

BULLYING – WHAT IS BULLYING? AND WHAT ISN'T?

Please use this resource as a guide to understanding situations your child may be experiencing at home and at school.
It can also be used as a conversation guide with your child.

BULLYING

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (StopBullying.gov).

The key point is that bullying is **targeted**, **intentional**, and **repetitive**.

Types of Bullying

Verbal Bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm.

Social Bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors about someone, and embarrassing someone in public.

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, and making mean or rude hand gestures.

Cyberbullying is using the internet and/or social media to do any of the bullying forms above.

WHAT IS NOT CONSIDERED BULLYING?

Other behaviors students engage in may be considered unkind, but they do not raise to the level of bullying. All of these behaviors are unpleasant and need to be addressed, but they are not to be treated as bullying.

- 1. Not liking someone** - It is natural that people do not like everyone around them. It may be an unpleasant behavior, but verbal and nonverbal messages of "I don't like you" are not acts of bullying.
- 2. Being excluded** - It is not considered bullying if children exclude someone on the playground or if they do not get invited to a party. Repeated and deliberate exclusion, however, can be bullying.
- 3. Accidentally bumping into someone** - It is important for parents and teachers to explain that some accidents happen without any bad intention and it's important not to create a big conflict because it was not an act of bullying.
- 4. Making other kids play a certain way** - To make sure students do not fall into considering it as an aggressive or "bossy" behavior, we need to teach them assertiveness. It is not fun, or pleasant, but is not considered an act of bullying.
- 5. A single act of telling a joke about someone** - It is important to teach students that things they say as jokes should also be amusing for others. If not, they should stop. Unless it happens over and over again and done deliberately to hurt someone, telling jokes about people is not bullying.
- 6. Arguments** are heated disagreements about two or more people. Arguments in themselves are not a form of bullying. It is important to help teach students to distinguish the difference between a disagreement and bullying during an argument.
- 7. Expression of unpleasant thoughts or feelings regarding others.** Although it may be unpleasant to hear what someone thinks about you, it is not a form of bullying. If someone says to you, "I think this was not a nice gesture" or "you insulted me when you said this", this is not a form of bullying, but an expression of thoughts and feelings.