For Parents and Families: How to Talk with Educators at Your Child’s School About Bullying

Parents are often reluctant to report to educators that their child is being bullied. Why?

- Parents may be unsure how best to help their child and may be afraid that they will make the situation worse if they report bullying.
- They may be embarrassed that their child is being bullied.
- Sometimes, children ask parents not to report bullying.
- Parents may fear being seen as overprotective.
- They may believe that it is up to their child to stop the bullying.

Children and youth often need help to stop bullying. Parents should never be afraid to call the school to report that their child is being bullied and ask for help to stop the bullying. Students should not have to tolerate bullying at school any more than adults would tolerate similar treatment at work.

THE SCHOOL’S RESPONSIBILITY

All children are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by students and staff at school. Educators have a duty to ensure that students have a safe learning environment. Fortunately, most educators take their responsibilities to stop bullying very seriously. Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place. Ask for a copy of your school’s policy or check the student handbook to see if your school has policies that will help resolve the problem.

WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

If your child tells you that he or she has been bullied or if you suspect that is the case, what can you do?

- Keep a written record of all bullying incidents that your child reports to you. Record the names of the children involved, the date the bullying occurred, and what happened.
- Immediately ask to meet with your child’s classroom teacher and explain your concerns in a friendly, non-confrontational way.
- Ask the teacher about his or her observations.
- Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
- How is your child getting along with others in class?
- Has he or she noticed that your child is being isolated, excluded from playground or other activities with students?
- Ask the teacher what he or she intends to do to investigate and/or help to stop the bullying.
- If you are concerned about how your child is coping with the stress of being bullied, ask to speak with your child’s guidance counselor or other school-based mental health professional.
- Set up a follow-up appointment with the teacher (perhaps in a week) to discuss progress.
- If there is no improvement after reporting bullying to your child’s teacher, speak with the school principal.
- Keep notes from your meetings with teachers and administrators.
No Name-Calling Week is an annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling of all kinds and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying in their communities.

No Name-Calling Week was launched in March 2004 as a co-created project of GLSEN and Simon and Schuster Children’s Publishing.

No Name-Calling Week was inspired by a young adult novel entitled "The Misfits," by popular author, James Howe. The Misfits tells the story of four best friends who grow tired of the constant teasing in their middle school, and decide to run for student council on a "No Name-Calling" platform.

No Name-Calling Week currently boasts over 40 national partnering organizations that work to spread the word about the project, including the National Education Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Middle School Association, and the American School Counselor Association.

Participants can purchase the No Name-Calling Week Resource Kit to support planning for the event. The kit includes information about organizing and publicizing No Name-Calling Week in individual schools, a Teacher Resource Book filled with lesson plans and other curricular material, a 27-minute video about name-calling, as well as stickers and posters. Each kit costs $129.95, and can be purchased by visiting www.nonamecallingweek.org.

Each year, GLSEN also hosts a Creative Expression Contest for Students, in which students can submit any type of artistic expression that relates to their experiences with or ideas about bullying. Over the years, thousands of students nationwide have submitted a variety of poems, stories, essays, drawings, collages, sculptures, and songs. Examples of previous years’ prizewinning entries can be found on www.nonamecallingweek.org.

No Name-Calling Week has spread in scope since its inception. Participants are teachers, students, guidance counselors, coaches, librarians, administrators, and other school staff. Both middle schools and elementary schools take part, and due to the high level of K-5 participation in the 2006 Creative Expression Contest for Students, new lesson plans for grades k-5 were developed. In addition, in 2010, Lesson plans and a contest category were added for 9 – 12 students, focusing on anti-LGBT bias in schools. All of these resources, and more, are available for free download in the resource section of www.nonamecallingweek.org.

GLSEN maintains a No Name-Calling Week Listserv that currently has over 9,500 registrants signed up to receive information about the project. You can register to join this Listserv by visiting the "Register" section of www.nonamecallingweek.org. Become a fan on Facebook and join more than 5,300 educators who are talking about ending name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools.
Bullying among children is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Typically, it is repeated over time. Bullying can take many forms such as hitting or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation through gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by e-mail (cyberbullying).

There is no one single cause of bullying among children. Rather, individual, family, peer, school, and community factors can place a child or youth at risk for bullying his or her peers.

**Characteristics of children who bully**
Children who bully their peers regularly (i.e., those who admit to bullying more than occasionally) tend to:
- Be impulsive, hot-headed, dominant;
- Be easily frustrated;
- Lack empathy;
- Have difficulty following rules; and
- View violence in a positive way.

Boys who bully tend to be physically stronger than other children.

**Family risk factors for bullying**
Children who bully are more likely than their nonbullying peers to live in homes where there is:
- A lack of warmth and involvement on the part of parents;
- Overly-permissive parenting (including a lack of limits for children's behavior);
- A lack of supervision by parents;
- Harsh, physical discipline; and
- A model for bullying behavior.

**Peer risk factors for bullying**
Children and youth who bully are more likely to have friends who bully and who have positive attitudes toward violence.

**Common myths about children who bully**

- **“Children who bully are loners.”**
  - In fact, research indicates that children and youth who bully are not socially isolated.
  - They report having an easier time making friends than children and youth who do not bully.
  - Children and youth who bully usually have at least a small group of friends who support or encourage their bullying.

- **“Children who bully have low self-esteem.”**
  - In fact, most research indicates that children and youth who bully have average or above-average self-esteem.
  - Interventions that focus on building the self-esteem of children who bully probably will be ineffective in stopping bullying behavior.

**Bullying and other violent or antisocial behaviors**
Research shows that bullying can be a sign of other serious antisocial or violent behavior. Children and youth who frequently bully their peers are more likely than others to:
- Get into frequent fights,
- Be injured in a fight,
- Vandalize property,
- Steal property,
- Drink alcohol,
- Smoke,
- Be truant from school,
- Drop out of school, and
- Carry a weapon.
Research also shows that
• Children who bully are more likely to report that they own guns for risky reasons, such as to gain respect or frighten others.

• Boys who were identified as bullies in middle school were four times as likely as their non-bullying peers to have more than one criminal conviction by age 24.

What do I do if my child is bullying others?
• Make it clear to your child that you take bullying seriously and that you will not tolerate this behavior.

• Develop clear and consistent rules within your family for your children's behavior. Praise and reinforce your children for following rules and use non-physical, non-hostile consequences for rule violations.

• Spend more time with your child and carefully supervise and monitor his or her activities. Find out who your child's friends are and how and where they spend free time.

• Build on your child's talents by encouraging him or her to get involved in prosocial activities (such as clubs, music lessons, nonviolent sports).

• Share your concerns with your child's teacher, counselor, or principal. Work together to send clear messages to your child that his or her bullying must stop.

• If you or your child needs additional help, talk with a school counselor or mental health professional.

References


NO STICKS. NO STONES.

NO DISSING

NO NAME-CALLING WEEK

nonamecallingweek.org
10 Simple ways to Celebrate No Name-Calling Week in Your School

There are many easy, time-saving ways to share the No Name-Calling Week message with your students. Here's a sampler of no-fuss activities, which require little planning and classroom time.

1. **Enter the No Name-Calling Week Creative Expression Contest.**
   Use a class period for creative writing and art, or encourage students to submit poems, essays, and artwork for extra credit and/or a chance to win prizes. Find more info at www.nonamecallingweek.org.

2. **Hold a No Name-Calling Weak poster contest.**
   Use an art class to make anti-bullying posters, or plan an after-school poster making session. Decorate the hallways with the images and designs that promote No Name-Calling Week and address issues of bullying.

3. **Spread the message in your morning announcements.**
   Encourage journalists to cover No Name-Calling Week and share ways or poetry during morning announcements.

4. **Develop a classroom anti-slip policy.**
   Work with students to outline rules and expectations about classroom language, and display your anti-slip policy prominently.

5. **Write an article for the school newspaper.**
   Encourage your school newspaper to cover No Name-Calling Week experiences with name-calling vignettes from the Misfits, No Name-Calling scenarios, and effective and bullying strategies from a social worker.

6. **Take a Name-Calling survey in your school.**
   The 27-minute video available in the No Name-Calling Week site or department offices can create dialogue on the effects of name-calling and harassment. Questions can range from “How do you feel when someone teases you or calls you a bad name?” to as simple as “How many times a day do you hear name-calling at school?” Both are sure to get their minds thinking about the effects of name-calling and possibly change their behavior.

7. **Discuss sportsmanship in physical education classes.**
   Ask physical education teachers to take a few minutes to discuss the value of sportsmanship and respect.

8. **Screen the No Name-Calling Week video.**
   The 27-minute video available in the No Name-Calling Week site or department offices features young people talking about their experiences with name-calling vignettes from the Misfits, No Name-Calling scenarios, and effective and bullying strategies from a social worker.

What does SAFE mean?

1. **Say what you feel.**
   Telling a person who is teasing you or calling you names the way that their words or actions make you feel can be a great way to let that person know that you don’t like what they are doing. You can start your sentence by saying something like “When you say/do _______ to me, it makes me feel _______.” Being angry or sad when someone is bullying you is ok, and it is ok to let that person [or someone else] know what you are going through.

2. **Ask for help.**
   Sometimes you can handle name-calling and bullying yourself (possibly by using one of the other SAFE strategies). But sometimes you need to ask for help, and that’s ok. If a person who is calling you names is making you feel scared that you might get hurt, you can talk to a teacher or other adult about what is going on. Asking for help is not about being weak – it’s about taking care of yourself and staying safe.

3. **Find a friend.**
   Some people who call names or bully others like to pick times and places when no one else is around because it makes them feel safer. That’s why sometimes you can end a bullying situation just by finding another person or people to be around or spend time with. Hanging out with people who make you feel good about yourself is important, and the person calling you names might think twice before picking on you when you’re with your friends.

4. **Exit the area.**
   While it might feel like you aren’t doing anything at all, sometimes walking away from someone who is picking on you is the best way to end things. Some people who tease want you to get upset, and while it’s perfectly normal to feel hurt, angry or sad if you are being called names, sticking around the person hurting you may just make things worse. So, if you can, find a way to exit the area where the teasing is happening.

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### No Name-Calling Week Facts

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### Staying Safe

If you are being called names or bullied, remember the four ways to stay **SAFE**.

- **Say what you feel.**
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### No Name-Calling Week

I __________ believe that bullying and calling other students hurtful names is wrong. I pledge to do my best to:

- Not bully other students or call them hurtful names.
- Intervene, if I safely can, in situations where students are being called names.
- Support efforts to end bullying and name-calling.

If you are being called names or bullied, remember the four ways to stay **SAFE**:

- **Say what you feel.**
  Tell the person who is bullying you or calling you names the way their words or actions make you feel.

- **Ask for help.**
  Sometimes you can’t handle the situation yourself, and it’s ok to ask for help. Find a teacher or other school staff member to talk.

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