

Stand Up to Bullying

Bullies can appear in virtually any social setting—at school, at work, and even online. Wherever people spend a lot of time, abusive behavior can follow.

Bullying behavior usually has several common elements. First, the bullying intends to harm or control another person. It happens repeatedly and exploits differences in people's power. This could be physical strength, or the status of a job role or social position. Finally, its effects on victims can be severe and long-lasting.

There are ways to fight back. In this issue of *Your Source*, we take a look at:

- Bullying that occurs in school, and how parents and schools can work together to combat it.
- Bullying that occurs in the workplace, and what steps an employee should take in response.
- Bullying that occurs through communication technology such as social media, and what victims and families should do.

Whatever the setting, it's important to learn how to be assertive and take steps to stop the bullying abuse.

Go online today! Log on to access *Bullying Awareness* under the Library/In the Spotlight section. There you'll find information on handling difficult social situations including bullying. There's also information on getting counseling support if you need confidential expert advice. No one should put up with bullying abuse; help is available for anyone who has been a victim.

Bullying at School

Impacting school children of all ages, bullying can be direct, like physical abuse or hateful speech. Bullying can also be indirect, such as social exclusion or rumor spreading. All bullying can harm students' ability to participate in school. Parents and schools can help prevent bullying through active steps.

- **Raise awareness at home and at school.** Bullying often starts at home, where a child has been bullied in some way. The child in turn seeks others to victimize. Schools' regular outreach to parents such as newsletters, websites and parent teacher meetings should address anti-bullying efforts. The school should hold student assemblies on bullying prevention. Students can learn to be more aware of bullying behaviors in themselves and others.
- **Make reporting easier.** The school should promote a system through which children can quickly report bullying and get help.
- **Maintain a zero-tolerance policy.** Rules that ban bullying behaviors should be clear at school. So should the penalties for offenders.
- **If necessary, launch anti-bullying efforts yourself.** If your child's school administration doesn't have an anti-bullying program, encourage them to develop one. Get help from your parents' association if needed.

When There's a Bully at Work

Although we most often think of bullying in school settings, it's also quite common in the workplace. A recent study revealed that 35 percent of the U.S. workforce (more than 53 million adults) report having been bullied at work.

Bullying is usually a pattern of actions meant to frighten, control, offend or humiliate another person. While physical abuse is common in school-age bullying, at work the threats are more often psychological. Whatever its nature, unaddressed bullying can lead to a decline in employee morale and productivity.

Examples of workplace bullying include:

- Spreading hurtful rumors or gossip
- Excluding or isolating someone
- Undermining a person's work
- Threatening physical abuse
- Assigning unreasonable deadlines or workloads to cause stress
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- Yelling or using profanity

If you believe you have been the target of such workplace behavior, the situation can be difficult though not impossible to fight. You should:

- Not allow yourself to be an easy target. Firmly tell the person that his or her behavior is not acceptable and that it should stop. You may want to ask a supervisor or HR person to be with you when you approach the person.
- Document all bullying behavior you see. Keep a written journal with the date, time and exactly what happened. Include the names of any witnesses.
- Ask coworkers to document bullying behavior. Multiple witnesses to bullying can strengthen your case when reported to HR and management.
- Keep copies of any inappropriate memos, emails, or texts received from the person.
- Do not retaliate against a bully. This could be easily misinterpreted by observers who think you're the one at fault.
- Speak to your supervisor or whoever is specified in your workplace policy. Be open and truthful about what has occurred and ask for assistance regarding next steps.

Now That's An Idea!

Stopping Cyberbullies

To help young people combat cyberbullying (bullies using technology):

Stay above the fray. If someone sends a mean or threatening message, or posts something offensive, do not respond.

Save the evidence. A child should not erase bullying messages, posts or pictures. They should be saved as evidence and shared with a trusted adult or authority.

Join your child's networks. Learn about your child's world by joining their social media network(s). There's no need to intrude by posting, but it doesn't hurt to know the "neighborhood."

Encourage your child to report online threats. They should tell you immediately if they or someone they know are being cyberbullied.

File a complaint. Sending inappropriate language may violate the terms and conditions of communications providers and social networking sites. Notify them with copies of the offensive posts.

Get official advice. If you are uncertain whether cyberbullying violates your area's criminal laws, you should contact local police.