

Sticks & Stones

Helping Your Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder Cope with Bullying



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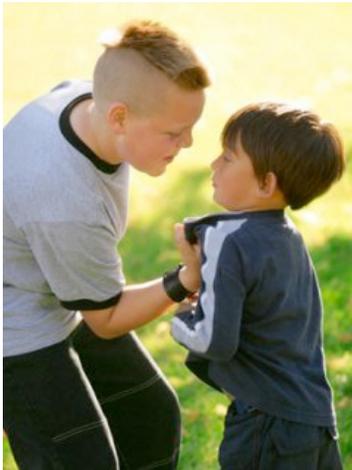
Everyone always says...

"Sticks and stones
may break my bones,
but **words** will never
hurt me..."

...but sometimes words do hurt.

Someone might be a **BULLY** if...

... they call you **mean** names, threaten to **hurt** you, **make fun** of you, or spread **rumors** and tell untrue things about you.



Someone who says cruel things about you, threatens to hurt you, or teases you online or in a text message might also be a bully.

And a bully could also be someone who fights with you by hitting or kicking you.

It's okay to be afraid of bullies.

A bully's words and actions might make you feel bad about yourself, mad, sad, or lonely.

But you are not powerless.



**Call on your inner warrior or super hero!
Your inner super hero is strong, fearless, and
can ignore bullies all day long.**

Pretend to be brave, even if
you feel scared or sad.



Stand tall.

Feel good about yourself.

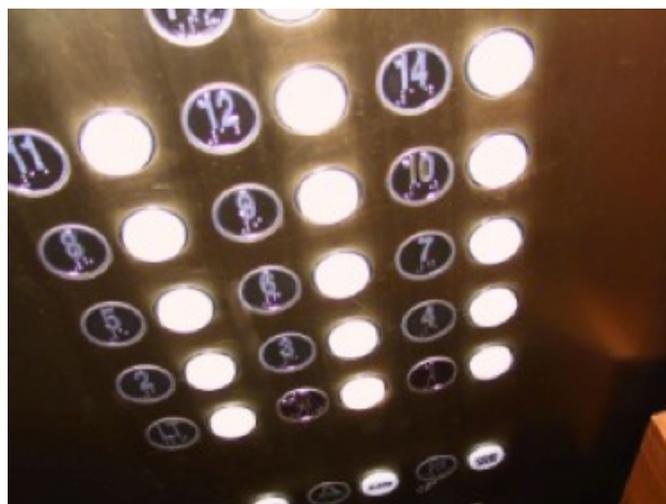
Know that **you are not alone**.
A lot of kids get bullied every day.

What else can I do to make the bullies stop picking on me?

Try to **IGNORE**
what the bullies say and do!

Bullies like to push your buttons.

Have you ever pushed all the buttons in an elevator? It can be so much fun to see all the buttons light up and to hear them make their ringing sound! And just like pushing the buttons in an elevator, bullies want to hear you and see you light up. Sometimes, they think it's a fun game when you get mad or upset even though it isn't very nice.



Act like you don't care.

Do **NOT**:
look at,
talk to,
or respond
to the bullies
in any way...



...unless they seriously try to hurt you.

Do something else, anything else except
talk to the bully.

Focus on your schoolwork, play with your friends,
or do any other activity you enjoy to stay busy.



Try not to let the bullies get the best of you.

Instead of listening to their teasing or responding to their
name calling, you have way more important things to do that
deserve your time and energy, like studying for your math test
or playing your favorite video game.

Know when to ask for help.

Don't be a tattletale.

Only ask for help when the bullies hurt you or someone else, or when they will just not leave you alone even though you **ignored** the bullies or told them to **stop** bothering you!



Before going to school or to a new place, make sure you know that someone you trust will be there. Find an adult who will help you when you need it most.

If you do ask for help, do it **secretly**. Talk to the teacher or another adult in private.

Stop, take a deep breath, and **RELAX.**

When you feel nervous or scared, or when the bullies are really annoying you, think about things you like. For example, you could think about your favorite game, your pet, going to the beach...

... I bet you feel better already!



Walk away.

Find somewhere else to work or play.



**Sometimes you can't walk away because your parents or your teacher would get mad or worry that you've gone missing.
But if you can, feel free to leave.**

Stay cool and calm.

Be a part of the group.

Try not to draw extra attention to yourself.

It's important to have fun and sometimes we can enjoy being silly, even at school. But try not to brag, talk too much in class, make jokes all the time, or do anything else that might distract your classmates and cause them to laugh at you.



Be friendly and nice to other people,
especially your classmates.

FRIENDS are nice people who say and do nice things that make you feel good about yourself.

Friends also stick up for you when you get in a fight or when you need some extra help. Because of this, bullies like to pick on people when they are alone.



Hang out with your friends as much as possible! Avoid being alone when bullies are most likely to pick on you the most, like in the hallway during class changes or at recess.

Don't be a bully yourself!

Try not to tease, threaten, or make fun of others in any way.



You know just how much bullying can hurt.

So, remember the golden rule:

Treat other people the way you want to be treated.



If you are **friendly** to **others**, chances are that they will be friendly to **you** too.

How do you deal with a bully?

- Try to **ignore** what the bullies say and do!
- Act like you don't care.
- Do something else, anything else except talk to the bully.
- Know when to **ask for help**.
- Stop, take a deep breath, and **relax**.
- Walk away.
- Stay cool and calm.
- Be **friendly** and nice to other people, especially your classmates.
- Don't be a bully yourself!

You can do it! Don't let them win.

Parents & Teachers



What is bullying?

Bullying is defined as intentional, frequent, or long-lasting experience of harmful acts performed by others who are of higher status or greater strength than the victim.

- Bullying can include the following:
 - Verbal threats, insults, name-calling, taunting, rumors
 - Physical assault
 - Social rejection
 - Cyberbullying
- Bullying may take place more often when teachers or other adults are not present.

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Rates of Bullying among Individuals with ASD

- Parents of children with ASD report bullying rates twice as high as rates found in typically-developing children.
 - 77% of parents reported at least one at school bullying episode for child in past month.
 - 68% of parents reported multiple types of bullying, with verbal or social bullying being the mostly commonly reported types.
- Teachers report higher amounts of bullying among adolescents with ASD than reported by the adolescents themselves.
 - 10% of adolescents with ASD reported experiencing bullying at least once per week, while 18% of teachers reported students experiencing bullying at least once per week.
 - 17% of adolescents with ASD reported experiencing bullying more than once per month, while 30% of teachers reported students experiencing bullying at least once per month.
- Risk factors for children with ASD experiencing bullying include children who:
 - Are younger
 - Have greater communication deficits
 - Have symptoms of anxiety and/or depression
 - Have fewer friends at school
 - Have parents with mental health concerns

Rates of bullying among typically developing children

- Ranges from **5 to 38%** of adolescent females worldwide
- Ranges from **6 to 41%** of adolescent males worldwide
- **11.3%** of females ages 11-15 in US report experiencing victimization
- **16.0%** of males ages 11-15 in US report experiencing victimization



Repeat Victimization

Risk factors include:

- Poor emotion regulation
- Aggressive responding to bullying

Is my child being bullied?



Signs that your child might be bullied:

- Comes home with clothing or possessions that are torn, damaged or in disarray
- Has bruises, cuts, or scratches; be sure to ask them how they got those marks.
 - See if your child is able to give a reasonable explanation for how he or she got the marks.
- Is reluctant to go to school
 - Ask your child more questions about their reasons for not wanting to go to school.
 - Fear or reluctance to go to school may be displayed through frequently complaining of illness such as headaches or stomachaches.
 - Children may also display avoidance of school by taking longer routes for getting to and from school.
- Loses interest in going to school, talking about school, or completing their schoolwork
- Seems unusually sad, shows unexpected mood shifts, is more irritable, or displays sudden outbursts of temper
- Seems socially isolated (they have no, or few, friends) and is rarely invited to social events outside of school
- Requests or steals money or possessions in order to meet demands set forth by the bully
- Frequently gets into trouble at school for disruptive or aggressive behavior (he or she may be attempting to defend himself/herself or may be bullying other children)

Be on the Look Out

Parents and teachers of children with ASDs should focus on being alert and observant to bullying because victims of bullying are frequently reluctant to report bullying.

Here are some signs and symptoms of bullying that **TEACHERS** should be aware of:

Children who:

- Are repeatedly teased, called names, and made fun of
- Are pushed around or are frequently involved in fights from which they try to withdraw
- Frequently come to you crying
- Have their belongings taken or scattered around frequently
- Are often alone and excluded from the peer group
- Try to stay close to you or other adults
- Have difficulty speaking up in class, appear anxious or distressed, or show a gradual deterioration in school work
- May be hot-tempered and attempt to fight back when attacked

How can I help?

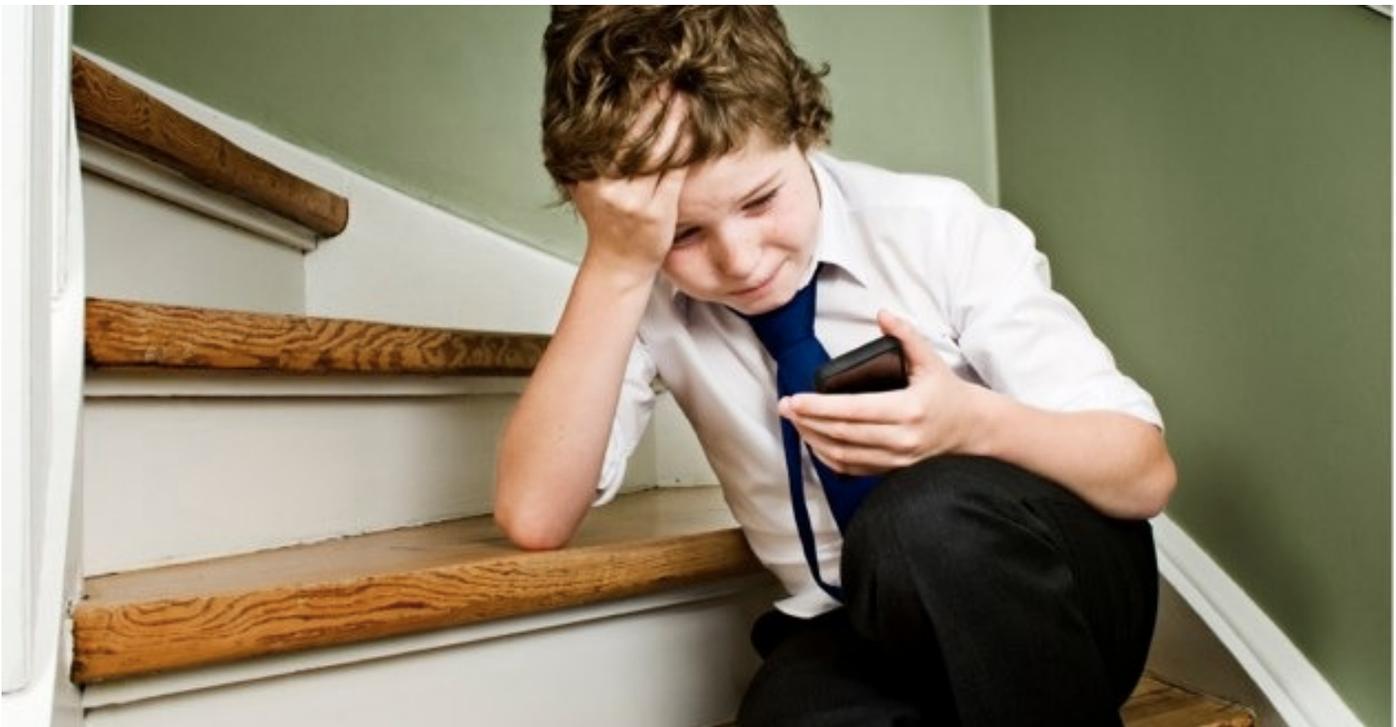
Teachers

- Create a no-bullying environment in the classroom
 - Make specific rules against bullying – have the children work collaboratively to define the rules and consequences
 - Discuss them often and provide the children an opportunity to discuss bullying in a group format
 - Emphasize that bullying is not a normal childhood experience
 - Consistently enforce the consequences
- Give rewards and praise for pro-social behaviors that are incompatible with bullying
- Teach children how to intervene safely
 - Discuss how bullying impacts others
 - Talk about times when it is appropriate to tell an adult versus getting involved
- Combine proactive/preventative and reactive interventions
 - The plans are complementary and will incentivize appropriate student behavior
 - Increase supervision, when possible
- Provide knowledge, raise awareness, change attitudes and behavior
 - Increase students' exposure to strong social models
 - Reduce exposure to aggressive and bullying behavior
 - Provide activities and materials to facilitate discussions about the factors and effects of bullying

How can I help?

Parents

- Develop social competence
 - Teach children how to intervene when they see another being bullied
 - Provide strong social models for empathy and appropriate self-assertiveness without conflict
- Develop children's appropriate responses
 - Teach children to remain calm when they perceive they are being bullied
 - Ensure children know the appropriate path to follow when telling an adult
- Contact the school if you suspect your child is being bullied
- Establish a support system
 - Encourage appropriate social relationships at school



What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying through electronic technology. Examples of cyberbullying may include: hurtful or embarrassing comments, rumors, and/or pictures targeted at an individual via email, videos, social networking sites, or websites.

How can parents help with cyberbullying?

Communicate:

- “Friend” or “follow” your children on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter or ask another trusted adult to do so.
- Talk openly about cyberbullying and other online issues with your children.
- Reassure your child that they will not lose access to technology for talking to you about a problem with cyberbullying.
- Emphasize the importance of protecting passwords, including not giving them to friends. Explain how other people could use their password to take their identity or make posts on their account.
- Implement family rules around technology use
 - Be clear about rules for site usage and acceptable online activities.
 - Explain the importance of online content. Tell them that once they post something, it is public and could later be harmful or embarrassing to themselves or a friend.
 - Speak to your children about privacy settings and explain how information and pictures they post may be seen and used by people they are not friends with.

Understand:

- Understand school technology policies and rules. There may be school-based consequences for behavior on social media sites.
- Pay attention to your children’s online identity, including which websites and technology they use.
- Download programs to monitor online activity and set parental controls on your internet and computer.



Take Action and Report:

- First steps:
 - Do not respond to the cyberbully or publicly post the messages.
 - Keep evidence:
 - Record dates, times, and descriptions of cyberbullying in emails, screenshots, or texts.
 - Block the cyberbully from social media sites, email, and/or phone.
 - Visit the social media site’s safety or help center for instructions on how.
 - Review the terms of service or rights and responsibilities section to determine if posts or messages are inappropriate.
 - Help the site take action by reporting cyberbullying and the user.
- Reporting cyberbullying to Law Enforcement
 - Cyberbullying is considered a crime if it involves:
 - Threatening violence,
 - The commission of hate crimes,
 - Child pornography or sexually explicit content,
 - Photos or videos of a person in a private place where the person may be unaware of being recorded, or
 - Online stalking.
- Reporting cyberbullying to schools
 - Many schools are embracing anti-bullying policies, which includes cyberbullying.
 - Cyberbullying is still bullying and may carry over into in-school behavior as well. Reporting cyberbullying to schools can help them protect students both inside and outside of school, too.

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