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Know! To Recognize & Respond to Bullying

October is National Bullying Prevention Month; an opportunity to bring awareness to an issue that is negatively impacting children and families nationwide.

Bullying touches the lives of at least one out of every four children in the U.S. In this year alone, approximately 13 million youth from preschool to high school will experience it. Yet, many parents do not even know their child is a victim. One study revealed that as many as 64% of youth who were bullied did not tell a parent, teacher or any other adult about it. Will your child be one of them? Would you recognize it and know how to respond?

Bullying can take various forms. While the schoolyard bully who pushes around smaller children or steals their lunch money still exists, the term “bullying” includes several other negative behaviors. Bullying can be physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, cyberbullying or combinations of the five. In any case, according to Pacer Center’s Teens Against Bullying, it’s considered bullying if:

- The person is being hurt, harmed or humiliated with words or behavior.
- It can be behavior that is repeated, or it can be a single incident.
- It is being done intentionally.
- The person being hurt has a hard time defending him/herself from the behavior.
- Those who are doing it have more power, meaning, they are older, physically stronger, have a higher social status, or if multiple youth “gang up” on another child.

Any parent whose child has been the target of bullying knows the pain it can cause. Sometimes the pain is physical, but many times it is emotional agony. In addition to decreased self-confidence and self-esteem, children who are bullied may develop anxiety and depression, increased feelings of sadness and isolation and/or a change in sleeping and eating patterns; they are more likely to miss, skip or drop out of school; these youth are at increased risk of

suicide, as well as increased risk for tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. These are devastating effects that can follow a person well into adulthood.

Parents need to discuss bullying with their children, to help them understand what it is and what it can do to a person. Young people must also be told: Bullying is never ok. No one deserves to be bullied. All youth have the right to feel and be safe. And everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

If you suspect or know your child is being bullied, here are some steps you can take:

Talk, Listen, Document: Encourage your child to talk about the situation, then listen without judgement, gathering, then documenting as much information as you can. That way, if it gets to the point where you need to contact school personnel, law enforcement or others to intervene, you have a record to share with them.

Support and Empower Your Child: Let your child know the bullying is not their fault and they are not alone – that you are there for them. But keep in mind that typically, a child who shares their bullying experience with a parent, teacher or other adult isn't looking for that adult to fix it, they're more likely wanting support and guidance on creating an action plan to help stop the bullying.

For specific steps in working with school-related bullying, [click here](#);
For an action plan specific to cyberbullying, [click here](#).

Know Your Child's Rights: Different states and school districts within each state have their own policies on bullying. Visit StopBullying.gov to learn about bullying laws in your state; contact your child's school to learn about their individual school policy.

Experts warn parents to resist the urge to directly contact the other parents involved. It typically only makes matters worse. Leave the mediating up to school personnel or law enforcement officers.

Sharing with your child what bullying is and the hurt it can cause is the first step in awareness and prevention. Knowing how to respond if you suspect or know your child is being bullied is essential to their well-being. For further information and advice on this topic, visit [Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center](#).

Sources: [Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center](#). [Pacer's Teens Against Bullying: Bullying 101 – Guide for Middle and High School Students](#). [StopBullying.Gov: Parents](#).

Visit starttalking.ohio.gov to get the conversation going !!!