Helpful Fact Sheets for Parents

by
ALLAN L. BEANE, PH.D.
Author, The Bully Free Classroom™
Website: www.bullyfree.com
Copyright October 29, 2003, Allan L. Beane, Ph.D.
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our son, Curtis Allan Beane, who was bullied in seventh grade and high school. It is also dedicated to our granddaughters, Emily Grace Turner and Sarah Gail Turner. Emily was born on the first anniversary of Curtis’ death. She and Sarah have brought light into our darkness. I hope this book, and those who use it, will bring light into the darkness of children who are mistreated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful thanks are offered to everyone who has helped by providing advice, information, and comments during the preparation of this book. Special acknowledgement and thanks are due to Linda Beane for her desktop publishing knowledge and skills. Special acknowledgement and thanks are due to Darlene Gibson for her editing knowledge and skills.

Some of the material in this book is reproduced from and/or based on The Bully Free Classroom™: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8 by Allan L. Beane, Ph.D. © 1999. Material is used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 1-866-703-7322; www.freespirit.com. All rights reserved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication
Acknowledgements
Preface

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF BULLYING?

Fact Sheet # 1: What is bullying?
Fact Sheet # 2: What does bullying look like?
Fact Sheet # 3: How are girls and boys different in their bullying?
Fact Sheet # 4: How frequently does it occur?
Fact Sheet # 5: When and where does it usually occur?
Fact Sheet # 6: Why do children keep it a secret?
Fact Sheet # 7: Why must it be stopped?

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

Fact Sheet # 8: Possible Characteristics of Potential Victims
Fact Sheet # 9: Possible Characteristics of Victims (Warning Signs)
Fact Sheet # 10: Possible Characteristics of Bullies (Warning Signs)

WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME TO GIVE MY CHILD A GOOD START?

HOW CAN I PROMOTE MY CHILD’S ACCEPTANCE?

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BULLYING AND NORMAL CONFLICT?

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD IS A TARGET OF BULLYING?

- What You Can Do
- Tips for the Victim: What Your Child Can Do

HOW CAN I PREVENT CYBER BULLYING?

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN SCHOOL PERSONNEL BULLY MY CHILD?

WHAT SUPPORTIVE TIPS SHOULD I GIVE MY CHILD’S SIBLINGS?

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

(INCLUDING SIBLINGS)?

- What You Can Do
- Tips for the Bully: What Your Child Can Do

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WHO IS A BYSTANDER?

- Tips for Bystanders

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOOL-WIDE BULLY FREE™ PROGRAM?

Conclusion
References
About the Author
PREFACE

As I look back on my school days, I remember times when my classmates were bullied. In fact, I regret that I participated in that behavior, even though I didn’t directly bully them. My participation was as a bystander who didn’t do anything to help them. At that time, I sensed the hurt that victims experienced. Later, as a special education teacher, I quickly became more aware that children could be cruel to each other. They often mistreat individuals who are “different.” The children I taught were rejected, teased, and called names. This caused a great deal of concern in them, their parents, and me. I often wondered, “How can kids be so cruel?” So, I began to explore a few ways to promote a sense of belonging and acceptance in others. Unfortunately, I stopped this exploration and became involved in other research.

Several years later the pain of being mistreated visited our home. When our son, Curtis, was in seventh grade, he was bullied and eventually isolated by several students. My wife and I decided to transfer him to another school system. He found acceptance and a sense of belonging at the new middle school. However, at age fifteen Curtis was in a car accident that changed his life. My wife and I had to give the surgeons permission to remove two fingers and one-third of his right hand. He had two other fingers repaired and one rebuilt. When he went back to school, many of his classmates encouraged and supported him. Unfortunately, many were cruel to him. Once again, I asked myself, “How can kids be so cruel?” There was a cry from within me, for answers. I wanted to know if I could stop cruelty from developing, and I wanted to stop it after it has already developed.

There was also a cry from within my son, but it was deeper and more intense than mine. The bullying had a tremendous impact on his self-esteem, confidence, and his emotional health even into the adult years. At the age of twenty-three, he suffered from depression and anxiety. He developed Post-Traumatic Stress from the wreck and from the persistent peer mistreatment. He also sought the company of the wrong people. He got desperate to escape his pain by taking an illegal drug. Since he had a heart problem that we didn’t know about, the drug killed him. Now you understand why I wrote my first book, The Bully Free Classroom™, and why I am writing this book for you, the parents. I understand the pain expressed by children who are mistreated and the heartache experienced by their parents. I want to stop the pain.

Please join me in bringing light into the darkness of kids who are mistreated everyday. I hope that you and your family are blessed with health, peace, and happiness and that you will be instruments that will promote acceptance and a sense of belonging in others. Any child I can help through you and your family will bring honor and purpose to my son’s life.

Bullying can be found in every school system, school, and classroom. To prevent and reduce bullying, a systematic effort must be made in each school. There must be a system-wide commitment to prevent and stop bullying. There must also be adult involvement, including parents and others in the community. This kind of commitment doesn’t always exist. It is difficult to believe, but I have actually had school superintendents tell me that bullying didn’t exist in their school system. Adults denying that bullying exists, or ignoring bullying, is the worst thing that can happen to children, a school, and a community. When adults get involved and harness the energy of school personnel, parents, community representatives, and children, bullying can be prevented and stopped. Well, at least significantly reduced. I often wonder if we can ever eliminate it – considering the whole nature of human beings. However, I am extremely hopeful.

If you are a parent, I hope you find this book informative and helpful. If you work in a school system, I hope you will strive to implement a Bully Free™ Program. Please tell others about this book and the other Bully Free™ resources.
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Parenting has never been an easy job, but it seems that the job is more complicated today than ever before. Unfortunately, parents are not given enough opportunities to learn how to fulfill their responsibilities as parents. We train people how to fulfill the requirements of almost every job, except how to do the most important job in the world, parenting. Parents need more guidance today than they have ever needed it before. The violence we see in our communities and schools reflects our neglect of providing such guidance. Tremendous gaps currently exist in the knowledge and skills of parents.

This book is designed to help fill some of those gaps. It is written for parents. However, school personnel who seek to guide parents should also read it. Schools are encouraged to make this book available to as many parents as possible, but especially to parents of potential victims of bullying, parents of victims, and parents of bullies. It is designed to be an informative, practical, and useful tool. The book is composed of several fact sheets about bullying as well as effective tips and suggestions for parents that can be readily accessed to help their children. The format is intentional. Narrative and educational terms have been kept to a minimum and much of the content is presented in a bullet format with short, concise, and useful one to four sentence tips.

Throughout this book, certain themes are repeated. This is intentional. It is hoped that you and your family never forget these themes. The themes are:

- Since school violence is a heart problem, hearts must be changed.
- The Golden Rule –treat others the way you want to be treated – must be valued and lived.
- We all need to strive to be peacemakers.
- No one deserves to be mistreated, and it must not be tolerated.
- To prevent and stop bullying, school personnel, students, parents, and others in the community must work together. Parents and their children play a key role in this effort.

Your first step to playing a key role in preventing and stopping bullying is to learn as much as you can about the nature of the problem – bullying. Don’t skip this section. If you don’t understand the problem, it is more difficult to help your child.

1 Throughout this book, I use “parents” to avoid the awkwardness of using “parents/guardians.” This is for ease of reading only and is never meant to imply that guardians and caregivers have a lesser role to play with their children.
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF BULLYING?

Understanding bullying is an important step in helping children. Therefore, the next few pages summarize basic facts about bullying.

There is universal agreement when it comes to the definition of bullying (see Fact Sheet #1).

---

**Fact Sheet #1: What is bullying?**

- Bullying is a form of overt and aggressive behavior that is intentional, hurtful, and persistent (repeated). Bullied children are teased, harassed, rejected, and assaulted (verbally and/or physically) by one or more individuals. There has to be an imbalance of strength (power and dominance) (Olweus, 1993).

- There are times that bullying can even be considered violent. All bullying is serious, but when it is intense and lasts for a significant period, it is very serious – it is violent (Beane, 1999).

---

Some of the key words in the above definition of bullying are:

- Intentional
- Hurtful
- Persistent (repeated over time)
- Imbalance of Strength (power and dominance)

Therefore, behavior such as teasing that is not intentionally designed to hurt and is not persistent is not considered bullying. However, it is inappropriate because even playful teasing can be hurtful.

Bullying behaviors can be classified into two major categories: Direct Bullying and Indirect Bullying. Within the categories are behaviors that are by nature physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, and relational (dealing with relationships). All of these are interrelated and can occur at the same time.

Fact Sheet #2 provides a list of behaviors falling into the categories of bullying. Please note that some professionals try to rate bullying behaviors as mild, moderate, and severe. This is a dangerous practice. For instance, behavior that is considered mild by one child may be considered moderate or even severe by another child. Labeling behaviors as mild, moderate, and severe may also cause some individuals to focus only on preventing or intervening in moderate and severe cases – situations they consider most urgent. All bullying behavior must be dealt with swiftly.
Fact Sheet # 2: What does bullying look like?

Physical Bullying (Direct Bullying)

- Hitting/slapping/elbowing/shouldering (slamming)
- Pushing/shoving
- Kicking
- Taking/stealing, damaging or defacing belongings/property
- Restraining
- Pinching
- Flushing someone’s head in the toilet
- Cramming someone into his/her locker
- Attacking with spit wads, food, etc.
- Sexual harassment
  - Grabbing in a sexual way
  - Forcing someone to engage in unwanted sexual behavior
  - Brushing up against someone in an intrusive manner
- Anti-gay harassment
- Pulling clothes down or off
- and more . . .

Verbal Bullying (Direct Bullying)

- Name-calling
- Insulting remarks and put-downs
- Repeated teasing
- Racist remarks/harassment
- Sexual bullying and sexual harassment
  - Unwanted comments, jokes, and taunts about body parts
  - Teasing about sexual orientation and rumors about sexual activities
  - Unwanted notes and pictures about sex
- Threats and intimidation
- Whispering about others behind their backs
- and more . . .
### Fact Sheet #2: What does bullying look like?

#### Indirect Bullying Behaviors

- Destroying and manipulating relationships (turning someone’s best friend against him/her, etc.)
- Destroying status within peer group
- Destroying reputations
- Making someone look foolish
- Public humiliation
- Intimidation
- Gossiping, spreading nasty and malicious rumors and lies about someone
- Hurtful graffiti
- Excluding someone from a group (social rejection/isolation)
- Stealing boyfriends or girlfriends
- and more . . .

#### Other Bullying Behaviors

- Negative text messages on cell phones, e-mail, voice-mail messages, etc.
- Negative body language (facial expressions, turning your back to someone)
- Threatening gestures, taunting, pestering, insulting remarks and gestures
- Glares and dirty looks, nasty jokes, notes passed around, anonymous notes
- Hate petitions (promising to hate someone)

*Note:* Direct and indirect forms of bullying often occur together. All of the above behaviors can be interrelated.

I’m sure you are aware of the fact that both boys and girls bully. But, do you know how they differ in their bullying behavior? *Fact Sheet #3* will help you understand the difference.
**Fact Sheet # 3: How are boys and girls different in their bullying?**

**General Facts:**
- Bullying behavior of boys is easier to see
- Girls are sneaky
  - Therefore, girls bullying behavior may be vastly underestimated
- Girls engage in bullying as much as boys (Atlas and Pepler, 1998)
- Boys tend to be bullied by other boys and girls tend to be bullied by both boys and girls
  - However, girls bully girls and boys
- Boys and girls use verbal aggression (e.g., mocking, name calling, teasing, mean telephone calls, verbal threats of aggression) and intimidation (e.g., graffiti, publicly challenging someone to do something, playing a dirty trick, taking possessions, coercion)—(Garrity et. Al., 1996, p. 228)
- Verbal bullying is more likely to be done to members of the same sex than to members of the opposite sex (Hazler and Oliver, 1991)

**Boy Bullies:**
- Boys use more direct behaviors
- Boys tend to use more physical aggression than girls (Hoover and Oliver, 1996)—may change and probably has in some school environments

**Girl Bullies:**
- Use more indirect/social and relationship-damaging behaviors – sneaky, nasty (Hoover and Oliver, 1996)
- Are becoming more physical in bullying—violence in girls on the increase
  - Are watching television shows that teach them it is okay to be physically violent and to attack males: *Xena, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Charmed, and Witchblade*
- Are more likely to bully other girls—but may bully some boys
- Bully by groups more than boys—just as mean—hard to detect (Kreidler, 1996)
- Seek to inflict psychological pain on their victims—hurts as much, if not more, as physical attacks—has long lasting effects
- Appear to be angels around adults but cruel and mean to others
- Target weaknesses in others
- Frequently make comments regarding the sexual behavior of girls they don’t like (Byrne, 1994)
- Attack within tightly knit networks of friends—intensifies hurts
Since bullying occurs most often in secret, away from the eyes of adults, parents and school personnel often underestimate bullying. Therefore, they don’t understand the intensity of the problem, nor the need to implement a school-wide Bully Free™ Program.

Fact sheet #4 will help you appreciate the fact that bullying is so prevalent that it is a constant hum in our schools and in some neighborhoods.

### Fact Sheet # 4: How frequently does it occur?

- 3.7 million youths engage in it and more than 3.2 million are victims of “moderate” or “serious” bullying each year (American Medical Association, at National Mental Health and Education Center for Children and Families, www.nascenter.org)
- Every twenty seconds
- Every seven (7) minutes a child on elementary playground(s) is bullied (Pepler, Craig, and Roberts, 1998)
- Some say 1 in 7 are bullied
- 10% - 58% or more of students (varies from school to school) have reported being bullied
- Some students receive an average of 213 verbal put-downs per week
  - 30 per day (Fried and Fried, 1996)
- A survey of 558 students in a mid-western middle school indicates that more and more good children are participating in bullying:
  - 80% of the students had engaged in bullying behaviors in the previous 30 days (Espelage, 2001)

Now that you understand that bullying is a frequent occurrence, it is important for you to know when and where it is most likely to happen. Well, it can happen almost any time and almost any place. It happens in preschool years through adulthood. It can happen where two or three people are gathered. Fact Sheet #5 addresses this more specifically.
Fact Sheet # 5: When and where does it usually occur?

- Occurs 2 to 3 times more often at school as to and from school (Olweus, 1995)
- Occurs at early ages and in all grades – Onset between 3 and 4 years of age (Byrne, 1993)
- In the U.S., it increases for both boys and girls during late elementary years, peaks during middle school years and decreases in high school (Hoover, et. al., 1992)
- Physical severity may decrease with age (Sharp and Smith, 1995)
- At the first of school year, bullies go “shopping”
- Occurs in homes, nursery schools, preschools, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, neighborhoods, churches, city parks, to and from school, on the streets and in the workplace, etc.
- Occurs in large cities, small cities, large schools, small schools— even one room schools in other countries (Olweus, 1995)
- Occurs in locations such as hidden areas and areas lacking adult supervision — halls, playground, where students take brief breaks, restroom, buses, walking to and from school, etc. – can also occur in classrooms

Bullying is so pervasive that it is easy to understand why some children feel “there is no escape.” Unfortunately, they also feel that bullying must be kept a secret. They are reluctant to tell anyone they are mistreated or that someone else is mistreated. Fact Sheet #6 explains this secrecy.

Fact Sheet # 6: Why do children keep it a secret?

- They are taught not to “tattle tale.” They think telling someone they are being hurt or someone else is being hurt is wrong.
- They have seen adults told before and nothing was done about it.
- They are afraid adults will make it worse.
- They are embarrassed or feel shame because they feel no one likes them.
- They feel shame because they cannot stand up for themselves, like they have been taught.
- They don’t want to worry their parents. They love their parents too much. They want to protect them from worry and anxiety.

Bullying is not only devastating to children, but it takes them places psychologically and physically they should not have to go and is connected to so many other problems. Examining Fact Sheet #7 will help you understand the rationale for preventing and stopping bullying. After reading this fact sheet, you will feel the urgency for and hopefully develop a passion for making our homes, schools, communities, and world bully free.
Fact Sheet #7: Why must it be stopped?

- More prevalent today in a more serious form
  - Intensity of bullying is greater today because more students join in
  - More good kids participating—even encouraging bullies to victimize others

- Occurs in every classroom (10% to 20% or more of school population)

- Creates a fearful school climate
  - Other students fear they may become victims
  - 20% of students are scared throughout much of the school day (Garrity, et al., 1997)
  - Causes confusion and fear in bystanders (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler and Charach, 1994)
  - Intensifies normal fears (laughed at, losing what you have, rejection, fear of unknown, exposure)

- Common theme in school shootings – children retaliating
  - Path taken by children who retaliate: Hurt, Anger, Hate, Rage, a Desire for Revenge
  - Roughly two-thirds of school shooters had “felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others...” (Bowman, 2001)

- Causes stress in children

- Causes “Toxic Shame”—very destructive to one’s sense of worth (Garbarino, Lost Boys, 1999)

- Suicide among Victims
  - 30% of all child suicides can be directly related to bullying (Hawker and Boulton, 2000)

- May raise suicide risk in bystanders

- Every environment is social and there seems to be no escape

- “Everyday of school can be a new social mind field.” (Rachel Simmons, Odd Girl Out, 2002)

- Rejected children may withdraw and commit social suicides - robbed of opportunities to develop needed social skills

- Encourages children to run away from home
  - “I would rather have a pimp love me than no one at all.”

- Encourages gang membership
  - Victims—find acceptance, security, “family”
  - Bullies—over time lose peer group status and may seek association with other aggressive students (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest and Gariepy, 1988)

- Encourages joining a cult, drug group, or hate group to find acceptance and a sense of belonging

- Encourages teen pregnancies
  - “I want a baby, not a husband.”
  - Seeking unconditional love and someone to love

CONTINUED
Fact Sheet #7: Why must it be stopped?

- Encourages dropping out of school
  - 10% of dropouts do so because of repeated bullying (Weinhold and Weinhold, 1998)
- Contributes to poor school attendance – according to the National Association of School Psychologists, 160,000 students per day stay home from school because of bullying (Fried and Fried, 1996)
  - 7% of eighth graders stay home at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 2000)
  - 25% don’t want to attend school and stay home or skip classes because of sexual bullying (AAUW, 1993)
- Causes Loneliness—trapped alone in the problem
  - Feelings of loneliness seem to persist even after bullying stops (Boulton and Underwood, 1992)
- Causes low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety disorders
- Causes Post Traumatic Stress
- Has long-lasting harmful emotional effects (Olweus, 1993; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler and Craig, 1998)
- Causes eating disorders
- Negative impact on student morale and learning/achievement
  - 14% of 8th through 12th graders and 22% of 4th through 8th graders surveyed reported that “bullying diminished their ability to learn in school” (Hoover and Oliver, 1996, p. 10)
  - 17% of students said bullying interfered with academic performance (Hazler et. Al., 1992)
- A root cause of discipline problems (both the victim and bully cause problems)
  - Bullied children have behavior problems after the bullying and those problems get worse (Schwartz, McFayden-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates, 1998)
- Hostile kids are more likely to have diabetes and heart attacks in the future (Karen Matthews, University of Pittsburgh, in Elias, USA Today, 2002)
- Prevents full inclusion of children with disabilities
- Creates societal problems
  - Bullies identified by age eight are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more likely than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by age 30 (Main Project Against Bullying, 2000)
  - 60% of students characterized as bullies in grade 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24 and 40% had three or more arrests (Olweus, 1991). Bullies may grow up and abuse spouses, abuse children and abuse co-workers.

All of this information is helpful, but you are probably wondering if your child is being bullied or if your child is bullying others. To help you address your concerns, the following information regarding warning signs has been provided.
WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

It is important for you to know what characteristics put your child at risk of being bullied. It is also important for you to know the characteristics observed in children who are already victimized, as well as the typical characteristics of bullies. These characteristics serve as warning signs. Fact Sheets #8, #9, and #10 provide a comprehensive listing of the possible characteristics of potential victims, victims, and bullies. When you see a combination of these characteristics, you need to pay attention to what is happening in your child’s life, get closer to your child and be ready to step up your involvement.

Fact Sheet #8: Possible Characteristics of Potential Victims (Warning Signs)

- Has a characteristic that sets him/her apart from other students
  - Disability
  - Comes from a racial, cultural, ethnic, and/or religious background that puts him/her in the minority
  - Big ears that stand out, long nose, etc.
  - Overweight or underweight, taller or shorter than peers
  - Wears glasses, “talks funny,” “looks funny,” and “walks funny”
  - Smaller and physically weaker than peers
  - Very intelligent, gifted, and appears to be teacher’s pet
- Clumsy, uncoordinated, and poor at sports
- Poor manners and social skills
- Teases, pesters, and irritates others, eggs them on, doesn’t know when to stop
- Passive, timid, quiet, shy, overly sensitive
- Cautious, clingy, and insecure
- Low or no assertiveness skills
- Sullen and withdrawn
- Low or no self-confidence and self-esteem
- Irritable, disruptive, aggressive, quick-tempered, fights back (but always loses)
- Lacks sense of humor and/or uses inappropriate humor
- Poor or no conflict resolution skills and poor communication skills
- Sudden decrease in school attendance or skips certain classes
- Decline in quality of academic performance

CONTINUED ➔
**Fact Sheet #9: Possible Characteristics of Victims**

*(Warning Signs)*

- Difficulty concentrating in class and easily distracted
- Wants to take a different route to school or different transportation to school
- Sudden lack of interest in school-sponsored activities/events
- Seems happy on weekends, but unhappy and preoccupied/tense on Sundays
- Uses “victim” body language—hunches shoulders, hangs head, won’t look people in the eye and backs off from others
- Suddenly prefers the company of adults
- Frequent illness or fakes illness (i.e., headaches, stomachaches, pains)
- Nightmares and insomnia
- Comes home with unexplainable scratches and bruises without an explanation
- Suddenly develops a stammer or stutter
- Change in eating patterns
- Angry, irritable, disruptive, aggressive, quick-tempered, and fights back (but always loses)
- Cautious, clingy, nervous, anxious, worried, fearful, and insecure
- Overly concerned about personal safety; spends a lot of time and effort thinking/worrying about getting safely to and from school and getting around in the school (i.e., to and from lunch, to and from recess, to and from the bathroom, to and from the lockers, etc.)
- Talks about avoiding certain areas of the school
- Carries protection devices (i.e., knife, box opener, fork, gun, etc.) with him/her
- Frequently asks for extra money (for lunch, school supplies, etc.)
- Possessions (books, money, clothing, etc.) are often “lost,” damaged, or destroyed without an explanation
- Sudden change in behavior (bed-wetting, nail-biting, tics, etc.)
- Cries easily and/or often, becomes emotionally distraught, and has extreme mood swings
- Blames himself/herself for problems/difficulties
- Talks about being made fun of, laughed at, picked on, teased, put down, pushed around, threatened, kicked, hit, called names, or students telling lies about them, or gossiping about them, or excluding them from a group and other bullying behaviors

CONTINUED
Fact Sheet #9: Possible Characteristics of Victims
(Warning Signs)

- Talks about not being able to stand up for himself/herself
- Talks about dropping out of school
- Suddenly starts bullying other students or siblings
- Becomes overly aggressive, rebellious and unreasonable
- Sudden lost of respect for authority figures
- Seeks the wrong friends in the wrong places
- Talks about forming his/her own cult
- Sudden interest in violent movies, video games and books
- Talks about running away
- Talks about feeling depressed
- Talks about or attempts suicide

Fact Sheet #10: Possible Characteristics of Bullies
(Warning Signs)

- Enjoys feeling powerful and in control
- Seeks to dominate and/or manipulate others
- May be popular with other students, who envy his/her power
- Is physically larger or makes himself/herself seem larger than his/her peers
- Is physically stronger than his/her peers
- Is impulsive
- Loves to win at everything; hates to lose at anything and is a poor winner (boastful)
- Seems to derive satisfaction or pleasure from others’ fear, discomfort, or pain
- Seems overly concerned with others “disrespecting” him/her; equates “respect” with fear
- Seems to have little or no empathy or compassion for others
- Seems unable or unwilling to see things from another person’s perspective or “walk in someone else’s shoes.”
- Seems willing to use and abuse other people to get what he/she wants

CONTINUED
| Fact Sheet #10: Possible Characteristics of Bullies  
(Warning Signs) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Defends his/her negative actions by insisting that others “deserve it,” “ask for it,” or “provoked it”; a conflict is always someone else’s “fault.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is good at hiding negative behaviors or doing them where adults can’t see them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gets excited when conflicts arise between others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stays cool during conflicts in which he/she is directly involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exhibit’s little or no emotion (flat affect) when talking about his/her part in a conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Blames other people for his/her problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Refuses to accept responsibility for his/her negative behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shows little or no remorse for his/her negative behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lies in an attempt to stay out of trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expects to be “misunderstood,” “disrespected,” and picked on; attacks before he/she can be attacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interprets ambiguous or innocent acts as purposeful and hostile; uses these as excuses to strike out at others verbally or physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Tests” your authority by committing minor infractions, then waits to see what you’ll do about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disregards or breaks school and/or class rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is generally defiant or oppositional toward adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seeks/craves attention - seems just as satisfied with negative attention as positive attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attracts more than the usual amount of negative attention from others - disciplined more often than other children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is street-smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- May or may not have poor self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seems mainly concerned with his/her own pleasure and well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seems antisocial or lacks social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has difficulty fitting into groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has a close network of friends (actually “henchmen” or “lieutenants”), who follow along with whatever he/she wants to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has average or above average performance in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- May have problems at school or at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lacks coping skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME TO GIVE MY CHILD A GOOD START?

All good parents want their children to have a good start in life. Parents are an important key to their child’s happiness, physical health, mental health, and success in life. More and more research is documenting the powerful influence of one’s home-life. Having a quality home-life can impact how children cope with life, and we must never forget that for a long time school is their life.

It is hoped that the following suggestions will improve the quality of your home-life and the quality of your child’s life at home, in the community, and at school.

To ensure this quality of life, you must do all you can to rear children who value the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated. The importance of that rule must not be underestimated. It is the foundation of all efforts to prevent and stop bullying. You can build a firm or shaky foundation for your children. Through your parenting, you can contribute to your children becoming easy targets of bullying or contribute to them becoming bullies.

This section is designed to help you develop the knowledge and skills that will enable and empower you to prevent your child from becoming a potential victim, a victim, or a bully. Give your child a firm foundation to grow and live upon.

As a parent, you should:

- Teach your child to be kind and not envious or self-centered. Teach your child to rejoice in the success of others and to encourage others.
- Be aware of the possible characteristics of potential victims of bullying (review Fact Sheet #8).
- Be aware of the signs that your child may be a victim of bullying (review Fact Sheet #9).
- Be aware of the signs that your child may be a bully (review Fact Sheet #10).
- Your child needs a lot of unconditional love and attention. This is love and attention that doesn’t require any conditions. It says that you love him for who he is and not because of what he does. In fact, tell your child that your love for him will never end. Hug him, smile at him, stroke his hair, pat him on the back, hold his hand, and say pleasant things to him. Indicate that your time with him is precious and valuable. Your love for him will help him love himself and accept himself. Self-acceptance is the basis for self-improvement and self-love is the basis for compassion toward others.

If your child feels that you do not love him, he may think he doesn’t deserve your love. When he this way, he may think he is unworthy of anyone’s love. He may even think he should not love himself. Before long, he may think he is a “no-body” and has no value. This is devastating and could have dire consequences.

---

2 Throughout this book, I alternate use of gender pronouns “he” and “she,” “him” and “her” when describing kids to avoid the awkward “he or she” and “him/her” constructs. I usually alternate list-by-list or section-by-section. This is for ease of reading only and is never meant to imply that all characteristics in a given list or all statements in a given section refer to only boys or girls. They refer to both boys and girls.
• Communicate your zero tolerance of the mistreatment of others and teach the Golden Rule—treat others the way you want to be treated. Let your child know that you value kindness. Brainstorm with your child to identify ways to live the Golden Rule. When you observe this behavior in others, read about it, or see it on television, discuss it with your child. Periodically remind your child that he should tell you when he or someone else is being mistreated at school or in the neighborhood.

• Teach your child to apologize, regardless of his age, regardless if child development experts tell you your child is too young to know what he is doing. When your child apologizes, give him a hug and tell him you forgive him and love him. Teach him what forgiveness is all about. Also, when you do something wrong apologize to your child and ask for forgiveness.

• Be a good role model by exhibiting self-control, kindness, empathy, and sensitivity. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Model the Golden Rule.

• Teach your child to be a peacemaker. Tell him not to be someone who stirs up strife. Ask him not to spread lies and rumors or even true stories that might be hurtful to someone or cause conflict.

• Respect the feelings of your child and don’t tease him about his fears. Your child’s fears seem real to him. If you make fun of his fears, he may not tell you when he is fearful.

• Teach your child the difference between right and wrong, good, bad and evil. There are powerful influences in the world today that are trying to snatch your child from you. You must be assertive to counteract the negative influences in our society. People are beginning to long for a return of virtue and moral values.

• Surround your child with people who have good morals. Develop a moral, religious and spiritual network around your child. Psychologists and professional mental health professionals have found that supportive religion can make a big difference in the lives of children, especially adolescents. Andrew Weaver (in Lost Boys by James Garbarino, 1999) found teenagers who are involved in religious institutions are: (1) less likely to attempt suicide and less likely to think about doing so, (2) report less depression and are less likely to experience depression that is at a clinically significant level when they are depressed, (3) less likely to favor casual sex and more likely to wait longer before they become sexually active, (4) more likely to find meaning in traumatic events and experience lower distress and faster recovery than other teens, and (7) are less likely to use drugs and alcohol. According to James Garbarino many violent young men have a spiritual void. Spirituality is a powerful protective factor. Some researchers have found that girls who are unsure of their moral identity were more likely to be aggressors.3

• Make sure your child gets a good night’s rest. The research on the connection between behavior, learning and sleep is not yet clear. But common sense tells us that adequate sleep is a basic necessity for children’s learning and self-control. Some experts say that profoundly sleepy children have impaired impulse control and some become hyperactive.

• Have one-to-one chats and family meetings around topics such as: kindness, love, patience, tolerance, acceptance, sense of belonging, courage, justice, generosity, helpfulness, honesty, honor, respect, citizenship, empathy, sensitivity, racism, charity, service, and other powerful words. Don’t just discuss these terms; but seek to develop your child in these areas. Family meetings are also a great way to promote closeness and unity in your family and to teach

---

problem solving skills. Family meetings help open lines of communication and help family members learn to work together to learn important concepts and to solve problems. Family meetings also give children a sense of security, a sense of belonging, and a sense of self-worth. They also can be used to enhance a child’s self-esteem and self-confidence. These meetings also help kids feel like there are parameters in their lives and that they can control certain aspects of their lives. Family meetings also give children a sense of responsibility and accountability.

The following is an adaptation of family meeting guidelines written by Kristen Zolten, M.A., and Nicholas Long, Ph.D., of the Department of Pediatrics at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline for Conducting Family Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> A family meeting is a structured discussion time that typically involves all members of a family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desired Age of Children:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Best if individuals are school-aged or older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Meetings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At first keep length of meetings to 15 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As communication and decision-making improves, lengthen meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to Discuss:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss positive events in the lives of each family member. (This is a great way to start each meeting.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss family responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss family rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss positive concepts to be learned (i.e., Golden Rule, cooperation, kindness, self-control, gentleness, and empathy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet where there are few distractions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet at regularly and consistently scheduled times (i.e., once a week).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet at a mutually agreed upon time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid canceling meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do not meet during mealtime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet after younger (five years and younger) have gone to bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special meetings can be called to discuss urgent issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting should be held even when there are no critical issues to discuss.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTINUED
Guidelines for Conducting Family Meetings

**Agenda:**
- Establish a brief agenda (topics) for several meetings.
- Post an agenda list in a prominent location: the dates, times, and topics of the meetings.
- Family members can add to list by writing topic(s) on the "agenda list" under the desired date.

**Ground Rules:**
- At the first meeting discuss family meeting ground rules – for example:
  - Discuss one topic at a time.
  - Take turns speaking.
  - No putting other people down.
  - No fighting or arguing.
  - Disagree without being disagreeable.
- Decide what will happen if someone misbehaves or breaks a rule during a meeting. For example: a brief timeout period in the bedroom.

**Chairperson:**
- Facilitates each meeting.
- Keeps discussion on track (on the topic).
- Ensures that everyone has a chance to speak.
- You may want to rotate the chairing responsibility among family members - by alphabet order, age, etc.).

**Recorder:**
- Choose someone who can write well to be a recorder for each meeting.
- The recorder writes down all decisions made and topics discussed.

**Attendance:**
- Attendance should be required.
- Of course, sometimes someone will have to miss.

**Making Decisions:**
- Important decisions are often made during family meetings.
- Some family decisions should be made even when someone is absent.
- It is best for families to strive for consensus (agreement of all members) when decisions are being made.
- If consensus is not reached and the issue being voted on is not one that must be decided immediately, it can be put aside and voted on at the next family meeting.

CONTINUED
Guidelines for Conducting Family Meetings

- However, there will be times when certain decisions cannot be put off and consensus has not been reached (for example, where to go on this week’s family outing). In such instances, a popular vote can be taken.

Fun Activity:
- End the meeting on a positive note by having one fun activity.

- Teach your child the importance of respecting the rights of others and protecting one’s own rights.

- Teach your child to respect authority. Ever since the 1960s, many Americans have lost their respect for authority. The best way to teach your child to respect authority is for you to teach him to respect you. You are the first authority figure he encounters. If he doesn’t respect you, he will not respect others in authority. This requires that you not tolerate disrespect and that you reward/reinforce your child’s respectful behavior. Teach your child to say, “Yes Sir.” And “Yes Ma’am.” Do not tolerate him talking back to you and others in a disrespectful way. Do not tolerate him belittling your efforts to discipline him or correct him.

- Respect is a two-way street. You cannot expect your child to show you respect if you do not show him respect. Therefore, never belittle, embarrass, or humiliate your child in front of his friends. This is especially important when it comes to discipline. When possible, punishment should be administered away from the eyes of onlookers.

- Provide good supervision of your child, especially when he is with others. Unsupervised children have more behavior problems. Children need structure and adult guidance.

- Don’t bully your child. Don’t hit, overly criticize, or shout at him. Words cut to the heart and are remembered for a long, long time. Use your words to build him up, to encourage and support him, not to cut him down. Avoid making sarcastic and insulting/belittling or derogatory remarks. No one should be verbally abused. Perhaps your parents treated you that way. If so, recall how you felt and how you even feel today. Don’t do that to your child. Ask yourself, “What is making me lose control? Is there anger I must deal with?”

- Teach your child to befriend individuals who are kind and accepting of others and to avoid friendships with those who mistreat others. Explain to your child how some friendships can be destructive and should be ended. If your child makes friends with individuals you do not approve of, express your concern. If you can’t seem to impact his choice of friends, then invite them over. It’s better for you to have an eye on them than to wonder where they are and what they are doing. You could even suggest things they could do and places to go. Sometimes they get into trouble because they are bored and are looking for a way to have a good time.

- Teach your child that he “should not love you too much.” He should tell you everything that is happening with him, even if it makes you worry. That is your job as his parent. Encourage him to let you know when someone is hurting him. Tell him you want to know what he is thinking and feeling.
Help your child develop a “feelings vocabulary” and encourage him to express his feelings to you. The following chart will help you guide your child in learning a feeling vocabulary. Knowing these words will help him better express his feelings.

### 50 Words that Describe Feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings Vocabulary</th>
<th>Feelings Vocabulary</th>
<th>Feelings Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>happy</td>
<td>restless</td>
<td>irritated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excited</td>
<td>calm</td>
<td>mad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eager</td>
<td>content</td>
<td>angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joyful</td>
<td>satisfied</td>
<td>upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“on top of the world”</td>
<td>proud</td>
<td>furious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sad</td>
<td>relaxed</td>
<td>fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down</td>
<td>surprised</td>
<td>embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miserable</td>
<td>startled</td>
<td>guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tearful</td>
<td>shy</td>
<td>self-conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fidgety</td>
<td>bashful</td>
<td>ashamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>helpless</td>
<td>safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tense</td>
<td>lonely</td>
<td>secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worried</td>
<td>unsure</td>
<td>confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afraid</td>
<td>confused</td>
<td>hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shocked</td>
<td>puzzled</td>
<td>trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrified</td>
<td>mixed-up</td>
<td>distracted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have an “Affirmation Box” in your home. This can be a shoebox with a slit cut in the top. Leave a pen and small pieces of paper near the box. Once or twice a week write something positive about your child and place it in the box for him to get and read. Keep the comments to one or two sentences. Encourage all of your children to write positive notes about each other. Of course, you will need to screen the notes before they are read. After they read the message, explain why you feel they deserve the positive comment. The following chart, “Positive Characteristics of My Child,” is a list of positive words that will help you write your sentences. If you don’t want to use such a box, simply select a word each week that describes your child and mention to him that you have noticed that characteristic in him. Another related strategy is to have your child overhear you talking positively about him to someone else. Also, frequently remind your child of the positive things people have said about him and remind him of his positive characteristics. Use your words and actions to enhance/improve the self-esteem of your child. Be your child’s raving fan. Let him hear you raving about his positive characteristics. Zig Ziglar says to be a “good-finder.” Look for the good in your child and make sure he sees that good.

---

### Positive Characteristics of My Child

*(Starter Words)*

| · Able to resolve conflicts           | · Good sport                  | · Perceptive              |
| · Alert                              | · Hard-working                | · Perseverant             |
| · Ambitious                          | · Health conscious           | · Planner                |
| · Analytical                         | · Healthy                    | · Pleasant               |
| · Appreciate                         | · Helpful                    | · Polite                 |
| · Articulate                         | · Honest                     | · Problem solver          |
| · Assertive                          | · Honorable                  | · Professional           |
| · Calm                               | · Hopeful                    | · Punctual               |
| · Careful                            | · Humble                     | · Quick                  |
| · Caring                             | · Humorous                   | · Reasonable             |
| · Cautious                           | · Imaginative                | · Relaxed                |
| · Cheerful                           | · Independent                | · Reliable               |
| · Confident                          | · Innovative                 | · Reputable              |
| · Conscientious                      | · Inspiring                  | · Resilient              |
| · Consistent                         | · Intelligent                | · Resourceful            |
| · Cooperative                        | · Interesting                | · Responsible            |
| · Courageous                         | · Intuitive                  | · Safety conscious       |
| · Courteous                          | · Inventive                  | · Self-assured           |
| · Creative                           | · Kind                       | · Self-disciplined       |
| · Dedicated                          | · Knowledgeable              | · Self-starter           |
| · Dependable                         | · Likable                    | · Sensible               |
| · Determined                         | · Lively                     | · Sensitive              |
| · Dynamic                            | · Logical                    | · Service-minded         |
| · Eager                              | · Loving                     | · Sharing                |
| · Efficient                          | · Loyal                      | · Sincere                |
| · Empathetic                         | · Mature                     | · Stable                 |
| · Enthusiastic                       | · Mediator                   | · Strong                 |
| · Ethical                            | · Merry                      | · Successful             |
| · Fair                               | · Motivated                  | · Tacful                 |
| · Faithful                           | · Neat                       | · Tender-hearted         |
| · Focused                            | · Nice                       | · Tactful                |
| · Friendly                           | · Obedient                   | · Trustful               |
| · Fun                                | · Open-minded                | · Trustworthy            |
| · Generous                           | · Optimistic                 | · Understanding          |
| · Gentle                             | · Organized                  | · Unselfish              |
| · Giving                             | · Patient                    | · Upbeat                 |
| · Goal setter                        | · Peaceful                   | · Versatile              |
| · Good example                       | · People-oriented            | · Willing to compromise  |
| · Good follower                      | · Positive                   | · Wise                   |
| · Good leader                        | · Precise                    | · Witty                  |
| · Good listener                      |                            |                        |
• Teach your child to engage in positive self-talk. You can encourage this by trying to give your child a compliment each day. It is natural for people to say negative things to themselves: “I’m stupid.” or “I can’t do anything right.” Teach your child to say positive things about himself. Once again, you can help by frequently saying positive things about him, directly to him or to someone else while he is listening. There is nothing wrong with planning to have your child overhear a positive comment about him.

• Avoid criticizing the personality and appearance of your child. Negative adjectives (i.e., stupid, clumsy, ugly) are just as powerful as the above positive adjectives, except abusive adjectives can have a devastating effect on your child’s self-esteem. James Dobson says, “Self-esteem is the most fragile attribute in human nature; it can be damaged by a very minor incident and its reconstruction is often difficult to engineer.” In addition, when your child hears you use negative words to describe him, he may become resentful. Such feelings toward you may make him feel guilty, causing him to behave inappropriately, hoping to be punished for his feelings. Therefore, never give your child negative nicknames or introduce him in a negative way, such as: “This is shorty.” or “This is the runt of the family.” or “This is my little devil.” or “This is the stinker of the family.” Your voice inflection and your words should communicate that you love him and are proud to be his parent. Your child needs to feel that he is important to you.

Your child’s self-image and self-esteem are very important. When he feels bad about himself, he does not understand how others can like him or accept him. This thinking hinders his ability to make friends and could lead to depression.

• It is also best to avoid labels that are difficult to live up to, such as: “This is my little angel.” or “This is my little honor role student.”

• Give your child hope through your vision of them. Successful parents raising positive kids need to “see” (visualize) their kids as someday being competent, positive adults. This positive vision should be shared with your child. This will help your child to “see” himself as a successful adult in the future. This attitude in you and your child will have a positive impact on your behavior and his behavior. Zig Ziglar says, “positive thinking will not let you do anything, but it will let you do everything better than will negative thinking.”

• Be an encourager. Constantly remind your child of the things he does well. Any time you see him being good or doing good, let him know you have noticed it. By being an encourager, you draw out the very best in your child. Be very specific in what you see. Keep in mind the following seven essentials of effective encouragement.

---

Seven Essentials of Effective Encouragement

- **Set clear standards.** Be certain your child knows what is expected of him.
- **Expect the best.** Communicate that you believe in your child and that he can do what is expected.
- **Pay attention.** Catch your child doing things well.
- **Personalize recognition.** Let your child know specifically what you appreciate and why.
- **Tell the story.** Don’t be afraid to brag about what your child does right.
- **Celebrate together.** As a family, intentionally celebrate when one member accomplishes something significant.
- **Set the example.** It’s essential that you, as the parent, practice what you preach.

- Teach your child early that no one can make him feel inferior without his permission. Teach him that he must communicate this to those who seek to hurt his feelings.
- Tell your child that life can be stressful. Teach him ways to stay healthy and to deal with stress. For example, perhaps he needs an exercise routine and needs to learn how to relax by breathing deeply and thinking about something pleasant.
- Teach your child about cliques. Make sure he understands that cliques are about power and influence and not necessarily about developing good friendships. Having a clique means someone has to be rejected. When we seek to belong to a clique, this means we agree to reject someone. Rejection is very hurtful and a violation of the Golden Rule.
- When you see inappropriate behavior in your home, intervene immediately. For example, when one of your children makes a negative “thumbs down” comment about another, immediately ask him to make two positive “thumbs up” comments. If he will not, make the comments yourself. Then, tell your children you will not tolerate them using their words to hurt someone; and if the mistreat happens again, you should apply appropriate and serious disciplinary consequences (i.e., withhold privileges, require restitution, etc.). Be consistent by never letting a putdown occur without your response. Tell your children that you expect them to defend others who are mistreated.
- Teach your child to applaud the successes of other family members. When someone does something deserving recognition, ask the family to join you in applause. Make sure no one in the family is left out, by watching for something about everyone to bring to the attention of the family. Look for the positive in all of your children.
- Ask your child if he knows anyone who mistreats others almost everyday. Discuss why the bully might desire to mistreat others. Brainstorm with your child to identify ways he might be able to help the bully change.
- Ask your child if he knows anyone who is mistreated almost everyday. Discuss how victims of bullying might feel. Brainstorm with your child to identify ways he might be able to help
others feel accepted and valued. Teach your child not to let others control his interaction with his peers.

- Teach your child to avoid individuals who mistreat him and others. Also make sure he is not tolerating mistreatment just to be accepted by popular students. Explain to your child that you are not interested in him being popular. In fact, explain that popularity should never be a goal. It is a by-product of our lives. Explain to your child that you value the Golden Rule and integrity. Tell your child that decency is more important than social status.

- Share stories about your days in school. Share with him the times you tried to fit in and what you learned from your experiences.

- Teach your child to tell a trusted adult when he is mistreated and when he sees others mistreated.

- Contact your police department and ask if there are gangs in your community/neighborhood. As soon as your child turns four years old, teach him that gangs are dangerous and should be avoided. Teach your child to recognize gang clothing, gang language, and gang signals.

- The American Psychological Association reports that gang members are as young as 9 and as old as 30. Be sensitive to any sign that your child may be involved in a gang: flashing hand signs and gang language, lacking interest in school, lacking interest in family activities, changing friendships, changing dress styles (i.e., wearing same colors all the time), keeping activities a secret, getting into trouble with the law for stealing, vandalism, assault, and exhibiting symptoms of alcohol and drug use and exhibiting a sudden interest in violence.

- Know your child’s friends and their families. Invite children over to your house and have interesting and fun activities planned. Make your home a fun place for children to visit. Observe your child while he is interacting with other children and give him feedback regarding his positive social skills and ability to be assertive (but not aggressive).

- Make a list of things you want your child to know before he is old enough to live outside your home. In fact, you may want to teach most of these things before he is thirteen. If you are a religious person, support your beliefs with scripture or other resources. Let him know your values and beliefs are not “old fashion” but have a spiritual foundation. Help your child develop convictions.

- When you are around your child, relax and enjoy his presence, but also make sure you are teaching him the values you wish him to have. Don’t assume he is learning how to treat others by watching you, by going to church, or by some other means.

- Have discussions with your child about school and how he feels about the social environment/climate of the school. Ask, “How are students treating one another?” “How are the teachers treating students?” and ask “How are the teachers treating one another?” Sometimes it is better to ask your child to complete open ended statements, such as the following:
Open-Ended Discussion Statements About School

- The thing I like most about school is . . .
- The thing I like least about school is . . .
- The funniest thing I saw at school was . . .
- The funniest thing I heard at school was . . .
- The saddest thing I saw at school this week was . . .

- Provide a quiet place at home for your child to do his homework and make sure he completes his homework. Children are often made fun of because they don’t complete their homework. Make sure this special place has the resources needed: dictionary, thesaurus, highlighters, scissors, paper, pencils/pens, ruler, calculator, and other resources.

- Have consistent family rules and consequences for breaking rules. The rules should be firm, friendly, fair, enforceable, and age appropriate. Explain your behavioral expectations and the reasons for each rule. Tell your child that the rules are not meant to restrict him, but to make sure he gets the best that life has to offer. The rules are designed to give him freedom from conflict, anger, heartache, and unhappiness. It is important that you be consistent in enforcing the rules. Then, be a good model by obeying the rules yourself. Some examples of family rules appear below.

Examples of Family Anti-bullying Rules

- We treat others the way we want to be treated.
- Bullying is not allowed in our home.
- We don’t tease, call names, or put people down.
- We don’t hit, shove, kick, or punch.
- We listen to each other’s opinions.
- We treat each other with kindness and respect.
- We respect each other’s property.
- We look for the good in others and value differences.

- Communicate to your child that you respect his school rules and the information in his school’s Behavioral/Student Code Book. Tell him you expect him to do the same. Tell him, when he violates a school rule, there will be serious consequences applied at home.

- Establish routines for mealtimes, homework, play, bedtime, and other family activities and teach your child to be punctual. These will help him develop self-control and self-management skills and help him feel secure.
• Evaluate, and if necessary, modify your parenting style and disciplining techniques. Your approach to discipline should be warm, firm, nonviolent/non-aggressive, and not permissive. James Dobson defines permissiveness as “the absence of authority, resulting in the lack of boundaries for the child.” Your discipline style needs to be designed around the nature and needs of each child. You should never show favoritism or be more lenient with some children, but your discipline strategies may be different for different children. Use positive discipline strategies to help your child feel loved, develop positive self-esteem, develop confidence and have a sense of security. Your child needs and wants fair parameters and limits. Children find security in limits. They make the home environment seem like a safe place. Good discipline will help make him mentally strong, confident and self-controlled. It is your job to set standards and demonstrate values. Your child needs to know what you expect. You should be strict when dealing with unacceptable behavior because you have the right, as the parent, to stop and redirect his inappropriate behavior.

James Dobson recommends avoiding the extremes of discipline styles. He says:

“On the side of harshness, a child suffers the humiliation of total domination. The atmosphere is icy and rigid, and he lives in constant fear. He is unable to make his own decisions and his personality is squelched beneath the hobnailed boot of parental authority. Lasting characteristics of dependency, overwhelming hostility, and psychosis can emerge from this overbearing oppression. The opposite position, ultimate permissiveness, is equally tragic. Under this setting, the child is his own master from his earliest babyhood. He thinks the world revolves around his heady empire, and he often has utter contempt and disrespect for those closest to him. Anarchy and chaos reign in his home, and his mother is often the most nervous, frustrated woman on the block.”

If you have questions about spanking, it is recommended that you read James Dobson book, Dare to Discipline and Tedd Trips book, Sheparding the Heart of a Child.

• Some child experts recommend that you provide your child with an appeal process. When you give your child a directive, he should obey. However, sometimes parents are too quick with directives and have not adequately considered all the facts to determine if the directive is necessary and appropriate. Parents can make mistakes and may need to apologize and ask forgiveness. Therefore, the child needs an opportunity to present his case in a respectful manner. Guidelines for allowing your child to appeal are as follows:

---

- The child should begin to obey immediately, not after the appeal.
- The child must be prepared to obey either way – regardless of the results of the appeal.
- The child must appeal in a respectful manner.
- The child must accept the result of the appeal with a gracious spirit.

- Learn to use questions to get at the heart of problem behaviors. Tedd Tripp says the heart determines behavior, try using questions such as the following that work back from the behavior to heart.\(^\text{12}\) He says you must begin by seeking to understand the nature of the child’s internal conflict that is expressed in his behavior. Your goal is not only to correct, but also to understand the “why” of what has been said and done and the struggle within your child. He goes on to say, as your child answers the questions, your job is to help him understand himself and speak with clarity and honesty about his internal struggles. Tedd Tripp says you stand above the child because of your authority. But, you also stand beside the child as you seek to understand and he seeks to understand his own thoughts and actions.

---

### Examples of Questions for Discovering the Heart of Behavior Problems

- What were you feeling when you hit your sister?
- What did your sister do to make you mad?
- Help me understand how hitting your sister seemed to make things better.
- What was the problem with what she was doing to you?
- In what other ways could you have responded?
- How do you think your response reflected trust or lack of trust in God’s ability to provide for you?

- Take an honest look at yourself. Parents who express anger physically will likely produce children who express their anger physically. Children who live in homes where there is spouse abuse tend to under estimate or over estimate violence. Fortunately, children who have learned to bully can unlearn the behavior.

---

Create a well-differentiated family environment. In other words, allow your child to be himself. De-emphasize parent-child and sibling differences.

Give your child one-to-one attention. Be a good listener. Good listening is the first step toward being your child’s encourager. It is estimated that we spend about 70 percent of our waking hours communicating (reading, writing, speaking, listening), and most of that time goes to listening. However, parents are often poor listeners. Mainly because they never have received training on how to listen. Perhaps we are born with one mouth and two ears because listening is twice as hard as talking. Here’s how to be a good listener. Seek to hear what your child wants you to hear.
**How To Be A Good Listener (Do’s and Don’ts)**

**DO:**
- Pay attention and be quiet.
- Use **attentive body language**. Face your child, lean slightly forward, smile, and keep your arms and legs uncrossed.
- **Make and maintain eye contact**.
- Be **patient**. Let your child finish speaking. Don’t interrupt.
- **Ask for clarification** if you need it.
- **Empathize**.
- Ask questions to encourage the speaker and show that you’re listening.
- **Reflect the speaker’s words and feelings from time to time**. Example: “It sounds like you are worried about that.”
- **Mirror the speaker’s feelings in your own face**. If your child looks sad, hurt, or angry, you should too.
- **At points along the way, summarize what you’re hearing the speaker say**.
- **Use brief interjections to indicate that you’re listening**. Examples: “I see.” “Go on.” “Tell me more.” “Uh-huh.” “Really.” “Hmmm.” “What then?”
- **Really concentrate on what your child is saying**.
- **Invite your child to name his feelings**. Example: “When Marcus calls you a bad name, how did you feel?”

**DON’T:**
- Talk too much and don’t interrupt.
- **Doodle**. (However, you can take notes if you tell your child that you want to make sure you keep the facts straight. However, maintain as much eye-contact as possible.)
- Tap your pen or pencil, shuffle papers, wiggle your foot, look at your watch, yawn, etc.
- Argue with, criticize, or blame your child.
- Mentally argue with your child or judge what he is saying.
- Evaluate or challenge what your child is saying.
- Interrogate (ask too many questions).
- **Allow distractions**. (It is best to turn off the television, radio, CD player and don’t answer the telephone.)
- Think ahead to what you’re going to say when your child stops talking.
- Let your mind wander.
- Mentally compare what your child is saying with what you’ve heard from others.
• Help your child discover a hobby or skill that will make him feel good and that other kids will think is neat. Don’t let your child sit around moping.

• Help your child identify talents and gifts that can be developed. This will improve his self-esteem and give him more confidence when dealing with the bully. When a child develops competence and confidence in at least one area, he is better able to weather the feelings of inferiority that this world will seek to develop.\textsuperscript{13}

• Encourage him to do something he is good at more often.

• Help your child develop good communication skills. Such skills are important in every relationship your child will have. Teach him how to be a good listener, how to appropriately communicate his thoughts and feelings, and how to respond to the thoughts and feelings of others.

• Help your child establish realistic goals and help him understand his purpose in life, even as a child. When he meets his goals, celebrate. However, also reward or reinforce efforts. Do not let him set only long-range goals that take too long to meet. It is good to set short-term goals that lead to each long-term goal. This will provide more opportunities for encouragement, success, and reward. Meeting goals is a great way to enhance self-confidence and pride.

• Involve your child in service or charity projects. There is something emotionally healing about helping others. These activities can also build sensitivity and empathy in your child.

• Occasionally take your child on a family field trip designed to build sensitivity and empathy. Visit a shelter for the homeless, a children’s hospital, a senior citizens home, and other such places.

• Monitor the television viewing of your child and limit television to one to two hours a day of educational programming. Also help your child distinguish between what he sees as being real and what is not real. Television is not recommended for children under two years. The average child in America watches over twenty hours of television each week, viewing 12,000 acts of violence on television each year, or 200,000 violent acts by age eighteen (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003). More than 1,000 studies confirm a link between heavy television viewing and aggressive behavior, crime, and other forms of societal violence. Studies on television viewing reveal that the amount of violence on television is increasing. Viewing violent programs can make children afraid, worried, or suspicious and may increase tendencies toward aggressive behavior. You should also keep in mind that television often portrays sexual behavior and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs in inviting terms. Zig Ziglar offer the following suggestions for monitoring your child’s television viewing:\textsuperscript{14}

Lt. Col Dave Grossman (1999) says that we also need to recognize the impact of violence in the news. He says that overexposure to violence in the news can encourage a child to seek violence in entertainment. Too often, news focuses on violence and the negative side of human behavior. Preschoolers should definitely not be allowed to watch the news.

\textsuperscript{13} Arp, David, and Claudia Arp (2003). \textit{Answering the 8 cries of the spirited child}. Howard Publishing.

**Strategy for Monitoring Television Viewing**

- Sit down with your child with the weekly TV schedule and go over the list of programs that would be appropriate for your child, based primarily on the age of your child.
- Write a list of the programs, giving the time and date for each showing so it can be referred to each day.
- Give your child a book of tickets or a card with ten numbers, which the child assumes the responsibility to keep.
- Punch a hole in the sheet or card for each program watched, and when all ten have been viewed, the child has had enough of television time.
- Use the television to inspire your child.\(^{15}\) Certain television shows and movies could inspire your child to play a musical instrument, to help the homeless, to help starving children, earthquake victims, and perhaps be kind to those who are mistreated and rejected.
- Also monitor your child’s use of the Internet and use of violent video games. Refuse to buy or condone violent video games. Lt. Col Dave Grossman (1999) says that the earlier video games are introduced, the more likely it is that the child will crave violent ones. Locate your child’s computer where you can easily walk by and see what he is working on. Some parents have located their child’s computer in a room without a door and have the computer screen facing the hallway. Also monitor what your child reads. This is especially important if your child is having problems and seems to be withdrawing, or is angry and depressed. Sometimes, children seek ways to escape and find relief from the pressures of their problems – even if it is a brief break in the cycle.
- Monitor the music your child listens to and seek to counter act the immoral music he hears. Play good music at home and in the car. Research indicates that appropriate music can enhance your child’s creativity and problem solving, as well as enhance relaxation and pleasure.
- Seek information to help you understand today’s youth culture. The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding has a website that you should bookmark as one of your favorites. Mr. Walt Mueller is the Founder and President. He is a man you can trust. It is one of the best websites to help you understand your child’s culture. The website is: [www.cpyu.org/default.asp](http://www.cpyu.org/default.asp). I also recommend his book, *Understanding Today’s Youth Culture (For Parents, Teachers, and Youth Leaders)*.
- Discuss the nature of bullying with your child. When you see bullying on television, make sure to discuss it with your child and explain that he should not tolerate it and should not participate in it. Discuss with your child real-life cases of bigotry and biases presented on television and in other media. Ask him to make notes about bullying, bigotry and biases he sees on television and to discuss his findings with you or during a family meeting.

• Ask your child to complete the following “Bullying Stories” form and tell him that you will discuss with him what he writes. You can fill out the form as well and discuss what you have written. Bullying occurs everywhere. Perhaps you saw it recently where you work or in a local store.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Use the spaces below to write about experiences from your life.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe a time when someone’s words or behavior hurt you.</th>
<th>Describe a time when you said or did something to hurt another person.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe a time when you saw/heard bullying but didn’t do anything about it.</th>
<th>Describe a time when you saw/heard bullying and either got help or tried to stop it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

• Tell your child that there are three ways people respond to bullying. Some are passive. These individuals behave as if the rights of others are more important than their own. Being passive does not work. Other individuals respond with aggression. These individuals behave as if their rights are more important than anyone else. Aggression does not work. Assertive people respect themselves and others equally. They treat others the way they want to be treated. However, they do not let others persistently mistreat them. They let the bully know by their posture and their words that they are not easy targets. Being assertive works. Therefore, teach assertiveness skills to your child. One of the most powerful ways to withstand negative peer pressure is assertiveness training. Several assertiveness strategies are presented later in this book, under “Tips for Victims: What Your Child Can Do.”

---

• Take a stand against negative peer pressure and voice your expectations of your child. Teach your child that it is not cool to give in to negative peer pressure. Tell him you expect him not to play that game – doing what “everyone else does,” wearing what “everyone else wears,” or mistreating individuals they mistreat. Teach him the value of being his own person and not to think too much about what his friends think. Once you voice your expectations, you might be surprised that your child (especially if under age 13) may stop responding to negative peer pressure.

• Teach your child how to make good decisions and to solve problems. Teach him to list the pros and cons of choices and decisions. Teach him that his choices/decisions impact others, not just him.

• Enroll your child in an exercise program, weight lifting program, or martial arts program. These programs build self-esteem, confidence and teach self-respect and respect for others. In addition, physical exercise can result in better physical condition and better coordination, as well as help him deal with stress and anxiety. Although your child may never use the skills taught, he will be better prepared to handle a physical attack. Unfortunately, there may be a time when he must be able to defend himself. At least the training will have prepared him. It is important to emphasize that physically fighting back usually makes the bullying worse – rarely does it stop. But, if your child is unable to run or be verbally assertive in a situation and finds himself being physically attacked, being trained to respond will help him.

• Enroll your child in a dance program. Dance is a wonderful expressive outlet and can boost the self-esteem of your child and improve his physical strength. Dance can also be therapeutic.

• When you hear about another child being bullied, defend that child. Let the parents of the child and the school know about the mistreatment. This will show your child that you are willing to defend others who are mistreated and you expect him to do the same. Be sensitive to sports aggression. Discourage imitations of famous sports figures who are overly aggressive. According to Terry and Jackson,17 “Sports violence can be defined as behavior which causes harm, occurs outside of the rules of the sport and is unrelated to the competitive objectives of the sport.” Leonard states that there are two forms of aggression in sports: Instrumental aggression and reactive aggression.18 Instrumental aggression is non-emotional and task-oriented. Reactive aggression has an underlying emotional component, with harm as its goal. Violence is usually an outcome of reactive aggression. An increase in both frequency and seriousness of acts of sports violence has been well documented. Violence is most prevalent in team contact sports, such as ice hockey, football, and rugby. According to Leonard, most occurrences of violence come from players. However, coaches, parents, fans and the media also contribute to this epidemic of violence in sports today. Leonard also says that mass media contributes to the acceptability of sports violence. The media exposes children to sport figures who are models of aggression, giving them a lot of attention. Children are bombarded by these examples of aggression and may imitate their behavior. In some cases, the media glamorizes players, often the most controversial and aggressive ones. The coverage is often very descriptive and links excitement to the aggression.

• Establish a routine of doing something special for your child. For example, on Friday nights play a game with him, or go with him to the movie theater, or cook something special for

---

him. You may even want to purchase an inexpensive toy for him each Friday. Occasionally, exceed his expectations by doing something significant. Or, you can just give him a significant amount of your time each week.

- Examine and improve your own self-esteem. Seek to improve how you feel about yourself. If necessary seek assistance from a good friend or from a counselor. How you feel about yourself affects how you treat your child.

- Build your child’s self-confidence by giving him approved choices and bragging on his choices. Instead of telling him what to do, what to wear, etc. select two or three options you approve and ask him to select one.

- Let your child be a helper. Give him responsibilities. He needs opportunities to be responsible for something. It can be chores or taking care of a pet. This will help him feel competent, valued and secure. When everything is done for him, he may feel inadequate and insignificant. Be sure to brag on how he carries out his assigned duties.

- Respect the rights of your child, but frequently survey and search his bedroom. He may get upset when you find something you disapprove of, but most children appreciate their parents putting an end to something they feel guilty about.

- Occasionally give your child a nice card or note that expresses your feelings toward him and your desire for his happiness. Leave the card or note where you know he will find it. Tell him that he has been a blessing to you. Most of all, tell him how proud you are of him – not so much for his accomplishments, but for whom he is.

- Once a week (or occasionally) ask your child to make a list of the positive things that are happening in his life. This will help your child focus on the positives in life.

- Monitor your child’s whereabouts and his friendships.

- Don’t confuse aggression with assertiveness. Modify inappropriate behavior in your child and reward the opposite of the behavior – which is the desired behavior.

- If your child exhibits inappropriate behavior, rule out physical causes such as attention-deficit disorder, visual or hearing problems, etc. Make sure a physician annually evaluates your child’s physical condition.

- Teach your child that it is okay to feel anger or any other emotion. However, feelings need to be expressed appropriately. Teach your child alternatives to hurting someone back for hurting him. Teach your child the anger management strategies appearing in the chart, “When You Are Angry” which follows. Teach your child to express his feelings with words in respectful ways and not to act on his angry impulses. Show him self-control techniques such as those things listed below. It is also important to praise your child for self-restraint. At the same time, allow appropriate expressions of anger. Since a good parent is a good example, demonstrate self-control in your own life.

- Reinforce/reward accepting behavior observed in your child and make positive comments about such behavior seen in other children. Let him know you value kindness, sensitivity and empathy.

- Avoid asking your child to display his weaknesses in front of others. For example, if he has difficulty reading, don’t ask him to read while family members or others are listening. Instead ask him to do something that demonstrates his strengths.

- Avoid parental favoritism. Children don’t like to share their parents with anyone. Your child depends a lot on your love and attention. He depends on you to meet his needs. If you show
favoritism toward one child, you may cause resentment to build up in your other children. The fact is parental favoritism is wrong. It doesn’t matter if one child causes you problems more than another or “seems” to love you more. You are to love all your children equally. As often as it is practical, spend time alone with your child. Plan “Just-You-and-Me” times.

- Don’t have unrealistic expectations of your child. Such expectations can lead to feelings of inadequacy. You don’t want your child to feel that he is a disappointment to you. When he feels this way, he is disappointed with himself and he loses self-confidence and could eventually dislike himself. What you communicate to your child can have a tremendous impact on his self-esteem, his self-confidence, his happiness, and how well he gets along with others.

- Don’t link your child’s character and personal worth to his behavior or achievements. Your love should be unconditional. Focus on the inappropriate behavior instead of criticizing him. When disciplining your child, explain that you love him, but you don’t like his behavior.

- Ask your child to help you make a new family feel welcome to the community. If they have children who will be going to your child’s school, invite them over to your home to get to know your child. Ask your child to help you make or purchase a greeting card welcoming them.
WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY

- Stop and think. Don’t do anything right away. “It’s okay to feel angry about this, but I don’t have to explode. I don’t have to hide my anger because I can express my anger in an appropriate way.” Consider your options. Think about what might happen if you try to hurt the other person.
- Know what you do is up to you. You can decide. You are in charge of your actions.
- Tell yourself, “It’s okay to feel angry. It’s not okay to hurt someone else even if that person hurt me first.”
- Keep your hands to yourself. Make fists and put them in your pockets.
- Keep your feet to yourself. Jump or dance or stomp.
- Tell the person how you feel. Use an “I message.” Example: “I feel angry when you hit me because it hurts. I want you to stop hitting me.”
- Learn to recognize signs that you’re about to express your anger. Do something before you explode. Let off steam in a safe, positive way. Go for a run. Shoot some hoops. Take a bike ride. Jump up and down.
- Take five deep breaths. Take five more. Take another deep breath, then blow it out. Blow your angry feelings out of your body.
- Tell the person, “Stop that! I don’t like that!”
- Walk away or run away from the person or situation that’s making you angry. You’re not running away. You’re doing something positive to make sure things don’t get worse or out of control.
- Make yourself relax and cool down. Think calm, peaceful thoughts. Try tensing, then relaxing every muscle in your body, from your head to your toes.
- Think cool thoughts. Imagine that you’re sitting on an iceberg. Cool down your hot, angry feelings.
- Think happy thoughts. Think of something you like to do. Imagine yourself doing it.
- Treat the other person with kindness and respect. It won’t be easy, but give it a try. This will totally surprise the other person, and it might end the conflict between you.
- Remember that getting back at someone never makes conflict better. It only makes it worse.
- Take a time-out. Go somewhere until you feel better.
- Draw an angry picture.
- Sing an angry song.
- Find another person to be with.
- Find an adult. Tell the adult what happened and how you feel.
- Ask yourself, “Why am I angry?” Maybe the person didn’t mean to make you angry. Perhaps it was an accident or a misunderstanding.
- Count slowly from 1 to 10. Count backwards from 10 to 1. Keep counting until you feel your anger getting smaller.
- Try not to take things so personally. Remember that the whole world isn’t against you.
- Know that you can do it. You can choose not to hurt someone else. It’s up to you.
• Don’t spend all your time nagging him about his inappropriate behavior, tell him the behavior you desire and praise him when you see the behavior. Make sure he understands you love him for who he is, not for what you want him to be. This will encourage self-love and self-acceptance. Yelling and nagging are ineffective. Instead of nagging, take action by applying an appropriate consequence for the child’s inappropriate behavior. If all you do is scream and nag, the child soon learns to stop listening to your empty words.19

• Respect your child’s nature. Your child came “pre-wired” and “his bags were half-packed.” This means that he was born with a certain temperament and characteristics. For example, some children have a need to be active and cannot sit still for long periods of time. They are not hyperactive; they are just overly active. Some children’s personalities are more intense than others – certain feelings and needs are more intense. Some are more sociable that others. Respect and appreciate your child’s nature. Don’t make him feel that he must transform his nature to be like one of his siblings or you.

• Teach your child the importance of cooperation, teamwork, collaboration and appropriate compromise. Individuals who think they can do everything by themselves or who think they are always right have a difficult time in life. Reward him when you see him cooperating or appropriately compromising with others. Teach him it is not appropriate to compromise or to go along with an individual or group when they are asking him to do something wrong or questionable.

• Work with other parents in the neighborhood to ensure that children are supervised closely on their way to and from school. Perhaps you can establish “safe homes” and/or “safe businesses” children can enter to escape a bully or a gang of bullies.

• Work with other parents to establish a telephone network so children can call other parents for help if they cannot reach you. Help your child learn these telephone numbers and other important telephone numbers and names of individuals to call in case of an emergency. Ask him to keep these on a piece of paper in his pocket.

• Take part in parenting classes. Find out if your child’s school or community organizations and agencies offer classes for parents. If not, start one. Parents often help parents.

• Stay in touch with your child’s school. Attend teacher-parent conferences and other meetings. Attend school events and functions. Ask your child’s teacher to keep you informed of all matters related to your child. Explain to the teacher that you want to be informed about your child’s social life and emotional health, not just his academic performance. Keep your child’s teacher informed of events at home that might affect his mood, behavior and learning.

• Ask your child’s school if you can be a volunteer worker and/or supervisor in the school. Your involvement can make a tremendous difference.

• Discuss with your child that it is okay to have opinions but it is not okay to like or dislike people just because of their social class, the clothes they wear, their appearance, their color, their religion, their accent, etc.

• Discuss with your child the meaning of the terms stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. Stereotyping is assuming that everyone in a group is the same because of religion, race, color, etc. When we stereotype people, we don’t see them as individuals. Prejudice is using stereotypes to judge others as good or bad, nice or mean, smart or stupid, etc., before getting to know them. Discrimination is ignoring, avoiding, excluding, or even attacking people just because they are different.

---

Discuss with your child how society teaches us that there are pretty people and ugly people and that certain characteristics (long nose, big ears, etc.) are considered abnormal. Teach him that he should not allow society to teach him this information. In fact, that information is of no value. It is how pretty people are on the inside that counts. It is the character of people that really matters.

Encourage your child to play with children of different backgrounds and cultures. Involve your child in sports, clubs, summer camps, and community activities where there are children with varied backgrounds and cultures. Guard your own language and behavior. Avoid ethnic, racial, and sexist comments and humor. Avoid making stereotypical, prejudicial, or discriminatory statements. Even your nonverbal behavior (your facial expressions, your eyes, etc.) should be guarded. Your child can tell how you feel by watching your body language.

Make sure your child understands that involvement in sports is not necessary for him to be considered a “man.” Some young men feel that others think less of them if they are not involved in sports. Some families and school systems put athletes on pedestals. There is tremendous value to be found in sports, but young men should not feel that something is wrong with them because they are not athletes and have no desire to be athletes. Some young men get to the point where they dread the question, “What sport are you involved in, son?”

Be an observant parent – have “withitness” (be with it – know what is happening). Demonstrate that you are a “full time parent.” If you even suspect your child is a bully or is being bullied, ask him about it.

Help your child by developing a good relationship with your child’s teachers. Create a spirit of cooperation by: (1) getting involved in the parent-teacher association, (2) sending “thank-you” notes or cards to the teachers, (3) volunteering to work at the school, (4) cooking something for your child’s teacher and/or principal, and (5) inviting your child’s teacher to dinner.

Once or twice a year, conduct a review of your child. List things you are pleased with and develop strategies for dealing with areas of concern. This review could include an effort to answer questions such as the following:

HURRAY FOR DIFFERENCES!

We treat others the way we want to be treated.
**Child Review Questions**

- What are my child’s relationships like?
- Does he have at least one best friend?
- Does he respect my authority?
- What is his attitude toward school?
- Is he doing well in school?
- Does he show me respect?
- How is his physical health?
- How is his emotional health?
- How is his spiritual health?
- Is he obedient?
- Does he have to be in control or is he controlling?
- He is able to appropriately compromise?
- Does he seek the attention of others?
- Does he feel good about himself?
- Does he lack self-confidence?
- Are his values consistent with mine?
- Does he have any special areas of interest?
- How does he spend his leisure time?
- What does he feel passionate about?
- Does he understand how his behavior has consequences?
- Does he understand how his behavior impacts others?
- Who is his favorite person and why?
- What does he most worry about?
- What does he like most about himself?
- What does he like least about himself?
- What does he want to do when he grows up?
- What type of music does he listen to most?
- What television shows does he like most?
- What Internet sites does he visit?
- Does he mistreat others?
- Do others mistreat him?
As you conduct this review be especially sensitive to your child’s social and emotional development. The following developmental chart will help you compare your child to “normal” development in these areas. Keep in mind that your child doesn’t have to match up perfectly to these characteristics.

### Normal Emotional and Social Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Emotional Development</th>
<th>Social Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Preschool   | • Has ups—joy, warmth, sympathy, love  
               • Has downs—fear, anger, anxiety  
               • Insecure  
               • Is a show-off  
               • Developing sense of humor  
               • Physically aggressive, sometimes rough and careless with toys | • Egocentric  
               • Struggles with authority  
               • Home-centered  
               • Beginning to be interested in friends  
               • Still has imaginary playmates |
| Grades 1-2  | • Shifts between emotional extremes  
               • Needs routine, familiar surroundings  
               • Many new feelings are emerging  
               • Easily becomes angry at self, situations, others; younger primary may cry, have tantrums, become violent; older primary may sulk  
               • May set too high goals | • Shows loyalty, pride, and interests in family  
               • Attitudes vary toward brothers and sisters, may be bossy, jealous, proud, protective, or brutal  
               • Desires friends but does not get along well  
               • Has two or three best friends  
               • Wants to win  
               • Tries to dominate in social situations by showing off, acting silly, bullying others  
               • Critical of other children’s behavior; tattles  
               • Desires attention; thrives on praise and approval  
               • Dislikes criticism  
               • Still quite self-centered |
## Normal Emotional and Social Development

### Grades 3-4
- Shows definite signs of empathy
- Widespread variable emotional behavior—shyness to boldness, morbid to cheerful, lethargic to excitable
- Likely to overextend self in thought and activities; when these become too much, he or she retreats, leaving “a mess”
- Often delays responses
- Anticipates with great eagerness; interest often short-lived; shifts rapidly
- Ready to tackle anything; likes challenges
- Feelings easily hurt; not given to prolonged depression; seeks reconciliation after being hurt
- Sensitive to criticism from adults
- Likes orderliness and neatness
- Frequently complains, sulks, mutters, “lets off steam” as outlet for tension
- May fear dark, fighting, and physical injury, failing, not being liked; often will not admit fears, even to self
- Worries frequently, often in midst of pleasant experiences
- Seeks friendly relationships with adults

### Grades 5-6
- Younger junior generally cheerful, content, carefree, relaxed
- Older junior experiences more emotional peaks, more variable moods
- Younger junior oriented toward action rather than reflection; unselfconscious about feelings
- Older junior aware of feelings but does not understand their causes
- Strong feelings related to likes and dislikes
- Older junior sensitive to hurt feelings and criticism; subject to jealousy
- Occasional short-lived bursts of anger and violence
- Relieves tension through bodily movement
- Frequently bursts into laughter, especially when unsure of self
- Prefers peer play to family outings
- May complain about assigned chores
- Hates playing alone; wants to have a best friend
- Learning to subordinate personal interests to group
- Developing self-discipline through peer criticism and responsibilities assigned by peer group; needs less constant adult supervision during play
- Able to enter group projects on extended basis; forms short-lived loosely organized clubs; older primary-juniors form more elaborate, purposeful, and lasting clubs
- Learning to give and take peer criticism constructively
- Admires and seeks friendships with older children
- Acquiring “company manners”
- May have some antagonism toward opposite sex; marked separation of sexes in play
- Growing consciousness of own racial, ethnic status
- Image of his or her ideal self forming
- Feels tensions of pulling away from parental domination and achieving independence

- Wants many friends, but wants one best friend of same sex
- Girls prefer small more intimate peer groups; boys want larger, less close-knit groups
- Shares “secrets” and much personal information with friends
- Frequently fights and argues with peers
- Enjoys participating in gangs and clubs; spontaneous clubs are fluid in organization
- Enthusiastically participates in teams and games
- Respects teachers, taking their word over parents
- Thrives on certain amount of routine
- Exhibits best behavior away from home
- Loves teasing, chasing, pushing, hitting, nudging, poking, etc.
## Normal Emotional and Social Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 7-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of self-confidence</td>
<td>- Becoming independent of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overreacts, especially with parents; actually more in control of emotions than juniors</td>
<td>- Conforms to group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moody and unpredictable</td>
<td>- Strong peer attachments, especially to those of same sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Often handles stress poorly</td>
<td>- Primary influence is peers; mother/father second; and then teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Needs time alone, especially from parents</td>
<td>- Coming to grips with his/her male/female roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Often boisterous</td>
<td>- Often boisterous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Often handles stress poorly</td>
<td>- Becoming independent of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Needs time alone, especially from parents</td>
<td>- Conforms to group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Comes to grips with his/her male/female roles</td>
<td>- Strong peer attachments, especially to those of same sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Often boisterous</td>
<td>- Primary influence is peers; mother/father second; and then teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 9-12</th>
<th>Grades 7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Still achieving independence from parents</td>
<td>- Daydreaming common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social group of primary importance</td>
<td>- Emotional energy goes toward physical change; heterosexual relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conflict between peer and adult roles</td>
<td>- Worries about future, looks, grades, physical development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Primary relationships between those of same sex</td>
<td>- Self is on center stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Jobs and money play key roles in group acceptance, use of free time</td>
<td>- Increasing control of emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Developing socially acceptable behavior</td>
<td>- Developing sensitivity to emotions of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some redeveloping relationships with parents</td>
<td>- Developing interest in poetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW CAN I PROMOTE MY CHILD’S ACCEPTANCE?

Many of the suggestions presented in the previous section will not only help you provide a quality home-life for your child, but will also promote the acceptance of your child. Since the need to be accepted and to have a sense of belonging is so strong, the following additional strategies have been provided for you.

It is very important that you understand that the need to be accepted and to have a sense of belonging screams to be met. Children will find ways for that need to be met – many of them are not appropriate and are destructive. They often look in the wrong places and to the wrong people to meet that need. Therefore, you must do all you can to help your child find appropriate ways to have that need met.

- Teach your child to be kind, not to be envious, and to rejoice in the success of others.
- Teach your child good manners and social skills.
- Teach your child how to make friends. Share the following twelve tips for making and keeping friends with your child. Also discuss the following “friendship busters” with her. Children who have at least one good friend are less likely to be bullied or are bullied for a shorter period of time. (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro and Bukowski, 1999 at www.svrc.net). This is especially true when a good friend sticks up for them. If your child has at least one good friend, she will also be better able to cope with the bullying. Your child’s friend is the one who is around to witness the bullying and to provide support for your child. Many times, adults are not present when bullying occurs.
- Teach your child that sometimes friendships just do not work out. Sometimes you find a friend for a life-time and sometimes you have a friend for only a few days. If your child tries her best to be friends with someone and her efforts are not successful, perhaps it is just meant to be.
### 12 Tips for Making and Keeping Friends

- Reach out. Don’t always wait for someone else to make the first move. A simple hello and a smile go a long way.
- Get involved. Join clubs that interest you. Take special classes inside and outside of school.
- Be a volunteer.
- Let people know that you’re interested in them. Don’t just talk about yourself; ask questions about them.
- Be a good listener. Look at people while they’re talking to you. Pay attention to what they say.
- Risk telling people about yourself. When it feels right, tell them your interests, your talents and what is important to you.
- Don’t be a show-off. Not everyone you meet will have your abilities and interests. (On the other hand, you shouldn’t have to hide them – which you won’t, once you find friends who like and appreciate you.)
- Be honest. Tell the truth about yourself, what you believe in, and what you stand for. When asked for your opinion, be sincere. Friends appreciate truthfulness in each other.
- Be kind. There are times when being tactful is more important than being totally honest. The truth doesn’t have to hurt.
- Don’t just use your friends as sounding boards for your problems. Include them in the good times, too.
- Do your share of the work. That’s right, work. Any relationship takes effort. Don’t always depend on your friends to make the plans and carry all the weight.
- Be accepting. Not all your friends have to think and act like you do. (Wouldn’t it be boring if they did?)
- Learn to recognize the so-called friends you can do without. Some people get so lonely that they put up with anyone—including friends who aren’t really friends at all.

Teach your child how to select good friends. Teach her how good friends behave by sharing the following “Friendship Boosters--A Good Friend . . .” list.
Depending on your child’s relationship with her siblings, you may want to get her permission to tell them she is being bullied. Some children don’t mind you talking to siblings about their problems, others do. Some children would not want you to say anything to them, while others would like their siblings to know so that they can defend them in bullying situations. In fact, you may discover that they have already discussed their situation with their sibling(s). However, research indicates she is more likely to tell a friend.

- Teach your child to have good hygiene. Children often make fun of kids who smell and whose clothes are dirty and/or need pressing.
- Teach your child to sample play partners and not to be too eager to play only with the popular children.
- Teach your child how to enter a group by being cooperative and not bossy.
- Trash your child’s T-shirts that may cause friction at school or in the community. These are shirts with derogatory words and symbols on them.
- Make sure your child’s clothes are not out-of-date or too small. Many school systems and communities have organizations willing to provide your child with appropriate clothing. You should not feel shame about asking for assistance. Everyone needs help from someone.
Someday you may have the opportunity to help someone. Would you want them to feel too embarrassed to let you help them? Give others an opportunity to use their gift of generosity and to share their blessings by helping you and your family.

- Openly point out your child’s similarities with other children. It is a good feeling to know you have something in common with others. Sometimes, this similarity helps a child make friends.

- If your child has a disability, inform her about the cause and nature of the disability so she can talk intelligently and openly about it. When your child seems to accept her disabilities, others feel more comfortable and are more accepting.

- Help your child have positive expectations regarding her acceptance and ability to make friends. Ask your child to practice visualizing (seeing) herself getting along with others.

- Reward your child for treating others the way she wants to be treated.

- Use photographs effectively. When you see her interacting appropriately with someone, take a picture and give a copy to her and the other child. Social psychologists tell us that this strategy can help a person feel accepted by the individual in the photograph.

- As mentioned earlier, help your child develop interests, learn a new hobby and develop a new skill (i.e., painting, drawing, or playing an instrument). This might help her feel good about herself, walk with more confidence and may even help her develop additional friends. Kids who have interests and skills of social value are more likely to be accepted by others. Once your child’s interests are identified, help her find opportunities related to her interests and skills, however, don't force her to be interested in something she is not. I have mixed feelings about forcing kids to try new things they don’t want to try. Perhaps most of the time, it is not a good idea. However, one parent told me she forced her son to play soccer. To his surprise, he loved soccer and eventually won several awards for his performance.

- If you have a special hobby or skill, give a presentation at your child’s school. Or, volunteer for responsibilities that the children value, such as serving as the class entertainment coordinator. It might net some social prestige for your child. What children think about parents sometimes rubs off on the parent’s children. The improvement of social status may be only short-term, but at least your child gets a break from the mistreatment.

- Keep grades a private matter, good and bad grades. Your child has the right to have her grades kept a private matter – between you and her. Siblings don’t have the right to know each other’s grades. Grades can be embarrassing and a source of jealousy and feelings of inadequacy. You certainly should not share your child’s grades with other parents or their children. In fact, you should not share it with anyone else, except your spouse (if married).

- Learn as much as you can about your child. That sounds like a strange thing to ask parents to do, but some parents don’t know their children very well. The more you know about your child, the more you can show interest in her desires, interests, and preferences. Also, you can tell her what she has in common with you and others. Ask your child to finish the statements you have selected from the list below. All the statements may not be appropriate for your child. You may want to add to the list.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Favorite Things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite TV show is ____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite place to go is __________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite thing to do in my free time is ___________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The thing I like MOST about school is ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The thing I like LEAST about school is ________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite athlete is _____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite radio station is _________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite food is ________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite place to eat is _________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I like people who __________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I don’t like it when people _________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite magazine is ____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite book is _______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite movie is ______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite web site is _____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite color is ______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite song is _______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The job I’d like to have when I grow up is ___________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite game is ______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My greatest hope is _______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My biggest worry is ______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I am happiest when _______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If I could go anywhere in the world, I’d go to ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite type of music is ________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite singer/group/musician is _________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite actor/actress is _________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The person I admire most is _________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My favorite time of the day is _______________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the difference between bullying and normal conflict?

It is important for you to know the difference between bullying and normal conflict. Unfortunately, some teasing will always exist and your child needs to know how to deal with that behavior. It is also important to guide children as they seek to deal with normal conflict and not to intervene too quickly in such situations. However, when bullying truly exists, adults should intervene and teach their children skills to cope and stop the bullying.

When the following is evident, the behavior is not considered normal conflict:

- The behavior is meant to hurt and harm your child.
- The behavior seems intense and has been occurring over a significant period of time.
- The bully seems to want and enjoy power over your child, to control your child. There are no apologies or offers to resolve the conflict.
- Your child cannot deal effectively with the behavior.
- Your child feels alone and isolated by the mistreatment because no one seems to be supportive.
- The behavior seems to be having a negative impact on your child.

**Why bullying must be stopped!**

Bullying makes people feel...

Sad  Distracted
Gloomy  Tired
Miserable  Irritated
Anxious  Afraid
Tense  Mad
Worried  Angry
Restless  Upset
Scared  Fearful

Unsafe  Confused
Puzzled  Embarrassed
Embarrassed  Guilty
Ashamed  Mixed-up

Copyright October 29, 2003, Allan L. Beane, Ph.D.
WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD IS A TARGET OF BULLYING?

As I mentioned in the Preface of this book, when my son, Curtis, was in seventh grade, he was bullied. Therefore, I know what it is like to have a child who is persistently mistreated. I, like most parents, didn’t know what to tell him and I didn’t know what to do myself. For some strange reason, I dealt with the problem as if it was only his problem. At first, I told him to ignore the bully. He tried to ignore him for several weeks, but it didn’t work. One day, the school counselor called me and said Curtis was an emotional wreck and that I needed to take him home. As we sat in our home, I saw the deep hurt in his face and tears. I didn’t know what to tell him to do. I just knew that the bullying had to stop. It seemed as if my son’s emotional health was at stake. Therefore, I told him to physically fight back – to retaliate. I also told Curtis that he had to win this fight. The next day, the bully started smacking my son around. My son pushed him. My son fought back and won the fight. However, the bully turned several boys against my son. Later, my wife and I discovered that our son sat in the cafeteria by himself for weeks. We transferred him to a larger middle school in a different school system – in the middle of seventh grade. He found acceptance and a sense of belonging in the new school.

Later, when he was fifteen, he was in an auto accident. He lost two fingers and one-third of his right hand. They had to repair and rebuild his other fingers. Several months later he returned to high school. There was a tremendous outpouring of love and support from some students. However, an unbelievable number of students were cruel to him. This mistreatment took its toll, even into the adult years. At the age of 23, Curtis suffered Post Traumatic Stress from the wreck and from the persistent mistreatment. He suffered depression and anxiety problems. He came to our home and told us that he had not been out of his bedroom for three days and wanted us to pray for him. We prayed and took him to the doctor. A few weeks later, he called me and said, “Dad I found some new friends, but they do things I don’t agree with.” Curtis looked for friendship with the wrong people. One night he took an illegal drug and it killed him. He had a heart problem that he and we didn’t know about. He didn’t kill himself. He had his car keys in his hands and was trying to go for help. Bullying contributed to his dying somewhat as a broken man. Sure, he made some bad choices. But, I wonder, what choices would anyone make under the same conditions? He was a good, tender-hearted man. We miss him. He is the reason I wrote The Bully Free Classroom™ and the reason I have written the Bully Free™ Series, including this book.

I share our story with you because I want you to understand the destructiveness of bullying. Please take it seriously. Please help me prevent it from occurring.

The following suggestions are provided to help you help your child. I was wrong to tell my son to retaliate. I know that now. I hope you handle your child’s bullying situation better than I did. I wish I had known the information provided in this book before my son was bullied.

What you can do:

- Be thankful that you know about the bullying. Children usually don’t tell their parents. If your child told you about the problem, praise her for letting you know and for asking for help. This will encourage your child to keep the communication lines open.

- Stay calm even though you are concerned. Don’t be upset or angry and don’t be too quick to blame anyone. If your first response is to blame someone, you may not listen as well as you
should and your child could get concerned that you may not handle the situation appropriately – that you may cause the situation to get worse. Don’t respond until your child shares the details of the whole story.

- If your child says, “No one likes me at school,” don’t disagree. If you disagree with your child too quickly, she may feel that you are not going to be able to help her. She may also decide to hide her feelings.

- Don’t be embarrassed. Hopefully this recommendation sounds strange to you. Unfortunately, some parents are embarrassed that their child has trouble being accepted or doesn’t stand up for herself.

- Be sensitive to the fact that your child may feel embarrassed and ashamed. It is difficult for her to admit that no one likes her and she cannot stand up for herself. Also be sensitive to her anxieties, fears, and dread. These are real and make it difficult for her to go to school and to feel safe. These feelings may be so intense that they interfere with her learning, her social development, her physical health, and her emotional health.

- No matter how minor the event seems to be, take it seriously. What you consider minor may seem devastating to your child. Listening carefully may also help you uncover more severe bullying events in your child’s life.

- Find out what has happened. Avoid “you” statements. When you start statements with “you,” your child may feel she is being attacked. Also keep in mind that every moment is not a great time to talk. When the time seems right, ask your child about the mistreatment she is receiving. Be sure to listen to your child’s description of what happened without interrupting. Listen to what your child says about her actions and the actions of the bully or bullies. Your listening goal is to answer the following questions:
  
  - Who is involved?
  - What was said and done to your child by whom?
  - What happened or usually happens immediately before the bullying occurs?
  - Who were the bystanders, and what did they say and do?
  - When does the bullying occur?
  - Where does it happen?
  - Was there any adult supervision?
  - Are there video cameras in the area recording activities?
  - How did your child respond?
  - What happened or usually happens after the bullying event?
  - Who has been told about the bullying, and what have they done (if anything)?
  - How long has this been occurring?

Try avoiding making a knee-jerk reaction to your child’s comments. After listening, ask questions to fill in the gaps, but don’t interrogate your child. Don’t overload her emotionally by asking too many questions at once. During the process of listening to her, you may discover “why” she is mistreated. If not, wait until you think the time is right to ask “why” she thinks the bullying happens. If you ask too soon, your child may not share everything with you or may not tell the truth. Yes, even good kids lie to their parents. It is important to
have the facts about what has happened. Sometimes children leave out critical information that affects our understanding of what happened. Keep in mind that, the “Why did you . . .” line of questions rarely works with anyone, even adults. Also, your child may not know why she is mistreated.

- Keep in mind, for a behavior to be labeled bullying, it has to be persistent (repeated over time), be intentionally designed to hurt or frighten your child or to have power and control over your child. Some people are too quick to label behavior as bullying. Ask yourself, “Is the individual really bullying my child or is she engaging in behavior that occurs infrequently and may stop on its own?” Of course, all inappropriate and hurtful behavior needs to stop, whether it is bullying or not.

- Keep a log (record) of the bullying events addressing the questions listed above. This will make it easier for you to check the facts as you gather more information and hear information repeated.

- Express confidence that you, the adults at her school and she will be able to find a solution.

- Ask your child to write down in a journal/notebook her thoughts and feelings about what has happened. Seek her permission to read what is written. Journaling helps your child to work through her emotions and thoughts about her mistreatment. You can then cross check her journal notes with your conversations with her and with the information shared by others.

- Make sure your child understands that no one deserves to be bullied and bullies mistreat a lot of people, not just her. Even though she already knows this, it is good to hear it from you. Explain that children bully others for a lot of reasons. For example:
  - They are angry because of personal problems.
  - They have been mistreated.
  - They have not been taught the Golden Rule.
  - They have weak self-control.
  - They have been taught that hurting others is a good way to feel powerful and in control.
  - They may have parents who have modeled aggression and inappropriate ways to express feelings.

- Explain that bullies seek certain reactions. Let your child know that crying and becoming upset only encourages the bully. It is best that the bully not know she has hurt your child or made her upset.

- Let your child know that it is normal to feel hurt, fear and anger. However, it is important for her not to express her feelings in an inappropriate manner.

- Avoid being a “fix-it” dad or mom by calling the bully’s parents. It is usually best not to call them, unless you are certain they will believe you and try to address the problem in a way that will not make the situation worse for your child. If you talk to the bully’s parents, use a soft and calm voice. Therefore, never talk to the bully’s parents when you are angry and upset. Don’t be judgmental. During the conversation, when you feel the time is best, express your desire to work with the parents to figure out a way your children can get along. At some point tell the bully’s parents, if your child is mistreating someone, you would like to know. Also tell the parents if they find out your child is contributing to the problem that you want to know. Don’t blame the parents of the bully. The parents didn’t bully your child.
• Find out what other parents and students know about the bully or bullies. When you talk to them, don’t mention the bullying - just seek information in an informal way. Don’t criticize the bully or bullies.

• Don’t tell your child to retaliate. Instead, give her specific actions to take (see recommendations below under “Tips for the Victim: What can your child do?”) Help your child to work out a plan for responding to the bully in the various situations and locations where it occurs. In most cases, retaliation makes bullying worse and last longer. There are several reasons you should not tell your child to retaliate. Telling your child to retaliate teaches her that violence is the way to deal with violence. You also run the risk of your child or the bully being seriously hurt. Your child may try to find a way to equalize the imbalance of power that exists because the bully is stronger and meaner than she. When you tell your child to retaliate, you are also telling her that she is alone in this struggle. That is not the way it should be, adults should get involved.

• Don’t tell your child to ignore the bully. That usually doesn’t work. Bullies rarely just go away. Being silent only prolongs the bullying. But, so does arguing and swapping insults.

• Teach your child to be assertive, but not aggressive. She will need a heavy dose of confidence in order to engage in the assertiveness strategies presented in this book. Try to boost your child’s self-confidence by expressing your confidence in her. Give her encouragement and hope by telling her the bullying can be reduced and stopped.

• Don’t promise that you will not tell anyone. Promise you will handle the situation in a way that will not make it worse. Tell her the bullying is not her problem alone. Tell her you would like to work with her to discover solutions to the problem. Tell her it has been proven over and over that when adults get involved, it can be prevented and stopped. Convince her that she is not alone in the situation and is not expected to deal with it alone.

• Identify possible cause(s) of the mistreatment (consider that your child may be contributing to her mistreatment). Ask yourselves: “Is my child doing something or wearing something that might be encouraging mistreatment?” For example, is she bossy, irritating, hot tempered, always interrupting others, or too aggressive? Does she have behavioral characteristics that make it more difficult for her to be accepted? No one deserves to be bullied, but sometimes there are changes that the victim needs to make. Regardless of your child’s behavior, don’t tolerate others blaming your child. Work with your child’s teacher and others to address your child’s behavior. But also ask that the school implement a program that changes the thinking, attitudes and behavior of those around your child.

• Examine your family and home environment/climate. Is there anything happening in the family that might cause your child to act out her frustration through inappropriate behavior that contributes to her lack of peer acceptance – such as spouse abuse, child abuse, divorce, etc.? Are any of the siblings bullying your child? Sometimes children are bullied at home, so they go to school and act out their anger through aggression – which hinders peer acceptance. Some victims at school are victims at home.

• Ask yourself, “Does my child have a physical appearance that sets her apart from others?” It is sad, but our society has taught everyone to value certain physical characteristics and to devalue others. In fact, society has taught us to label some physical characteristics (i.e., big ears that standout, a big nose) as “abnormal.” These attitudes are wrong, but they exist. There are some characteristics that can be changed and others that cannot. For example, your child may have a scar that can be removed through cosmetic surgery. However, you cannot change your child’s height. Therefore, determine if there is a need to “normalize” your child’s appearance and if it is feasible and desirable. Please consider how your child feels about the modification. If the changes require surgery, you must determine the best time and
the least stigmatizing strategy for getting it done. For example, if your child must wear bandages after the surgery, it may be best to have it done in the summer.

- Check to see if the school system has a written anti-bullying policy that the bully may be violating. The school should deal with all bullying incidences according to the policy. If the school doesn’t have a policy and a response plan, encourage them to be developed.

- If your child is bullied while walking to school or riding the bus, drive her to school or arrange for a car pool. Or, tell her to sit with friends or close to the bus driver. You can also ask the school to secure a monitor to ride the bus and to install video cameras, which are not always effective.

- Take pictures of all injuries and hold a ruler next to the injuries to show their sizes and keep a record of all medical treatment, all medical expenses and all related travel expenses, including counseling.

- Report all physical assaults to the school and to police. Insist that the police make out a charge sheet. This will make your child feel better and may deter the bully.

- Make an appointment with your child’s teacher and make a factual report, using your log (record of bullying). Make sure you communicate that you would like for your child’s situation to be investigated. Don’t go to the school during school hours. Students will see you and may know why you are there. They may tease your child because they saw you at school. Presenting a log will create a greater awareness of the problem and motivate the school system to take action. If bullying is occurring in a specific class, it is best to talk to that teacher, if you and your child feel comfortable doing so. If your child has more than one teacher, select the teacher you and your child feel most comfortable talking to. Some experts recommend taking your child with you to the meeting. Take notes during the meeting and have a tape recorder in the car so you can immediately record your mental notes after the meeting regarding the conversations and agreements. Most teachers will be cooperative. However, if the teacher is not cooperative, you and your child, as well as other victimized students and their parents, should go to the teacher’s supervisor (i.e., the principal). After the meeting, ask the principal to tell you when he plans to talk to the person who is bullying your child and your child’s teacher. Follow-up the meeting with a telephone call to the supervisor to see if the meetings occurred. If action has not been taken, tell the supervisor your child is being hurt (and possibly other children), so his prompt action is important. The supervisor doesn’t have to tell you what corrective action has been taken. If you are not satisfied with the supervisor’s response, you should tell him that you plan to go to the next level (i.e., the superintendent). If necessary, you may have to go to the chairman of the Board of Education or someone on the board you respect and trust. Once again, make sure you have your facts. Of course, the other victimized students and their parents can go with you to each of the meetings.

- One parent had the principal call a meeting of the victim and the bullies. The principal and the parent of the victim also attended the meeting. At the meeting the victim asked the bullies to explain their behavior. The principal warned the bullies. He told them they would be suspended if they mistreated her again. The behavior stopped.

- If you are not satisfied with the response of the school system, you may want to talk to an attorney to see what rights your child has and if any action can be taken. Then decide if you want your child in the school under those conditions. Sometimes a letter from an attorney is all that is needed. You might be able to ask the school system to assign your child to a different teacher or even a different school. You might also want to talk to your attorney and see if your child can take a small tape or video recorder to school and record the mistreatment. They make recorders that are about the size of your little finger. Make sure
that your child can legally do that - you don’t want to get into trouble for tape recording someone without permission. Some parents of victims have obtained a restraining order against bullies. The bullies had to stay so many feet away from their child and the school had to ensure that the order was enforced. You can also consider filing assault charges against the bully. Talk to the police or an attorney about the different types of assault charges. Also ask law enforcement officials and the attorney about the legalities of “terroristic threats.” You must bring this unhealthy situation for your child to an end. Every child has the inalienable right to attend a school that is safe, secure, and peaceful.

- Be as patient as you can with the school, but make it clear that solutions need to be found as quickly as possible.

- Ask that there be an adult (i.e., support teacher) that your child can talk to everyday to give an update on her mistreatment.

- Ask your child’s school system and school to implement a Bully Free™ Program and to make sure school personnel are trained to prevent and stop bullying. Offer your assistance. Ask them to visit the website: www.bullyfree.com. All school personnel need to know how to create schools where all students feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. They also need to learn how to prevent and stop bullying, how to help victims, and how to change bullies. Encourage the school to purchase an anti-bullying book for each teacher and counselor, such as The Bully Free Classroom™. Ask local parent organizations, civic organizations, or corporations to sponsor a workshop by Dr. Beane and/or to purchase the book for the school system or school.

- Determine if there is anti-bullying legislation in your state. It may be that your child’s school system has a legislative responsibility to have a policy and/or have an anti-bullying program.

- Promote anti-bullying activities through local Parent-Teacher Associations/Organizations. Ask that bullying be placed on the agenda of a Parent-Teacher Organization meeting and that a guest speaker be contracted to address bullying.

- Identify caring school personnel who are willing to help your child – perhaps even befriend her.

- Involve your child in activities inside and outside school. Help her make friends with new children who can help break the cycle of mistreatment. For example, your child might become a scout or join a club, or youth group in a local church. Your child could also have an e-mail friend or pen pal – with your supervision.

- Monitor your child’s whereabouts and her friendships. Children who feel rejected may seek friendships with the wrong people in the wrong places.

- Help your child establish a meaningful relationship with her grandparents and other quality family members. This will extend the support network for your child.

- Label everything your child has with a permanent marker. The bully is less likely to want to steal it. Do not let your child take valuable property to school or to high-risk areas in the community.

- Watch videos and read books with your child about bullying. Discuss how the children in this media handled the situation and the outcome of their solutions.

- Involve your child in discovering solutions to her bullying situation. Ask your child what she thinks should be done to stop the mistreatment. She may offer good suggestions. With your help, your child may be able to diffuse the problem herself.
• Be aware of signs that your child is bullying her siblings. Some children, who are victims at school, bully their siblings. They don’t want to be victimized at school and at home.

• Be an observant parent – have “withitness” (be with it - know what is happening). Demonstrate that you are a “full time parent.” Listen to what your child says and what others are saying to your child. Also, watch your child interacting with others. Also be aware that bullying occurs over cell phones and over the Internet.

• Watch for signs of depression in your child and do not hesitate to seek professional counseling for your child. If you are a member of a religious organization, you may also want to seek pastoral counseling for your child. Depression in children and adolescents is not uncommon. Children who experience repeated mistreatment are at risk of becoming depressed. The depression creates a vicious unhealthy cycle for them. Among both children and adolescents, depressive disorders can increase their risk for illness and interpersonal and psychosocial difficulties that persist long after the depressive episode is resolved; in adolescents there is also an increased risk for substance abuse and suicidal behavior. Unfortunately, these disorders often go unrecognized by families and physicians alike. Signs of depressive disorders in young people often are viewed as normal mood swings typical of a particular developmental stage. In addition, health care professionals may be reluctant to prematurely "label" a young person with a mental illness diagnosis. Yet early diagnosis and treatment of depressive disorders are critical to healthy emotional, social, and behavioral development.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), depressive disorders include three types: (1) Major Depressive Disorder (unipolar depression), (2) Dysthymic Disorder (chronic, mild depression) and (3) Bipolar Disorder (manic-depression). The following is NIMH’s (2000) description of each.

**Major Depressive Disorder.** The diagnostic criteria and key defining features of major depressive disorder in children and adolescents are the same as they are for adults. However, recognition and diagnosis of the disorder may be more difficult in youth for several reasons. The way symptoms are expressed varies with the developmental stage of the youngster. In addition, children and young adolescents with depression may have difficulty in properly identifying and describing their internal emotional or mood states. For example, instead of communicating how bad they feel, they may act out and be irritable toward others, which may be interpreted simply as misbehavior or disobedience. Research has found that parents are even less likely to identify major depression in their adolescents than are the adolescents themselves.

The following list of symptoms and associated behaviors have been provided to help you recognize a Major Depression Disorder in your child.
# Symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder Common to Adults, Children, and Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistent sad or irritable mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant change in appetite or body weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychomotor agitation or retardation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty concentrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five or more of these symptoms must persist for 2 or more weeks before a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diagnosis of major depression is indicated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signs That May Be Associated with Depression in Children and Adolescents**

- Frequent vague, non-specific physical complaints such as headaches, muscle aches, stomachaches, or tiredness
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Outbursts of shouting, complaining, unexplained irritability, or crying
- Being bored
- Lack of interest in playing with friends
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Fear of death
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, or hostility
- Reckless behavior
- Difficulty with relationships

While the recovery rate from a single episode of major depression in children and adolescents is quite high, episodes are likely to recur. In addition, youth with dysthymic disorder are at risk for developing major depression. Prompt identification and treatment of depression can reduce its duration and severity and associated functional impairment.

**Dysthymic disorder (or dysthymia).** This is a less severe yet typically more chronic form of depression and is diagnosed when depressed mood persists for at least one year in children or adolescents and is accompanied by at least two other symptoms of major depression. Dysthymia is associated with an increased risk for developing major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder and substance abuse. Treatment of dysthymia may prevent the deterioration to more severe illness. If dysthymia is suspected in a child or adolescent, a referral is often made to a mental health specialist for a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and for appropriate treatment.

**Bipolar Disorder.** Although rare in young children, bipolar disorder—also known as manic-depressive illness—can appear in both children and adolescents. Bipolar disorder, which involves unusual shifts in mood, energy, and functioning, may begin with manic depressive, or mixed manic and depressive symptoms. It is more likely to affect the children of parents who have the disorder. Twenty to 40 percent of adolescents with major depression develop bipolar disorder within 5 years after depression onset.

Given the challenging nature of the problem, it is usually advisable to involve a child psychiatrist or psychologist in the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of a child or
adolescent in whom depression is suspected. Although the scientific literature on treatment of children and adolescents with depression is far less extensive than that concerning adults, a number of studies—mostly conducted in the last four to five years—have confirmed the short-term efficacy and safety of treatments for depression in youth. Studies including more children and adolescents are needed to determine which treatments work best for which youngsters, and studies are also needed on how to best incorporate these treatments into primary care practice.

As mentioned earlier, depression in youth is not uncommon. Fortunately, appropriate treatment can lead to improved functioning at school, with peers, and at home with family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bipolar Disorder: Manic Symptoms</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Severe changes in mood—either extremely irritable or overly silly and elated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Overly-inflated self-esteem; grandiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Increased energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Decreased need for sleep—able to go with very little or no sleep for days without tiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Increased talking—talks too much, too fast; changes topics too quickly; cannot be interrupted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Distractibility—attention moves constantly from one thing to the next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Hyper-sexuality—increased sexual thoughts, feelings, or behaviors; use of explicit sexual language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Increased goal-directed activity or physical agitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Disregard of risk—excessive involvement in risky behaviors or activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are encouraged to talk to a mental health professional and to examine information available from the following resources.
## Information Resources

National Institute of Mental Health  
Office of Communications  
Information Resources and Inquiries Branch  
6001 Executive Boulevard, Rm. 8184, MSC 9663  
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663  
(301) 443-4513  
Mental Health FAX 4U: (301) 443-5158  
E-mail: nimhinfo@nih.gov  
NIMH home page: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 966-7300  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

American Psychiatric Association  
1400 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
(202) 682-6000  
[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

American Psychological Association  
750 First Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 336-5500  
[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation  
1187 Willmette Avenue, PMB #331  
Willmette, IL 60091  
(847) 256-8525  
[www.bpkids.org](http://www.bpkids.org)

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)  
Colonial Place Three  
2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201  
Phone: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or (703) 524-7600  
Internet: [http://www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
Watch for signs that your child may be suicidal. Children who are persistently mistreated and experience depression for a significant amount of time may have suicidal thoughts. Depression in children and adolescents is associated with an increased risk of suicidal behaviors. This risk may rise, particularly among adolescent boys, if the depression is accompanied by a conduct disorder and alcohol or other substance abuse. In 1997, suicide was the third leading cause of death in 10- to 24-year-olds. NIMH-supported researchers found that among adolescents who develop major depressive disorders, as many as seven percent (7%) may commit suicide in the young adult years. Consequently, it is important for doctors and parents to take all threats of suicide seriously.

Researchers are developing and testing various interventions to prevent suicide in children and adolescents. Early diagnosis and treatment, accurate evaluation of suicidal thinking, and limiting young people's access to lethal agents—including firearms and medications—may hold the greatest suicide prevention value.

Discussing the possibility of suicide with your child does not increase the likelihood that he will commit suicide. The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, recommend seeking answers to the following questions:

---


- Have you been feeling depressed? (Adjust language depending on age – sad, bummed-out, blue)
- How long have you been feeling depressed?
- Do you feel that everything is hopeless?
- Have you experienced difficulty sleeping? (e.g., falling asleep versus middle of night awakening?)
- Has your appetite changed (e.g., Have you gained or lost weight?)
- Have you found yourself turning to alcohol or other substances to help you cope?
- During this time, have you ever had thoughts of killing yourself?
- When did these thoughts occur?
- What did you think about doing to yourself?
- Did you act on your thoughts?
- What stopped you from doing it?
- How often have these thoughts occurred?
- When was the last time you had these thoughts?
- Can you promise that you will not harm yourself?
- Have your thoughts ever included harming someone else in addition to yourself?
- How often has that occurred?
- What have you thought about doing to the other person or people?
- Have you taken any steps toward acquiring a gun, pills, etc.?
- Have you thought about the effect that your death would have on your family or friends?
- What help could make it easier for you to cope with your current thoughts and plans?
- What makes you want to live?
- How does talking about this make you feel?

Watch for signs that your child is at risk of committing suicide. A child who desires to end his life needs immediate attention. Individuals who are actively suicidal often have multiple signs of distress. These signs may include the following:

| • saying farewell to peers |
| • giving away prize possessions |
| • writing essays and/or notes about suicide |
| • verbalizing to a peer or teacher about “not wanting to be around any longer” |
| • excessive fatigue |
| • sudden changes in personality |
| • self-destructive behavior (e.g., self-mutilation) |
Be prepared to manage the suicidal thoughts and behavior of your child. When a child has thoughts about killing himself or actually makes an attempt, there are a number of things that need to be done, such as those listed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Suicidal Thoughts and Behavior*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take it seriously</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a child is saying she wants to die, it is worthy of attention. Maybe it is really nothing. At the very least, it requires a heart to heart talk. Many adults believe that children and teenagers don’t really mean it when they talk about suicide. Data collected in the last two decades clearly suggests that sometimes children do mean it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take away the taboo from talking about suicide</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have a depressed child, she certainly may be thinking about suicide. Not talking about it will not make this possibility go away. At the very least, openly ask the child if she is thinking about suicide. If some stressor has occurred (for example, boyfriend troubles) ask again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get some help</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal thinking or attempts almost always means that some sort of professional help is needed. Most children and adolescents who have suicidal thoughts or have made suicidal attempts have at least one, and sometimes more than one, psychiatric disorder. These disorders obviously need to be identified and treated. For medically serious attempts, it usually means going directly to a hospital, and then seeing a psychiatrist once the medical emergency has passed. Sometimes it means psychiatric hospitalization. For less serious attempts, it means getting seen in the next week or so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your child makes a suicide attempt or has a plan, you need to make sure she is not alone. She needs to be watched until she can be carefully assessed. This may just be a matter of a day or so, or it could be longer. No one likes being watched all the time, and it is exhausting to all concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoiding manipulation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people will use suicidal thoughts or attempts to get what they want or to get out of things they don’t want to do. People try suicide to hurt others, to try to get back at boy or girl friends, and to get out of work or school. By keeping this possibility in mind, most parents (with a little help) can prevent suicidal behavior from becoming a habit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preventing suicide by restricting access to guns, pills, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes people forget that the most important thing to do about suicidal children is to make sure they don’t have access to the common methods people use. That means putting away all medications in a locked cabinet. It means guns should not be in the home, even if they are locked up. It means that razors for shaving are kept in the same place medications are. These simple suggestions can make a great deal of difference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since being bullied is traumatic, watch for signs of Post Traumatic Stress. According to the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape, as well as persistent mistreatment (bullying). People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged. These symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life. PTSD is marked by clear biological changes as well as psychological symptoms. PTSD is complicated by the fact that it frequently occurs in conjunction with related disorders such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other problems of physical and mental health. The disorder is also associated with impairment of the person's ability to function in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems and divorces, family discord, and difficulties in parenting.

Only recently has it been realized that bullying may cause PTSD in some children and adolescents. This is not surprising when you examine the national center’s list of characteristics of individuals who are most likely to develop PTSD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is most likely to develop PTSD?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Those who experience greater stressor magnitude and intensity, unpredictability, uncontrollability, sexual (as opposed to nonsexual) victimization, real or perceived responsibility, and betrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Those with prior vulnerability factors such as genetics, early age of onset and longer-lasting childhood trauma, lack of functional social support, and concurrent stressful life events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Those who report greater perceived threat or danger, suffering, upset, terror, and horror or fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Those with a social environment that produces shame, guilt, stigmatization, or self-hatred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep. Lack of sleep affects impulse control.
• Make sure your child regularly exercises and eats the right foods. This will help her deal with the stress caused by bullying.
• Ask an older student with good morals to mentor your child. Mentoring can be effective, as they share wisdom gained from personal experience. The mentor can go places with your child and do a lot of fun things with her.
• As suggested earlier, make sure your discipline style is not too permissive or too aggressive. Your discipline must be firm, controlled, and filled with love. Good discipline makes your child mentally strong, confident, and self-controlled. These are characteristics she needs to deal with bullying.
• Examine your own behavior. Are you modeling overly aggressive behavior? Are you bullying your child? Do you frequently criticize your child? Do you use your words to build people up, to encourage and support others, or do you cut people down with your words?
• If necessary, transfer your child to another school or school system. Your child may need a “fresh start.” This strategy is not always effective, but it could give her a chance to leave all the “labels” behind and have a new beginning. It is best to transfer a child at the beginning of the school year than after school has already started. Of course, you must do what you feel you must do. Another alternative is to home-school your child. It is better to remove your child than to let bullying take its toll on her self-esteem, her physical health, her emotional health, as well as her social development. If you don’t transfer your child and the bullying continues, your child may feel that the school cannot meet her needs and may resent that the school has not stopped the bullying. This could cause her to build up anger toward you and toward school personnel, leading to disrespect and discipline problems.

• When you see or hear about your child effectively coping with bullying, reward her verbally and with a special privilege or treat. In other words, reward her survivor behavior.

• Discuss the bullying with other parents of children who have been bullied. They may share ways they have helped their own children and how their children have been able to cope or end the bullying they received.

• Don’t give up. Most school personnel are supportive and want to help. However, you may find a few who seem to ignore you or brush you off. Don’t let them do that to you. Don’t feel like you are a trouble maker or that you are taking up too much of their time. Your child’s safety and health must be a priority. By stopping bullying, you are helping your child, other children, and the school. Keep the school informed and give the school time to explore solutions. But, make it clear that solutions need to be found quickly.

• Keep telling your child that you love her. Hug her a lot and give her your time and attention. Be approachable, courteous, considerate and respectful of her. Be willing to defer something you want to do in order to do what she wants. In other words, go out of your way to be good to her and to communicate she is important to you. Your love for her will help her love herself and accept herself. Self-acceptance is the basis for self-improvement, and self-love is the basis for compassion toward others.

• Maintain open lines of communication with your child. Ask her to keep you posted on her mistreatment. When the time feels right, conversationally ask probing questions to determine if there are improvements in her situation.

• Cheryl Dellasega and Charissee Nixon (2003), authors of Girl Wars recommend helping your child develop coping skills that do not involve others, such as listening to music, exercising, and keeping a journal.23

• Limit the time your child has on the computer and on the telephone. Students who rehash bullying events over and over with others on the telephone and through the computer are more likely to retaliate.24

• Share with your child the strategies listed below under “Tips for Victims: What Can Your Child Do?” and role-play bullying situations to give her practice in using the strategies. Rehearsing the strategies will give her the confidence needed to use them with the bully. Keep in mind, no one strategy works in all situations for all children. You are the best person

23 Dellasega, Cheryl, and Nixon, Charissee (2003). Girl wars, 12 strategies that will end female bullying. Simon & Schuster, New York, p. 120.
to select the strategies that are best for your child. Hopefully, you know your child better than anyone.

Now that you are equipped to deal with bullying as a parent, you need to make sure your child is equipped. You can do a lot to help your child, but your child must also help herself. That requires that she have certain knowledge and skills. Hopefully, the following information will prove helpful to her.

**Tips for the Victim: What can your child do?**

Not all anti-bullying strategies are appropriate for all children. Select some of the following strategies that you feel are appropriate and teach them to your child. If you want your child to have his own book of strategies, order *How to Be Bully Free*™. The tips/strategies you can give your child are as follows:

- Frequently remind yourself of the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated. Remind yourself to be kind, not envious, and not self-centered. Do not be rude and do not rejoice in the failure of others. Encourage others and give them hope.

- Write down what has been happening to you by answering the following questions:
  - Who is involved?
  - What was said and done to you and by whom?
  - What happened or usually happens immediately before the bullying occurs?
  - Who were the bystanders, and what did they say and do?
  - When does the bullying occur?
  - Where does it happen?
  - Was there any adult supervision?
  - Are there video cameras in the area recording activities?
  - How did you respond?
  - What happened or usually happens after the bullying event?
  - Who has been told about the bullying, and what have they done (if anything)?
  - How long has this been occurring?

  Writing down your answers to these questions is a good way of accurately communicating the facts to your parents and/or a trusted adult. If you have any thoughts about “why” this has been happening, share those with your parents or the adult.

- Talk openly and honestly with your parents and/or a trusted adult about the mistreatment. If the bullying is occurring at school, tell an adult there. If you wish, take a friend with you, but go when the bully is not around. If you cannot tell someone personally about the bullying and how it makes you feel, then write a note to them explaining what has happened. You can also ask that your name be kept confidential.

- Don’t get defensive if your parents or other adults increase their supervision of your activities. Be thankful that you have adults who care about you.
• Don’t retaliate. Don’t fight back. Retaliation usually makes bullying worse and last longer. You also run the risk of getting serious hurt or hurting the bully and getting into trouble with the law.

• Don’t be afraid to share with your parents what you think needs to be done.

• Realize that you are not expected to deal with bullying alone. It’s not just your problem, parents and other adults should get involved. It has been proven over and over, when adults get involved, bullying can be reduced and stopped.

• When possible, stay calm and cool and don’t let the bully know that he has upset you. The bully wants to upset you. Imagine yourself surrounded by a magical, bully-free shield. This may help you stay calm. Keep an object in your pocket – like a smooth rock – that you can rub when you are fearful, upset, or angry. This will help you think before you say or do something that causes you more problems.

• Keep in mind that no one deserves to be bullied. Bullies have a need to have power and control over others and desire to hurt people. Sometimes bullies also feel bad about themselves, but not always. Sometimes bullies are bullied at home by their parents and/or siblings and are determined not to be bullied at school. So, they choose to bully others.

• Avoid the bully as much as possible. Especially avoid places where the bully hangs out or where there is not much adult supervision. If you cannot avoid the bully, at least try to keep your distance. Give the bully space. When possible, don’t go near the bully. For example, go down a different hallway; or when you are on the playground, stay away from the bully. Try not to be alone anywhere. Hangout with friends or adults. When you see the bully walking toward you, walk over to some individual and start a conversation with him/her or walk into a crowd.

• If you are being bullied while walking to and from school or while riding the bus, tell your parents and ask them to take you to school or make arrangements for you to carpool to school. Your parents can also ask the school to provide an adult to ride the bus or to let you ride a different bus. Sit near the bus driver and ask a friend to sit with you. If you walk to school, take a different route.

• Be careful to whom you give your phone number(s) and e-mail address(s). If you are being bullied through electronic devices, such as the cell phone or over the Internet, tell your parents. They can report the cyber bullies to the police. Harassing and threatening messages are against the law. If possible, print the messages. Don’t respond to the bully’s messages. If you are in a chat room and someone starts mistreating you with words, don’t respond. Write down the screen name and tell your parents.

• Practice not looking like an “easy” target. Bullies often look for potential victims who look like easy targets who are smaller, physically weaker, nicer, and more sensitive than the bully. Check your body language. Bullies look for people who look sad, who are stooped over and avoid eye contact with people, who are always fidgeting, who always want to be alone, and who might cry easily and never stand up for themselves. Practice looking, walking, and talking like a confident person. Look like a person who is physically and emotional strong. Stand up straight, hold your head up straight, hold your shoulders back, look into the eyes of the bully (not at the ground or somewhere else), use a firm and strong voice, and stay calm. If you make an assertive comment to the bully, walk away with confidence. Don’t hang around. If you are not there, you cannot be bullied.

• Don’t let those who bully you make you feel bad. Don’t say things to yourself like, “I’m ugly,” or “I’m dumb,” or “I can’t do anything right.” When the bully says something bad about you, say something positive to yourself – remind yourself of your positive
characteristics. If this is difficult for you, ask an adult who loves you to help you make a list of your positive characteristics. Sometimes others see positive characteristics in us that we don’t see. If you wish, tell them why you need help.

- Make a list of the positive things in your life and a list of your positive characteristics. Keep them in your pocket. Ask an adult to help you develop these lists.

- Be assertive by moving closer to the bully, but no closer than an arm’s length. Keep a safe distance. You should also turn sideways, relax your hands and arms and hold them down at your side. You don’t want the bully to think you want to fight. Keep your feet about shoulder’s width apart – for good balance. When you stand this way, you are ready to walk away from the bully or even run, if you have to so you can protect yourself.

- Don’t argue or get into a shouting match with the bully, but make a firm and assertive statement. Tell the bully how you feel, why you feel the way you do and what you want him to do. Learn to do this with a confident and determined voice. For example, “I feel angry when you call me names because I have a real name. I want you to call me by my real name. My name is Allan.” Say this with confidence while you look the bully in the eye and then walk away with confidence. If you are not there, you cannot be bullied.

- Let the bully know you are not an easy target. Stay calm and say to the bully with confidence and determination, “Stop it! Leave me alone.” Or, you might say, “No! You cannot have my pencil. I need it.” Then walk off with confidence. Don’t stand there. If you are not there, you cannot be bullied.

- The bully wants to hurt your feelings. So, act like it doesn’t hurt. Don’t reward the bully with your tears. Practice having a blank expression on your face. You can also disappoint the bully by admitting he is right. For example, when the bully calls you “fatty,” look the bully in the eye and say calmly, “You know, I am overweight. I need to start working out with weights.” Then calmly walk off with confidence. If you are not there, you cannot be bullied.

- Make an asset of the bully’s comment. For example, a bully made fun of a boy who had cancer and lost all of his hair because of the treatments. The bully called him “bowling ball.” So the boy said, “I guess Michael Jordon and I have something in common.”

- Disarm the bully with humor. This doesn’t mean you should laugh at the bully. Don’t target the bully with your sense of humor. If you do, the bully might think you are making fun of her. Just smile and walk away or say something about yourself as it relates to what the bully said. For example, if the bully makes fun of your ears, you could say, “You know you’re right, my ears stand out like opened doors on a car.” The bully might think what you said was funny and leave you alone. Remember, the bully wants to hurt you. So, don’t reward him by revealing that you are hurt. Cover your hurt with a sense of humor. Individuals who have a sense of humor have an easier time than those who let teasing get to them. Having a sense of humor may make the bullying disappear. However, use your best judgment.

- Exhaust the topic by asking the bully several questions. For example, one girl was made fun of because she was overweight. The bully said she was “fat.” So she asked: “What do you mean by fat?” “How fat do you have to be to be fat?” “How many people do you know who are fat?” The bully got tired of her questions and left her alone.

- Write down all the things that bullies have said to you. Under each statement, write down assertive comebacks and/or actions that might stop students from making the comments. This will prepare you for the next time you are bullied.
• Write down all of the comments the bully has said to you, and then rip up the paper into small pieces as if they were meaningless and no longer a part of your past.

• Admit the obvious. For example, when a bully made fun of a boy because he had big ears, the boy said “Wow.” He noticed that I have big ears.” then he walked off confidently.

• Remember you are powerful. You are powerful because you have the power to make a choice. You can let the bullying bother you or you can choose not to let it get to you. You don’t have to give up your power of choice. However, you should not tolerate it. Learn how to be assertive and tell an adult.

• Give the bully permission to tease. For example, you could say: “Well, It’s okay to say what you want. It doesn’t bother me.”

• In response to the bully’s comments, just keep saying “so.” It is amazing how powerful that word can be. Use your own judgment when it is time to stop and walk away with confidence.

• Respond to the bully’s teasing and name calling with a non-defensive question: “Why would you say that?” or “Why would you want to say ……?”

• Use your best judgment and follow your instincts. For example, if the bully wants your homework and you think he is about to punch you, give up your homework. Then walk off with confidence and act as if the bully didn’t hurt you. Your safety is more important than your possessions. Be sure to tell a trusted adult.

• If possible, always walk with friends. Never walk alone. If you find yourself walking alone, join other students or an adult and start a conversation. Don’t linger alone in any area, stay with a group.

• Tell your friends who are bigger and stronger than the bully. When you find the bully alone, take your friends with you and tell the bully to leave you alone. Don’t start a fight, but be assertive.

• If you are in the community and you see the bully coming toward you, walk over to some adults even if they are strangers and pretend they are your parents or people you know. You could say, “Oh, there’s mom and dad.” and walk to them and quietly ask them a question as if you are having a conversation with them. Then, if necessary walk with them.

• If you are in danger, surprise the bully by throwing your books at him and then RUN. Your safety is more important than your possessions. Then, tell a trusted adult about the threat.

• Try not to take a lot of money or expensive items to school and places in the community where you will see the bully. If the bully threatens you to get your money or your property, give it up and tell your parents or another trusted adult. You can also ask that your name be kept confidential.

• Being bullied can make you tired and make you feel sick. To deal with the bully, you need to feel good. So, be sure to get plenty of exercise and eat healthy foods. Also, make sure you get plenty of sleep.

• Don’t expect to be mistreated. When you are walking toward a group of students, think about them being nice to you and try to see in your own mind them being nice to you. Also, do your best to be friendly to them. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Practice visualizing (seeing) yourself getting along with others.

• Stand up for other students who are bullied and ask them to stand up for you.
• Try to make friends with others at school and make lots of friends outside school. Find things you can do with them. However, be careful whom you select to be your friends. They should be kind people who seek to do what is right, who encourage you to do what is right, and support you. They should be people with good morals and who seek to treat others the way they want to be treated.

• Develop an interest, hobby, or skill that will make you feel good about yourself and that other kids will think is neat. Then, do what you love doing.

• Ask your parents and teachers to help you cope with your feelings and thoughts focusing on your hurt, fear, loneliness, depression, anxiety, anger, hate, rage, and perhaps retaliation/revenge. Don’t try to deal with these alone. Even adults need help to deal with such feelings and thoughts.

• Take a good honest look at yourself. Is there something you need to change about the way you act around others? Are you too aggressive? Are you too bossy? Are you rude and always interrupting others? Ask your parents and teacher to help you to develop more accepting behaviors. Of course, regardless of your behavior, you don’t deserve to be mistreated. Bullying is not your fault. But you may be able to improve on your situation by changing a few behaviors.

• Let your parents help you find good e-mail friends and pen pals.

• Make friends with extended family members: aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. Do fun things with them. Share your feelings and thoughts with them.

• Be kind to the bully. Your kindness may surprise and/or confuse him. If you are lucky, it will make him feel shame for mistreating you and encourage him to change the way he treats others.

• Compliment the bully. For example, if the bully says you have big ears, say “I know I wish I had ears like yours.”

• Try to distract the bully by starting a conversation about something the bully enjoys talking about. For example, you might ask: “Hey, did you see the Lakers game last night? Did you see that play with two seconds left on the clock?”

• Some students join in on the bullying, but they are not really true bullies. They may not realize that they are hurting you. Talk to these individuals and explain how it makes you feel. Explain to them that you understand why they join in – they are afraid they might be the next victim. Tell them that you believe they are good people with good hearts and that you would like for them to be your friend. You may be surprised. They may apologize to you and even come to your defense in the future. Of course, you must be selective in choosing these individuals and say these things only to those for whom you believe it to be the truth. Don’t try to befriend those who don’t deserve to be your friend. Just treat them the way you want to be treated.

• If you have tried several anti-bullying strategies and nothing seems to help, talk with your parents about the possibility of transferring to a different school or school system. Sometimes this helps, but sometimes it doesn’t help.

• If possible, avoid being alone in areas of the school lacking adequate adult supervision (i.e., bathroom, between buildings, gym’s locker room, band room). Make sure you have someone you trust with you.

• Tell a trusted adult when you see someone being mistreated. If you wish, take a friend with you, but go when the bully is not around. If you are worried about putting yourself at risk,
write an anonymous note to an adult. If you cannot tell your parents, then tell your
grandparents, uncle or aunt – any adult you trust. Tell them what is happening, who is
involved, who the bystanders are, where it is happening, and when it is happening.

- If you are bullied in the lunchroom, avoid sitting near those who bully you, or ask a friend to
  move with you to a different seat. If this is not allowed, ask the lunch room supervisor if you
can move. If the supervisor says you cannot move, ask your parents to speak to someone at
school and explain why you must not sit near the bully.

- If you are bullied in the hallways, try to avoid the bully by being aware of his location. If the
  bully is walking ahead of you, slow down to give him time to move ahead. If the bully is
  behind you and is following you, don’t walk into unsupervised or under-supervised areas,
such as between buildings, gym locker room, rest room, or the playground, etc. Stop and
talk to an adult and let the bully pass. Don’t have a routine way of going to classes or to your
locker. This keeps the bully guessing your route.

- Don’t give up; keep asking for help. If the bullying continues, keep a trusted adult
  (especially your parents) informed and ask for their assistance. Don’t feel that you are
causing trouble.

- Maintain hope. Life is always changing, and no one can see the future. No matter how bad
  life may seem right now, peace and happiness can fill your life in the near future. There are
people around you who care about you and want to help you. Trust them.

- Ask your parents to buy you a pet. Your pet will always be glad to see you and love you.
  Your pet can be a great friend.

- Maintain open lines of communication with your parents and adults at school. Keep them up-
to-date on your mistreatment.
HOW CAN I PREVENT CYBERBULLYING?

You and your child need to know how to handle a new form of bullying – cyberbullying or electronic bullying. This form of bullying involves the use of the Internet and other forms of information and communication technologies (i.e., e-mail, pager text messages, instant messaging, cell phones, defamatory personal web sites and defamatory online personal polling web sites) to mistreat others. These strategies for bullying are becoming more and more popular. Bullies have even developed their own cyber language. This makes it difficult for parents to understand the messages. For example, “Ur guna git a!-(2day for *ing my bf and Ur ded” is cyber language for “You’re gonna get a black eye today for kissing my boyfriend and you’re dead.” (Crosbie, 2003) Cyber bullying intensifies the victim’s feeling that “there is no escape.”

Experts offer the following advice for parents:

- Limit the amount of time your child has on the Internet.
- Ask your child to report threatening and harassing messages to you and to print the messages. Tell your child that such messages are unlawful. Report the messages to the police and to your Internet provider.
- Limit the number of people to whom you give your e-mail address and cell phone number. To be on the safe side, if the sender’s name and address is unfamiliar, don’t open the message.
- If the bullying happens through a personal account, report the situation to the bully’s e-mail account provider, which is usually the word after the “@” sign.
- Change your child’s cell number or e-mail address.
- Don’t let your child record her own voicemail and say her name, as the bully will know she is calling.
- Tell you child not to open messages from people they do not know.
- Tell your child to trust her instincts. If a message doesn’t look right or feel right, it probably isn’t.
- Tell your child not to believe everything she reads. Just because a person, they do not know, says he is 15, doesn’t mean he is 15. He may be 55.
- Sometimes, those who bully children are not necessarily classmates. In fact, they could be child predators who look for young victims online. Print the messages and immediately give a copy to law enforcement officials. Also show the message to your attorney.
- Tell your child not to respond to the message. The bully may print your child’s message and get her into trouble.
- Sometimes it’s best for your child to stay phone, chat or e-mail free for a few days. Let her phone take messages. Check to see if her phone allows turning off incoming text messages.
- Block instant messages from individuals you don’t want your child to talk to. Most instant messaging allows you to do this. Look under “Help” or “Tools.”
- Tell your child to exit a chat room when individuals start mistreating her through words. Ask your child to write down the individual’s screen name and report it to you. Then you should report the individual to the police and your Internet provider.
• If your child really enjoys using a chat room, make sure she signs up again with a different ID. She could even use a nickname. Remind her not to provide any personal information.

• Maintain open lines of communication with your child. Ask her to keep you posted on her mistreatment.

• Frequently examine records on your computer and track the sites your child visits and the messages she receives.

• If there is a website (weblog, message board, online voting site) that says bad things about your child, print it and give a copy to your internet service provider (ISP). The ISP may have an e-mail address where you can send the copy. Ask them to get rid of it.

• Purchase a software blocker that will block out messages and sites that contain content related to sex, violence, racism, as well as profanity. Some of the most popular programs are CyberSitter, Cyber Patrol, Net Nanny, and Surfwatch.

It is a serious matter when children mistreat children. It is more serious when adults mistreat children. They must be stopped.

Walt Mueller (1999), author of *Understanding Today’s Youth Culture*, recommends establishing “NEVER” rules. Some examples are:25

• NEVER give out your real name, address, or telephone number to strangers or someone you have met only on-line.

• NEVER send a picture of yourself to someone you haven’t met face-to-face.

• NEVER arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you met on-line until you’ve checked with your parents.

• NEVER give out a credit-card number.

To stay current on how to stop text bullying, visit [www.stoptextbully.com](http://www.stoptextbully.com).

---

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN SCHOOL PERSONNEL BULLY MY CHILD?

There has not been much written about what should be done when school personnel bully a student.

- Keep in mind, for a behavior to be labeled bullying, it has to be persistent (repeated) and intentionally designed to hurt or frighten your child or to have power and control over your child. Some individuals are too quick to label behavior as bullying. Ask yourself, “Is the adult really bullying my child, or is he engaging in some other behavior that is inappropriate and unprofessional?” However, the question really isn’t that important. All inappropriate and unprofessional behavior should be stopped immediately, whether it is bullying or not. Mistreatment is mistreatment—regardless of other labels individuals might chose to give it.

- Find out what has happened but avoid “you” statements. When you start statements with “you,” your child may feel he is being attacked. Also keep in mind that every moment is not a great time to talk. When the time is right, ask your child about the mistreatment he is receiving. Be sure to listen to your child’s description of what happened without interrupting. Listen to what your child says about his actions and the actions of adults and the bystanders (witnesses). Your listening goal is to answer the following questions:
  - Who is involved?
  - What was said and done to your child by whom?
  - What happened or usually happens immediately before the behavior occurs?
  - Who were the bystanders, and what did they say and do?
  - When does the behavior occur?
  - Where does it happen?
  - Were any other adults providing supervision in the area?
  - Are there video cameras in the area recording activities?
  - How did your child respond?
  - What happened or usually happens after the mistreatment?
  - Who has been told about the behavior, and what have they done (if anything)?
  - How long has this been occurring?

After listening, ask questions to fill in the gaps, but don’t interrogate. Don’t overload him emotionally by asking too many questions at once. During the process of listening to him, you may discover “why” he is mistreated. If not, wait until you think the time is right to ask him why he thinks the mistreatment happens. If you ask too soon, he may not share everything with you or may not tell the truth. Yes, even good kids lie to their parents. It is important to have the facts about what has happened. Sometimes children leave out critical information that affects our understanding of what happened.

- Keep a log (record) of the events addressing the questions listed above. This will help you check the facts as you gather more information and hear information repeated.

- Ask your child to write down in a journal/notebook his thoughts and feelings about what has happened. Seek your child’s permission to read what is written. Help your child to work
through his emotions and thoughts about the event(s). You can then cross check journal notes with your conversations with your child and with the information shared by others.

- Ask yourself: "Is my child doing anything that is wrong that might be encouraging the adult's behavior?" For example, perhaps your child is disrespectful and is constantly disobeying the adult. This is certainly behavior that needs to cease because it is not appropriate, and it doesn’t help his situation. However, you and your child must understand that no one deserves to be bullied, and no one has the right to bully someone.

- Find out what other parents and students know about the adult. When you talk to them, don’t mention your child’s bullying situation. Seek information in an informal way, and don’t criticize the teacher.

- Check to see if the school system has any written personnel policies that the teacher is violating by mistreating your child.

- Check to see if the school system has a harassment policy that addresses personnel mistreatment of others.

- When you have a problem with an adult who works at school, you should go directly to him first and share the facts that you have recorded. Try to think positive of him first and assume he might be cooperative. Of course, sometimes you will be disappointed. Be opened minded - perhaps he doesn’t realize how hurtful he is being. If his behavior is injuring your child physically, emotionally, psychologically, or socially, you need to let him know immediately. Be sure to write good notes regarding conversations at the meeting. You might want to have a tape recorder in your car so you can record immediately after the meeting what was said. You might also want to take someone with you to the meeting to confirm what was said. If the adult is mistreating other students, ask those students and their parents to go with you.

- If the adult is not cooperative, you and your child, as well as the other victimized students and their parents, should go to the person’s supervisor (i.e., the principal). After the meeting, ask the principal to tell you when he plans to talk to the adult who is mistreating your child (and perhaps other children). Follow-up the meeting with a telephone call to the supervisor to see if the meeting occurred. If the meeting has not occurred, tell the supervisor the adult is hurting your child (and other children), so his prompt action is important. The supervisor doesn’t have to tell you what corrective action has been taken. If you are not satisfied with the supervisor’s response, you should tell him that you plan to go to the next level (i.e., the superintendent). If necessary, you may have to go to the chairman of the Board of Education or someone on the board you respect and trust. Make sure you have your facts in order. Of course, other victimized students and their parents can go with you to each of the meetings.

- If you are not satisfied with the response of the school system, you may want to talk to an attorney to see if any action can be taken. Sometimes a letter from an attorney is all that is needed. You may want to ask the school system to change your child’s schedule so that the individual can be avoided as much as possible, or ask them to assign your child to a different school. You might also want to talk to your attorney and see if your child can take a small tape or video recorder to school and record the mistreatment. They make recorders that are about the size of your little finger. Make sure that your child can legally do that - you don’t want to get into trouble for tape recording someone without permission.

- Maintain ongoing communication with your child. When the time is right, conversationally ask probing questions to determine if there are improvements in his situation.

- As a last resort, transfer your child to a different school or school system. This doesn’t always help, but it might give your child a “fresh start” in a different school. It is better to go
to a new school at the first of the year, instead of going after school has started. Of course, you must do what you feel you must do.
WHAT SUPPORTIVE TIPS SHOULD I GIVE MY CHILD’S SIBLINGS?

If your child is being bullied, share the following information with the child’s siblings. You may want to get your child’s permission to share this information.

What siblings can do:

- Whenever your brother or sister tells you about his/her mistreatment, you should feel special. Victims of bullying usually prefer to share this information with their friends, not their siblings.
- Don’t make fun or make light of the situation. Bullying is serious and can cause physical and emotional health problems.
- Don’t promise to keep it a secret. Tell him that you love him and care too much about him not to help. Tell him that you are obligated to tell your parents and/or a trusted adult. Tell him you will try to ensure that the situation is handled in an appropriate manner.
- Make sure he realizes that the bullying is not his fault and he is not expected to deal with the problem alone. It is not just his problem. Adults should get involved. It has been proven over and over; when adults get involved, bullying can be prevented and stopped.
- Encourage him to tell your parents or a trusted adult. Tell him that you will go with him to support him. If he is willing, he should tell someone at school. He could take a trusted friend with him to tell the adult. He could also ask the adult to keep his name confidential.
- Even if he tells you that he will tell your parents later, keep a log (record) of the bullying events he shares with you. Record what happened, as well as when and where it happened. Also record who was involved (including witnesses). Ask if he has told any adults about it and has any action been taken to stop it. This will make it easier for you to share the information with your parents or another trusted adult. Write this information down as soon as you can. This will help you accurately share the information later. Don’t overload your sibling emotionally by asking a lot of questions.
- If you go to the same school as your brother or sister, try to defend him or her. Be assertive with the bully, but don’t threaten him.
- Tell your friends, who are bigger and stronger than the bully, so that they can defend your siblings in a non-violent but assertive manner. In fact, take your friends with you to tell the bully to “back-off.” Don’t start a fight, but be assertive. Don’t threaten the bully, but be assertive. Tell your sibling to let you know if the bully says anything about the confrontation(s). Tell him to say in response to the bully’s teasing, “Isn’t it great to have friends like that?” and then, walk off confidently.
- Be a good listener. Seek to understand the feelings of your sibling.
- Spend time with your sibling in fun activities after school and on weekends.
- Maintain open lines of communication with your parents. Keep them posted on the mistreatment of your sibling. When you hear rumors about your brother or sister, share them with him/her and your parents.
WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS (INCLUDING SIBLINGS)?

All good parents want to know when their child is bullying others. After all, children who bully are at-risk of other forms of anti-social behavior, such as juvenile delinquency, criminality, and substance abuse. In fact, they may be at risk of health problems. Therefore, you should feel a sense of urgency to help your child change. You must take quick action to stop her bullying. Bullying occurs because adults and others allow it in the child’s environment. Doing nothing about bullying implies that you approve of it.

What You Can Do

When you find out your child is a bully:

- Remind your child of the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated.
- Be thankful you know about the bullying and take the problem seriously. Don’t ignore it, and don’t deny that your child could be a bully.
- Don’t get upset or angry. Stay calm even though you are concerned. All children have the capacity to be bullies.
- Try not to get defensive. Be willing to believe your child is mistreating others.
- Keep in mind that most children who bully will minimize or deny wrongdoing. Don’t accept the comments, “It was all in fun.” or “He brings it on himself.” You cannot accept these as excuses. No one deserves to be bullied.
- Find out what has happened. But keep in mind that every moment is not a good time to talk. When the time seems right, ask your child about her bullying behavior. Avoid “you” statements. When you start statements with “you,” your child may feel she is being attacked. Be sure to listen to your child’s description of what happened without interrupting. Listen to what your child says about her actions and the actions of the victim(s). Your listening goal is to answer the following questions:
  - Who is involved?
  - What was said and done by your child and others?
  - What happened or usually happens immediately before the bullying occurs?
  - Who were the bystanders, and what did they say and do?
  - When does the bullying occur?
  - Where does it happen?
  - Was there any adult supervision?
  - Are there video cameras in the area recording activities?
  - What happened or usually happens after the bullying event?
  - Who has been told about the bullying, and what have they done (if anything)?
  - How long has this been occurring?
· Try avoiding making a knee-jerk reaction to your child’s comments. After listening, ask questions to fill in the gaps, but don’t interrogate your child. Don’t overload your child emotionally by asking too many questions at once. During the process of listening to your child, you may discover why she is mistreating others. If not, wait until you think the time is right to ask her “Why?” she thinks the bullying happen. If you ask too soon, your child may not share everything with you or may not tell the truth. It is important to have the facts about what has happened. Sometimes children leave out critical information that affects our understanding of what happened. Keep in mind that, the “Why did you . . .” line of questions rarely works with anyone, even adults.

If the conversation gets heated, call for a break so everyone can calm down. It will be easier to discuss it with your child when everyone is calmer.

· Keep in mind, for a behavior to be labeled bullying, it has to be persistent (repeated over time), be intentionally designed to hurt or frighten another child, or to have power and control over another child. Sometimes, people are too quick to label behavior as bullying. Ask yourself, “Is my child really bullying the individual, or is she engaging in behavior that occurs infrequently and may stop on its own?” Of course, all inappropriate and hurtful behavior needs to stop, whether it is bullying or not.

· Keep a log (record) of the bullying events addressing the questions listed above. This will make it easier for you to check the facts as you gather information and as you hear information repeated.

· Make sure your child understands that no one deserves to be bullied.

· Remember that bullies mistreat others for a lot of reasons: (1) to have power and control, (2) to hurt, and (3) to express feelings of anger, insecurity, loneliness, etc. Sometimes children mistreat others because parents and/or siblings mistreat them at home. Sometimes they even bully siblings because they are mistreated at school.

· Your child may be following an aggressive bully and is afraid not to participate in the bullying. Ask your child if she is fearful of becoming a victim.

· Ask your child if there is anything that is making her upset or angry or sad. Ask her if she feels these things are making her mistreat others.

· Ask your child to write down in a journal/notebook her thoughts and feelings about what has happened. Seek your child’s permission to read what is written. Help her to work through her emotions and thoughts about the bullying. You can then cross check journal notes with your conversations with your child and with the information shared by others.

· Help your child see errors in her thinking. For example, your child may blame everything on the victim(s) and be blind to her own lack of self-control, quick temper, disrespect, and lack of sensitivity.

· Hopefully, your child feels embarrassed and ashamed of her behavior. This is not usually the case with true aggressive bullies. However, some good kids find themselves bullying others “because everyone is.” If your child is joining the bullying to be popular, tell her that kindness and integrity are more important than popularity. If your child does regret her actions, praise her feelings and develop a plan of action (i.e., apology, restitution, etc.). Explain to your child that you appreciate her feelings, but because you love her, there must also be consequences for the behavior.

· Apply negative, yet non-violent, consequences (withhold privileges, require restitution, etc.) for bullying that are proportionate with the severity of her behavior. This is not as easy as it
sounds. For some children even “mild” bullying can be very hurtful. The consequences should also be appropriate for her age and stage of development. Of all the strategies, this is the most critical. Sometimes, just talking to the child is not very effective. If your child is bullying others, she needs more self-control. Teaching her self-control involves disciplining her. You should also praise your child for appropriate behavior. Consequences should be administered in a consistent and warm manner, not in the heat of anger.

- Tell your child that a person’s reputation is more valuable than gold. It is important that she have a good name. Tell her that people will remember all their lives how she treated them. Ask her to describe her reputation as it relates to how she treats others. When people hear her name, what do they remember and what do they think about.
- Tell your child you will support the school as it applies punishment for the behavior.
- Depending on the age of your child and the bullying behavior, tell her that she could get into legal trouble for mistreating others.
- Talk to school personnel and let them know you are aware of your child’s behavior and she is willing to improve (if this is the truth). Ask them to investigate your child’s behavior. Ask for their assistance to apply consequences for inappropriate behavior and to reward appropriate behavior seen in your child. Don’t give up. Most school personnel will respond favorably to your concerns. However, if someone ignores you, don’t let him brush you off. Don’t let them minimize your child’s behavior. Don’t feel like you are a trouble maker or that you are taking up too much of the individual’s time. Your child’s safety and health must be a priority – some victims retaliate. By stopping bullying, you are helping your child, other children, and the school.
- Make a follow-up appointment with the appropriate school personnel to assess whether action taken by the school has been successful.
- If your child is bullying others, ask that there be an adult (i.e., support teacher) that she can talk to everyday to update him/her on her behavior. If the teacher is not responsive, speak to the principal. You must bring this unhealthy situation for your child and other children to an end.
- Find out what other parents and students know about the individuals who claim to be victimized. When you talk to them, don’t mention the bullying; just seek information in an informal way. Don’t criticize the individuals who say they were victims.
- Ask your child if she has any ideas of what needs to happen for the bullying to stop.
- Explain to your child that she could get into a lot of trouble. She could be suspended or expelled from school, or get into trouble with the law.
- Remind your child that it is often those who are feeling small, afraid, weak, and helpless that resort to violence by retaliating. When they retaliate, they go after those who have mistreated them, and they often hurt innocent bystanders.
- Communicate zero tolerance of intolerance. Set limits and immediately stop any aggression.
- Teach your child to control her anger. Teach her to get away from situations that anger her. Review with your child the anger management techniques that have been discussed in this book. Help your child find non-aggressive ways to express her feelings.
- Tell your child to talk sense to himself/herself. This is similar to “Positive Self-talk” already discussed. Teach your child to rehearse in her mind the self-talk statements like those listed below:
Talking Sense to Myself

- I can get into trouble with the school and with the law for mistreating others. So, I better stop. I can make the choice to stop.
- I don’t have to take my anger out on others. There are better ways to express my anger.
- I can have power and control by doing good things, such as helping others.
- I can walk away.
- Just because someone bumped into me, doesn’t mean she did it on purpose.
- I can stop and think and cool down.
- I can put on my brakes.

- Ask your child to apologize (verbally and in writing) for her bullying and make restitution – make amends.
- Make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep. Lack of sleep affects self-control.
- Make sure your child regularly exercises and eats the right foods. This will help her deal with stress that sometimes causes inappropriate behavior.
- Be an observant parent – have “withitness” (be with it – know what is happening). Demonstrate that you are a “full time parent.” Bullying even occurs over cell phones and over the Internet.
- Give your child something meaningful to do at home. Have chores that you depend on her completing. Express your appreciation for her being helpful and dependable.
- Meet with other parents of bullies and seek to help each other help your children.
- Talk to the victim’s parents, and apologize for your child’s behavior.
- Be as patient as you can with the school, but make it clear that solutions need to be found as quickly as possible. You want your child to stop bullying others. You want to help the school help your child.
- Ask the principal to implement a Bully Free™ Program and provide anti-bullying training for the teachers, bus drivers, counselors, and other adults in the school. They also need to learn how to prevent and stop bullying, how to help victims, and how to change bullies. Ask them to visit the website: www.bullyfree.com. All school personnel need to know how to create schools where all students feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. Encourage the school to purchase an anti-bullying book for each teacher and counselor, such as The Bully Free Classroom™ and other Bully Free™ resources. Ask local parent organizations, civic organizations, or corporations to sponsor a workshop by Dr. Beane and/or to purchase Bully Free™ brochures, posters, and books for the school system or school.
- Promote anti-bullying activities through local Parent-Teacher Associations. Ask that bullying be placed on the agenda of a Parent-Teacher Organization meeting and that a guest speaker be contacted to address the topic.
• When it is known that your child is trying to improve, others may provoke her to get her to act out. Warn your child of this behavior. Teach her to quickly remove herself from such situations. Teach her to be assertive and refuse to let them control her behavior.

• Monitor the whereabouts of your child. Increase your supervision of your child’s activities. If necessary, go to school with your child. Sometimes this is enough to make her behave.

• If your child feels bad about herself, seek to improve her self-esteem. Frequently remind her of her positive characteristics and successes. Provide opportunities for successful experiences that help her feel valued and appreciated. Most of all remind her of your unconditional love for her. Your love for her will help her love herself and accept herself. Self-acceptance is the basis for self-improvement, and self-love is the basis for compassion toward others.

• Help your child develop interests and learn a new hobby or develop a new skill such as painting, drawing, or playing an instrument. This might help your child feel good about himself. As someone once said, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.”

• Examine your child’s friendships and provide opportunities for her to select individuals to be with who have good morals. Develop a moral, religious, and spiritual network around your child. Psychologists and professional mental health professionals have found that supportive religion can make a big difference in the lives of children, especially adolescents.

• Help your child discover there is power and control in doing good deeds. Involve your child in community service activities and charity activities. Find opportunities for your child to help others.

• Ask her to monitor her behavior and report back to you.

• When you see your child exhibiting kindness and empathy, reward her with a special treat or privilege.

• Role-play situations where your child might respond inappropriately. For example, what should she do when someone knocks her books off her desk or bumps her in the hallway? This will give your child practice in controlling her anger. It also teaches appropriate behavior.

• If necessary, seek professional counseling for your child. In fact, you may want to consider family counseling. Your child’s school system can help you arrange this kind of assistance. If you are a member of a religious organization, you may also want to seek pastoral counseling for your child.

• Extend your time horizon – give your child time to change.

• Make sure your discipline style is not too permissive or too aggressive. Your discipline must be firm, controlled, and filled with love. Good discipline helps your child develop the self-control that is necessary for her to stop bullying.

• Examine your own behavior. Are you modeling overly aggressive behavior? Are you bullying your child? Do you frequently criticize your child? Do you use your words to build people up, to encourage and support others, or do you cut people down with your words?

• Examine your family and home environment/climate. Is there anything happening in the family that might cause your child to act out his/her frustration – such as spouse abuse, child abuse, divorce, etc. Are any of the siblings bullying your child? Sometimes children are bullied at home, so they go to school and avoid being a victim by bullying others.
• Maintain ongoing communication with your child. When the time feels right, conversationally ask probing questions to determine if there are improvements in her behavior.

• Keep the school informed, and give the school time to devise and implement solutions.

• Keep telling your child that you love her very much and give her your time and attention. Make sure she understands you love her unconditionally. It’s her behavior that you disapprove of.

• Ask an older child or young adult who has good morals to mentor your child. Mentoring can be effective. The mentor can go places with your child and do a lot of fun things with her. She can also provide guidance on what is right and wrong and show her how to have power and control by doing good.

• Tell your child that a person’s reputation is more valuable than gold. It is important that she have a good name. Tell her that people will remember all their lives how she treated them. Ask her to describe her reputation as it relates to how she treats others. When people hear her name, what do they remember and what do they think about.

There are a lot of reasons you want your child to treat others the way she wants to be treated. You don’t want her to hurt others and you don’t want her to get hurt. Children who bully increase their risk of heart problems even into the adult years. In addition, children who bully are at risk of engaging in substance abuse, gangs, and criminal activity. They may also grow up and abuse their spouses, their children, and their co-workers.

You can do a lot to help your child stop bullying others, but she must also seek to change herself. Hopefully, the following tips will help your child.

**Tips for the Bully: What Your Child Can Do**

Share the following tips with your child.

• Frequently remind yourself of the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated.

• Ask yourself, “Why am I mistreating others?”
  
  o Are you unhappy about something or angry about something that you need to discuss with an adult? If you are, talk to someone about it instead of taking it out on someone.
  
  o Are you mistreated somewhere else and don’t want to be the one mistreated at school?

• Realize that if you keep on mistreating others, you could get into a lot of trouble. You could be suspended or expelled from school, or get into trouble with the law.

• Keep in mind that those who are feeling small, afraid, weak, and helpless are often the first to resort to violence and retaliation. When they retaliate, they go after those who have mistreated them, and they often hurt innocent bystanders and may even kill them.

• Sometimes mistreating someone becomes a habit. But you can stop. You can change. Bullying is a choice. Talk to someone about your need to change.
Perhaps you have fallen into the trap of mistreating someone because “everyone is.” If this is the case, you may feel guilty and need to ask someone to help you get out of the trap. Share your thoughts and feelings with an adult. If you wish, take a friend with you. If you cannot tell the adult personally, then write a note to him explaining what has happened. If you cannot tell your parents, then tell your grandparents, uncle, or aunt – any adult you trust. If you cannot tell your teacher, then tell some other adult in the school. Tell him what is happening, who is involved, who the bystanders are, and where and when it is happening.

Make sure you get a good night’s sleep, regular exercise, and eat the right foods. All of these will help you have better self-control.

Don’t get defensive if your parents and/or other adults increase their supervision of your activities. Be thankful that they care enough about you to help you behave more appropriately. Everyone needs somebody who holds her accountable for her actions.

Listen to the suggestions of your parents and teachers.
HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WHO IS A BYSTANDER?

According to experts, there are three (3) different types of bystanders: (1) victim bystanders, (2) avoidant bystanders, and (3) ambivalent bystanders. The victim bystanders may identify with the victim and become afraid they may become a victim if they don’t support the bullying. This is a real fear, because victim bystanders could very easily become the next targets. The avoidant bystanders watch the bullying and don’t do anything about it. Sometimes their avoidance is simply because they feel there is nothing they can do or they don’t know what to do. The ambivalent bystanders have distracted contradictory feelings about the bully and the bullying. They are always trying to figure out what role they play in the power dynamics.

If your child is not a victim, but a bystander, you should still be concerned. Researchers have discovered that bystanders who witness bullying sometimes experience increased levels of fear, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. Even bystanders feel that there is nothing that can be done to stop the bullying.

Ask your child (the bystander) to talk to you about his feelings and thoughts regarding the bullying he sees in school and in the community. Watching bullying around him almost everyday can intensify any emotional problems and issues he may already possess. Help your child deal with feelings of fear and insecurity created by his experience as a bystander. Some times bystanders also experience a lot of guilt feelings. When you first talk to your child about witnessing the bullying, don’t overload him emotionally by asking a lot of questions.

Just as it is important for victims of bullying to develop effective coping strategies, it is also important for bystanders to develop certain skills. Bystanders have to be willing to buck the peer system.

Share the following information with your child, who is a bystander.

**Tips for Bystanders:**

- Talk to an adult about your feelings and thoughts regarding the bullying you see in school and in the community. Watching bullying almost everyday can make you fearful and feel unsafe. Some times bystanders also experience a lot of guilt feelings.
- Keep in mind that you and your friends (the other bystanders) outnumber the bullies. You can make a difference.
- When you see someone mistreated, keep a record of the event and tell a trusted adult. Write down what happened, who was involved, when and where it happened. Also write down what happened immediately before the event and what happened when it was over.
- Ask your friends to join you in making a commitment to help your school be bully free.
- Ask your friends to help you communicate to the bully that bullying will not be tolerated. Tell the bully that you and your friends value the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated. Take a stand against the bully. The longer you wait to do this, the more likely you are to join in on the bullying.
• When you see the bully alone, take some friends with you to tell the bully to stop mistreating the students you know are victims.

• Don’t watch the mistreatment. The bully wants an audience. You can also try to stop it by going over and standing beside the victim. Ask some friends to join you.

• Take on the characteristic of the victim that the bullying is using to mistreat her. For example, you could go over and stand beside the victim and say, “I’m pretty stupid myself, in fact, everybody is stupid in something.”

• Refuse to laugh when someone is made fun of or mistreated some other way.

• Be peacemakers. Do not stir up strife or conflict. Live out the Golden Rule, and encourage others to do the same.

• When you hear gossip, end it by telling the person that you are not going to share the story with anyone and that you feel the person should be told that rumors are being spread about him/her. Let the victim know that a rumor is being spread about him/her and that you are trying to stop it.

• Learn to use the assertiveness skills presented in this book. They will help you defend victims of bullying.

• Encourage the victim to share his thoughts and feelings with you. Be a good listener.

• Encourage the victim to tell an adult. Ask if she/she would like for you to report the bullying.

• Invite the victim to do something with you and others such as going to the movies. Make sure the experience is a positive one.

• Don’t let the bullies control how you treat others. Maintain your values and beliefs. Do what is right. Remember, a person’s reputation is more valuable than gold. It is important that you have a good name. Others will remember all their life how you treated them. How would you describe your current reputation as it relates to how you treat others? When people hear your name, what do they remember, and what do they think about?

• Raise the issue of bullying with the student council and in your classes (i.e., social studies, literature, dramas, English).

• Do not bully the bully and do not try to deal with the bully on your own.
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOOL-WIDE BULLY FREE PROGRAM?

Hopefully, you have this book because your child’s school has established a Bully Free™ Program. For the program to be effective, they need your involvement and support. Here are a few suggestions for you:

- Ask your child’s school if they have a “Parent’s Pledge” to support the Bully Free™ Program. If they do, tell them you would like to sign it and support the program. The following is an example of such a pledge.
- When invited, attend school meetings and activities focusing on the prevention of bullying.
- When your child brings information and homework assignments related to bullying, review the material with her. Reinforce what is taught at school.
- Volunteer to supervise high-risk areas (i.e., playground, hallways, bathrooms, and between buildings) in the school. These are the areas where bullying occurs most often because of a lack of adequate adult supervision.
- Support the anti-bully policies of your child’s school.
- Help your child’s school develop Bully Free™ Bulletin Boards and Banners.
- Encourage your school to use bullying boxes and a telephone hotline so students can anonymously report mistreatment. Some schools have even established anonymous e-mail systems for this type of reporting.
- Encourage your child’s school to add structure to recess or to schedule a different time for older students. Or they can restrict older students to a certain area of the playground.
- Encourage your child’s school to provide Bully Free™ training for all school personnel.
- Encourage your child’s school to purchase books/materials and videos about bullying.
- Encourage your child’s school to eliminate/modify policies that embarrass disadvantaged students and parents.
- Encourage your child’s school to purchase and install surveillance equipment (video cameras, photo cameras, metal detectors, and curved mirrors) for playgrounds, buses and other areas lacking adult supervision. Some schools have even installed video cameras in the classroom.
- Encourage your child’s school to require school uniforms.
- Encourage the school to purchase safe, quality and interesting outdoor equipment for the playground.
- Encourage the school to hire school resource officers.
Bully Free
PARENT PLEDGE*

BOWMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL
“Home of the Bulldogs!”
rspurling@central.mitchell.k12.nc.us

We the PARENTS of a BOWMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL student say.....

“AT THIS SCHOOL,
WE BELIEVE...
WE SHOULD BE...
BULLY FREE!”

Bullying defined is when one individual (or group) seeks to dominate, control, and terrorize the life of another. We know bullying can be pushing, shoving, hitting, and spitting, as well as name calling, picking on, making fun of, laughing at, and excluding someone. Bullying causes pain and stress for victims and is never justified or excusable as “kids being kids,” “just teasing,” or any other rationalization. The victim is never responsible for being a target of bullying. Bullying behavior is not welcome at our school.

I will work with my child’s school and the community to provide environments that are safe, calm, orderly, procedural, and one in which people care for one another.

BY SIGNING THIS PLEDGE, I, THE PARENT OF A B.M.S. STUDENT AGREE TO:

- Keep myself and my children informed and aware of school bullying policies.
- Work in partnership with the school to encourage positive behavior, valuing differences, and promoting sensitivity to others – creating a caring environment.
- Discuss regularly with my children their feelings about school, friendships and relationships, and seek to have a positive impact on their lives through my involvement in their lives.
- Inform faculty of changes in my children’s behavior or circumstances at home that may change their behavior at school.
- Alert school personnel when I observe or receive reports of bullying.
- Serve as a Golden Rule role model for my children and others.

Signed by: __________________________________________
Print Name: __________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________

“When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school but throughout life.”

*Adapted by Dr. Allan Beane, March 27, 2004, with permission from Rick Spurling, Ph.D.

- Work with other parents in the community and establish “Safe Places” between the homes of children and the school. Some parents have also established a telephone network so children can call other parents for help if they cannot contact their parents.
• Ask the school to examine its use of school counselors and/or hire more, so they can use their time to counsel students who have problems.

• Ask the school to establish a system for erasing hurtful graffiti on the walls of the school.

• Ask the school to establish a School Welcome Wagon Program/Committee for new students. The committee should include students who welcome new students and befriend them to make them feel welcome. The students could introduce new students to school personnel and others as well as accompany them to school events.

• Ask the school to hold meetings with groups of students, as well as parents, to discuss bullying and other school safety issues.

A Bully Free™ Program cannot be successful without your support, encouragement, and involvement. Join them as they seek to prevent and stop bullying. If your child’s school system needs assistance, ask them to contact Dr. Allan Beane (www.bullyfree.com).
CONCLUSION

Hopefully this book will be helpful to you and your family. You know your child better than anyone. Therefore, you should decide what strategies are best for your child and family. As mentioned earlier, your involvement in the Bully Free™ Program at your child’s school is critical. Please don’t hesitate to voice your interest in helping them establish such a program. Help me spread the good news that there is hope for the victims of bullying and there is hope in helping children who bully change.

I hope your child is bully free. I hope his/her life has been filled with health, peace, and happiness. I hope this book has brought light into the darkness. I hope your child will bring light into the darkness of others.

REMEMBER . . .

Together,
we can make it happen!

STOP
BULLYING
NOW!
REFERENCES


American Medical Association (www.NASPcenter.org).


Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro and Bukowski (1999) at www.svrc.net


About the author: Allan L. Beane, Ph.D., a former classroom teacher, is an internationally recognized expert, speaker, and author on bullying, as well as a renowned consultant and educator. He has over 30 years experience in education that includes teaching special education, teaching regular education (speech and debate), and serving as Director of a School Safety Center. He has served as an expert witness in criminal cases involving bullying and has been an expert guest for Fox News in Chicago.

Dr. Beane has been studying bullying since 1977. His son was bullied in seventh grade and high school. Bullying contributed to his son’s dying at the age of 23. His son’s life inspired him to write the book, *The Bully Free Classroom™*, and other books about bullying. Schools and districts all over the United States have adopted his program. For more information on the Bully Free Program, go to [www.bullyfree.com](http://www.bullyfree.com).

A dynamic and highly sought-after speaker, he has presented keynote addresses, presentations, and workshops to school districts, organizations, colleges, students, and parents throughout the United States. His down-to-earth speaking style, inspirational stories, and practical strategies appeal to audiences everywhere.

Website: [www.bullyfree.com](http://www.bullyfree.com)
Email: abeane@bullyfree.com
Fax: (270) 753-1927
Call: (270) 227-0431 or (270) 293-7376
Write: Allan L. Beane, Ph.D.
262 Ironwood Drive
Murray, KY 42071