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What is bullying?

When one person or a group of people intentionally (and, often, repeatedly) hurt another person physically or verbally, this is bullying.

Some of its most common forms are:

- Teasing or saying mean or embarrassing things about someone
- Threatening to harm someone
- Spreading rumors that make someone look bad
- Ignoring or leaving kids out of activities on purpose
- Attacking someone by hitting them or yelling at them
- Harassing someone’s belongings

Bullies might make fun of other kids because they are new at school, live in a certain neighborhood, look or dress differently, or speak a different language.

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens online or through text messages or emails and is often anonymous. It includes posting rumors on sites like Facebook or Twitter, sharing embarrassing pictures or videos, and making fake profiles or websites.

Why do people bully?

Bullies treat other kids badly because they think it will help them fit in or be more popular, they feel superior to their victim, or they are copying other bullies.

How does bullying affect someone?

Being bullied can make you feel sad, lonely, unpopular, afraid, or powerless. Some kids might feel sick or want to hurt themselves. Sometimes kids who are bullied at school start behaving badly in class, getting bad grades, skipping school, or bullying other kids.

Consequences for bullies

Bullying is a serious problem in the U.S. Even if the bullying happens outside of school or online, bullies can receive detention, suspension or expulsion from school. Bullies can even get in trouble with the police, and a police record can have a negative impact on immigration processes. If you need help to change your behavior, talk to an adult you trust.

What should I do if I am being bullied?

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice.
- Walk away and stay away. Don’t fight back.
- Talk to an adult you trust to help stop the bullying.
- Show an adult any negative text messages, emails, or online comments you get.

What can I do to prevent bullying?

- Stay away from places where bullying happens.
- Stay near adults and other kids.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Don’t post embarrassing or hurtful pictures, videos or comments online.
- Keep your passwords a secret.