just don't care.

Use humor. In situations where you have to deal with a bully and can't walk away with poise, use humor or offer a compliment to throw the bully off guard. However, do not use humor to make fun of the bully.

Tell an adult. If you are being bullied, it's very important to tell an adult. Teachers, principals, parents, and lunchroom personnel at school can all help to stop it. Studies show that schools where principals crack down on this type of behavior have less bullying.

Talk about it. It may help you to talk to a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend — anyone who can give the support you need. Talking can be a good outlet for the fears and frustrations that can build when you are being bullied.

Use the buddy system. The bully wants to be recognized and feel powerful, after all, so a lot of bullying takes part in the presence of peers. If the bully is picking on another person, point out to the bully that his or her behavior is unacceptable and is no way to treat another person. Make a plan to buddy up with a friend or two on the way to school, on the bus, in the hallways, or at recess or lunch — wherever you might meet the bully.

Develop more friendships by joining social organizations, clubs, or sports programs. Being in a group with other kids may help to build your self-esteem and give you a larger group of positive peers to spend time with and turn to.