



Share the Wellness Tip

September 6, 2013

Back to School: Ban the Bullying

From nasty text messages to hurtful rumors, girls, just like boys, can be bullies. Girls who are bullied face a higher risk for behavioral problems, including depression, eating disorders, and suicidal thoughts and acts.

Signs of being bullied may be harder to spot in girls than in boys, who are more apt to bully physically. Girls more often use subtler, nonphysical actions, like gossiping and teasing, and even cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying takes place using electronic technology, like mobile phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites. This type of bullying can include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles.

If your daughter is being bullied, you might notice mood swings, changes in eating or sleeping habits, or skipped school days. Another clue is “victim” body language, like avoiding eye contact and hanging her head.

Bullying takes a toll on perpetrators, too — sometimes leading to family, emotional, legal and substance abuse problems both now as children and in the future as adults. So don't ignore bully-like behavior. For example, take note if your daughter gets satisfaction from others' pain, discomfort, fear or conflicts. And watch for a lack of empathy, intolerance for others, and blaming people for her problems.

Nip Bullying in the Bud

If your daughter is a bully, try these tips:

- Discuss the problem with your daughter's doctor, principal, teachers or school counselor.
- Speak up if you witness your daughter making fun of someone, even if she's “just joking.”
- Give her specific examples of the hurt she has caused others.
- If she continues bullying, consider having her evaluated by a mental health professional.

If, on the other hand, your daughter is being bullied:

- Tell her it's not her fault. Explain that most bullies make others feel bad to boost their low self-esteem.
- Discourage her from becoming visibly upset or fighting back. Instead, suggest remaining calm and walking away.
- Rehearse possible responses to the bully, such as looking the bully in the eye and saying, “If you don't stop, I'm going to tell the principal.”
- Encourage her to travel to and from school and other places with a group of friends.
- Ask your daughter's principal, school counselor, or teachers to intervene, if necessary.

Sources: Stopbullying.gov, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

