

# ALL ABOUT

# BULLYING

## Relational bullying

Bullying is not always physical. Another common form of bullying is relational (social) bullying. This includes nonphysical behaviors that occur over and over to damage a youth's reputation or social standing among peers.

### EXAMPLES OF RELATIONAL BULLYING

- Excluding someone from a social activity
- Spreading a rumor behind someone's back
- Giving someone the silent treatment
- Threatening to stop being friends with someone if they don't act a certain way

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

- **Relational bullying often goes unnoticed by adults.** It is sometimes wrongly assumed that children go through this as a normal part of growing up — as a “rite of passage.”
- **Relational bullying often leads to physical conflicts.**
- **Depression, anxiety and loneliness are often seen with relational bullying.**
- **Bullying is different between boys and girls.**
  - Girls use relational bullying more often than physical bullying. This is partly because they greatly value close-knit friendships and often judge their own worth based on their social relationships.
  - Boys may participate in relational bullying, but they are more likely to bully in a physical way such as hitting or pushing.

### STRATEGIES TO HANDLE RELATIONAL BULLYING

#### Tips for Parents

- Take all incidents seriously while staying calm, without overreacting emotionally.
- Keep communication open with your child in order to recognize if they are bullying others and/or being bullied. Talk about how to respond and when to ask for help.
- Assist your child in making friends outside of school.
- Locate a trusted point person at school (teacher, counselor, etc.) to collaborate with you in supporting your child.
- Alert school administrators (principal, dean of students) and/or police as necessary and report the facts calmly.

#### Tips to Share with Youth

- Recognize what is happening and that excluding a person and spreading rumors can be forms of bullying.
- Stay calm. Don't show emotion if it gives the bully the reaction they want.
- Avoid “bullying hot spots” at school, where there is less adult supervision (for example, empty hallways and areas on the playground that are not visible to most adults).
- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Join welcoming groups of youth, inside or outside of school.

*The “All About Bullying” fact sheets are brought to you by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for Violence Prevention, a hospital-wide, evidence-based effort to protect youth from violence.*

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