

Parenting Tips
Trempealeau County Promoting Safe and Stable Families
By
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Bullying

What is the difference between bullying and normal childhood conflict? Comparisons are described on the following chart:

Bully Behavior	Normal Childhood Conflict
One party has the upper hand	Both parties have a fair chance
Often planned, ongoing, and arises without real cause	Generally, spontaneous or arises from a specific disagreement
Victim very upset while bully is matter-of-fact and says things like “What’s the big deal?” or “He asked for it.”	Both parties equally upset and angry about the conflict

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, about one in seven children has been either a bully or a victim. As many as 7% of America’s eighth graders stay at home at least once a month because of bullies. The following tips to bully-proof our children are offered by Herbert G. Lingren, Family Scientist from Nebraska Cooperative Extension:

- **Teach self-respect.** Make sure positive comments about your children’s actions outweigh negative ones. Example: “I like the way you put away your clothes without being asked.”
- **Let your child know it’s OK to express anger or dissatisfaction.** Allow your child to blow off steam. Show her that you value her opinions and accept her feelings. Letting your child stand up to you now and then makes it more likely she will stand up to a bully.
- **Model and acknowledge confident body language.** Show your child how to hold himself confidently, keep his hands steady, and maintain frequent eye contact. Bullies tend to pick on children who appear less self-assured.
- **Encourage friendships.** Start early to help your child develop friendships and build social skills. William Porter, author of *Bully Proofing Your School*, suggests that a shy child should seek out another youngster who’s alone a lot, rather than try to break into a group of two or three.
- **Teach your child to express himself clearly, yet diplomatically.** Use “I” messages. This form of expression works for two reasons. First, it is indisputable. When the child says, “I don’t like to play this game anymore,” who can argue the point. Second, the statement is nonjudgmental. Your child is not putting the other youngster on the defensive.
- **Listen to your child and take reports of his/her being teased or intimidated seriously.** Encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling about the situation. Brainstorm a list of possible strategies to help the child deal with the situation

Additional resources on bullying include:

- <http://hometown.aol.com/kthynoll/bully.htm> A web site, **Taking the Bully by the Horns**, gives young people the skills they need to deal with bullies and maintain healthy self-esteem. The book by the same title co-authored by Kathy Noll and Jay Carter, MA PsyD is available at the site.
- <http://bullybeware.com> **Take Action Against Bullying** offers programs, tips and strategies, and workshops to address the issue.



Family Living Program

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