



What to Do If Your Child is the Bully

No parent ever wants to think their child is capable of intentionally causing harm to others. However, bullying is an unfortunate reality that many families face. Discovering your child bullies others can be confusing, disturbing, and frustrating. It often elicits feelings of shame, anger, sadness, and even denial.

While the news can come as a shock, it is essential to address bullying behavior immediately. Doing so can help your child change course and prevent further damage. This article provides guidance on understanding the roots of bullying, directly addressing incidents with your child, setting clear boundaries, building empathy, and getting professional support.

Why Children Bully

Children rarely bully purely out of malice or sociopathic tendencies. More often, bullying

aims to fulfill an unmet psychological or social need in the bully. Common motivations include:

- Gaining status, belonging, or approval among peers
- Regaining a sense of power or control after being bullied themselves
- Seeking attention from parents, teachers, or classmates
- Failure to understand the real impact bullying has on victims
- Poor social skills or emotional regulation
- An attempt to boost low self-esteem

Grasping the underlying motivations behind your child's bullying is key. It allows you to help them satisfy needs in healthier, more positive ways. This removes incentives to continue the aggressive behavior.

Steps to Address Bullying

If you discover your child bullies others, timely, thoughtful intervention is critical. Here are constructive steps you can take:

- 1 Speak with your child directly: Don't assume reports of bullying are exaggerated or false. Make it clear you take them very seriously. Explain exactly what you heard, but also listen openly as your child describes their experience. Accounts often differ, so maintain objectivity until you understand all perspectives.
- 2 Institute clear boundaries: Define explicit rules and consequences around bullying in your household. Explain that any form of bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Be prepared to revoke privileges and enforce consequences if incidents continue. Work collaboratively with your child's school and authorities to align disciplinary policies.
- 3 Cultivate empathy: Helping your child understand and share in the feelings of others is pivotal. Ask pointed questions about how victims might think and feel. Resist the urge to answer for them. Instead, give them space to reflect critically. Over time, this builds compassion and emotional intelligence.



- ④ Get professional support: Bullying results from emotional or social troubles your child cannot resolve alone. Counseling allows them to better understand their motivations, triggers, and relationships. It also provides a judgment-free space to practice positive behaviors. Consider family therapy to address underlying family dynamics that may enable bullying behaviors.

While discovering your child bullies can be difficult, lasting change is absolutely possible. Early intervention, education, and unconditional support can help them adopt new coping strategies and conduct themselves ethically. With compassion and consistency, you can help guide them toward becoming their best self.