

Parent - 5 Warning Signs Your Child is the Target of Bullying

Bullying comes in many forms: verbal, physical, social, and more. Children who are bullied often feel ashamed. They don't want to talk about it – not even with adults they trust. That's why it is important for parents to be mindful of the warning signs, which can speak volumes. Be on the lookout for these five warning signs:

1. ***They have unexplainable injuries or bruises, or have "lost" valuables like jewelry or electronics – signs of physical bullying and theft by a bully.***
2. ***They have no interest in their normal circle of friends, or want to avoid social situations. The bully might be in that circle of friends, or your child feels ashamed about being bullied.***
3. ***Their grades decline; they suddenly don't want to go to school and maybe even get emotional about it. School might no longer feel safe with the bully there.***
4. ***You see changes in their eating or sleeping habits. They might have nightmares, or have loss of appetite. Being very hungry after school could be a sign their lunch is getting stolen.***
5. ***They seem isolated, sad or depressed. Or maybe they change their online behavior by going online more or hiding what they are doing.***

If you do notice these signs in your child, it is important to act. To help your child:

1. ***Understand what bullying is.*** By definition, it must be repeated and there must be an imbalance of power between the bully and target. If your child experiences other mean or hurtful behaviors, even if not necessarily bullying, this may still require your assistance. Remember, some social experiences, such as teasing and choosing certain friends over others, are developmentally normal behaviors for school-aged children and are not necessarily bad experiences. School is not only for academic learning, but also for learning about social relationships and choosing friends wisely.
2. ***Be supportive:*** Understand that kids often deny bullying, fearing that parental intervention will escalate the bullying. Assure them you will try to help without making things worse for them. Whether they disclose bullying or not: Listen. Don't dismiss their concerns or blame them for not telling you sooner or not standing up for themselves.
3. ***Help your child gain confidence:*** Brainstorm ways to respond to bullying. Standing up for themselves, using humor, avoiding places where bullying happens, and talking to a Safe Adult are all ways to respond to bullying. Help your child identify safe friends that will be helpful and supportive.
4. ***Get help from school:*** If your child finds they cannot deal with the bullying themselves, report it to the school and ask the school to intervene. Many times, bullying will not stop without some outside intervention.
5. ***Don't disconnect:*** If your child is being cyberbullied, do not respond by taking away their technology. Encourage your child to not respond and to block the person online.

