

Dealing With Bullying

Bullies are found everywhere—in small communities, towns, big cities, neighborhoods, malls, parks, on the streets and anywhere else people gather. Most of all, bullies are found in schools. Bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Guys can be bullies, and so can girls. Adults can be bullies, too. The good news is, bullies can be stopped.

Bullying Is...

- An imbalance of power (psychological, physical or social)
- Repeated incidences of negative actions, not just one time (unless very severe)
- Done by either a single individual or a group
- Done to gain attention or popularity
- Done to get one's way or material things

What Types of People Are Likely To Be Bullies?

Someone who:

- Likes the rewards that aggression can bring
- Lacks compassion for his or her target
- Lacks guilt
- Believes that the target provoked his or her attack and deserved what happened
- Likes to be in charge and to get his or her own way
- Has parents or older siblings who are bullying him or her
- Misperceives how others treat him or her

People Bully By...

- Physical aggression
- Social alienation
- Verbal aggression
- Intimidation

What Types of People Are Likely To Be Bullied?

Anyone can be bullied. Often, bullies are attracted to people they perceive as:

- isolated and alone
- anxious, insecure, with trouble making friends
- small or weak and unlikely to defend himself or herself
- Likely to give up when bullied or not likely to stick up for himself or herself
- suffering abuse at home

- A student with learning difficulties

HA HA, SO Strategies To Use With Bullies

Remember these letters for strategies to use with bullies.

- **Help**—This strategy is best used in situations where help is available and willing. As a target or potential target of bullying you can ask other students or adults to stay close and provide a watchful eye or get help if it happens.
- **Assert Yourself**—This strategy is usually the best one to start with. But it should not be used with severe bullying or where you are very scared. To use this strategy, look the bully in the eye and say, "I don't like what you are doing. It is mean and unfair. Stop doing it."
- **Humor**—This strategy uses humor to de-escalate a situation. Use this in conjunction with the Help strategy to get others to help think of humorous ways to deal with the bully.
- **Avoid**—This strategy may be the best for situations where the target is alone. One way for the target to use the Avoid strategy is to avoid the bully physically—cross the street or avoid situations where the bullying is occurring, by being with others instead of alone, and analyze what seem to be the triggers for the bully's behavior and avoid them.
- **Self-Talk**—The Self-Talk strategy is used to keep feeling good about oneself. The strategy involves "putting on a record" in one's mind that says nice things like, "When X does these things, it is not my fault. It is his problem that he is being mean. I don't have to accept his opinion of me. I have my own opinion about me and I like myself."
- **Own It**—This strategy can be combined with the Humor strategy with responses like, "I agree that this is an ugly dress; my mother made me wear it." It can also be combined with the Assert Yourself strategy with responses like, "I do have slanted eyes and that is because I am Korean. Korea is a really cool country. Do you want to hear some things about it?"

The first strategy that you use with a bully may not work. In that case, try another. That's why there is

HA HA, SO because it gives you several things to try.

Disengage When Your Buttons Are Pushed

Bullies get to us by pushing our buttons—those things about ourselves that are sensitive. You keep the power when you:

- Think about what gets to you
- Think of things like counting backwards from 30 in your head or the last time you were really bored, and not what the person said or did

Remember that you are giving control to the other person if you respond. Doing nothing means you win and they lose because you stayed in control.

Plan for the next time the person tries to get to you. Bullies usually try again and the second or third time might be worse. When it happens, remind yourself that:

- It gets worse before it gets better.
- Winning is not who is best at put-downs.
- Winning is taking care of your own emotions.

