



Parenting Tips: Addressing Bullying Behavior

What we know:

In a recent national study, **ten percent (10%)** of school aged children admit to moderate to frequent bullying of their peers. The numbers of children who actually engage in bullying and/or actively support bullying behavior is higher.

Warning signs:

- Come home with unexplained money or possessions
- Persistent teasing, hitting or taking advantage of other children (peers, neighbors, siblings)
- Express a sense of entitlement, inflated self-esteem
- Lack empathy for others
- Defy authority figures (bullying behavior may be directed towards adults)
- Difficulty managing anger

What parents can do:

- Take the problem seriously
- Make sure your child understands that you won't tolerate behavior that hurts other people
- Supervise behavior/interactions with others, including use of the internet
- Respond to incidents of bullying behavior consistently and implement natural consequences. For example,
 - A child who bullies other children in the neighborhood would lose the privilege of playing outside after school for a brief period of time. Return to play may require supervision.
 - A bully on the school bus would be unable to ride the bus and would then sit up front upon return.
 - Any property that is stolen or destroyed must be replaced.
- Notice and reward appropriate interactions with others
- Reassure child that you love them, but don't like their behavior
- Work out a way for child to make amends for bullying
- Look for underlying problems that may be causing anger or frustration
- Teach negotiating skills
- Provide healthy outlets for need for strength/power – sports, leadership roles
- Develop empathy – volunteer for less fortunate, use teachable moment