



## Parents: What to Do When Your Child IS the Bully

You never want to find out that your child is being bullied. But what should you do if it turns out your child *IS* the bully?

First, look for these warning signs:

- Displays aggressive, dominant, disrespectful behavior (or speech)
- Gets in trouble at school for fighting or threatening others
- Has possessions that aren't theirs
- Shows little empathy for others
- Hides online behavior

Then, help your child change their behavior. Bullying is unsafe for everyone involved. It not only hurts the person being bullied but the bully as well. In fact, 60% of kids characterized as bullies in 6th through 9th grades had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.

It may be difficult to accept that your child is hurting others, however denying the problem will not make it go away. Punishment and scolding won't be of much help. Instead, admit the reality and then work with your child to help them change their behavior. Understand why your child bullies others to help you better address their behavior. Try to determine if your child:

1. **Wants to be the leader, wants power and control, or wants other children to like them or look up to them.** If so, help them learn positive, healthier ways to be a leader and have others look up to them.
2. **Lacks empathy for others.** If so, look for opportunities to teach them about empathy and how others feel when they are hurting.
3. **Has low self-esteem or feelings of jealousy/inadequacy.** If so, help your child discover their strengths and assets to improve their self-esteem and lessen their comparison of themselves to others.
4. **Has been harmed in some way.** If they are hurting others to help themselves feel better, you will need to address their concerns and feelings first.
5. **Has witnessed negative, hostile, or bullying behaviors from a family member or friend.** Although it may be hard to admit, sometimes kids bully others because that is what they've experienced or witnessed. If so, help them understand this behavior and show them more empathetic and positive social interactions.

If you can get your child to understand why their behavior is harmful, and they want to change it, encourage them to think of the word SAFE:

- Stop the bullying behaviors
- Admit that they've been a bully and ask why; apologize to those they've hurt
- Formulate a plan to change their behavior
- Engage in the new behavior and track their behavior and success

