

# BULLYING AND SOCIAL CONFLICT: HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD

Isabel Hernandez, MS, LMHC  
Erica Wells Cerrato, MEd, PhD



**PEDIATRIC PSYCHOLOGY**  
— ASSOCIATES —

# Overview

What is Bullying

What is NOT Bullying (Social Conflict vs Rude vs Mean vs Bullying)

Types of Bullying

Strategies in Cases of Bullying

Social Conflict Management Strategies

Size of Problem

Tattling v. Telling

# What is bullying?

## American Psychological Association (2022)

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone **intentionally** and **repeatedly** causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or more subtle actions

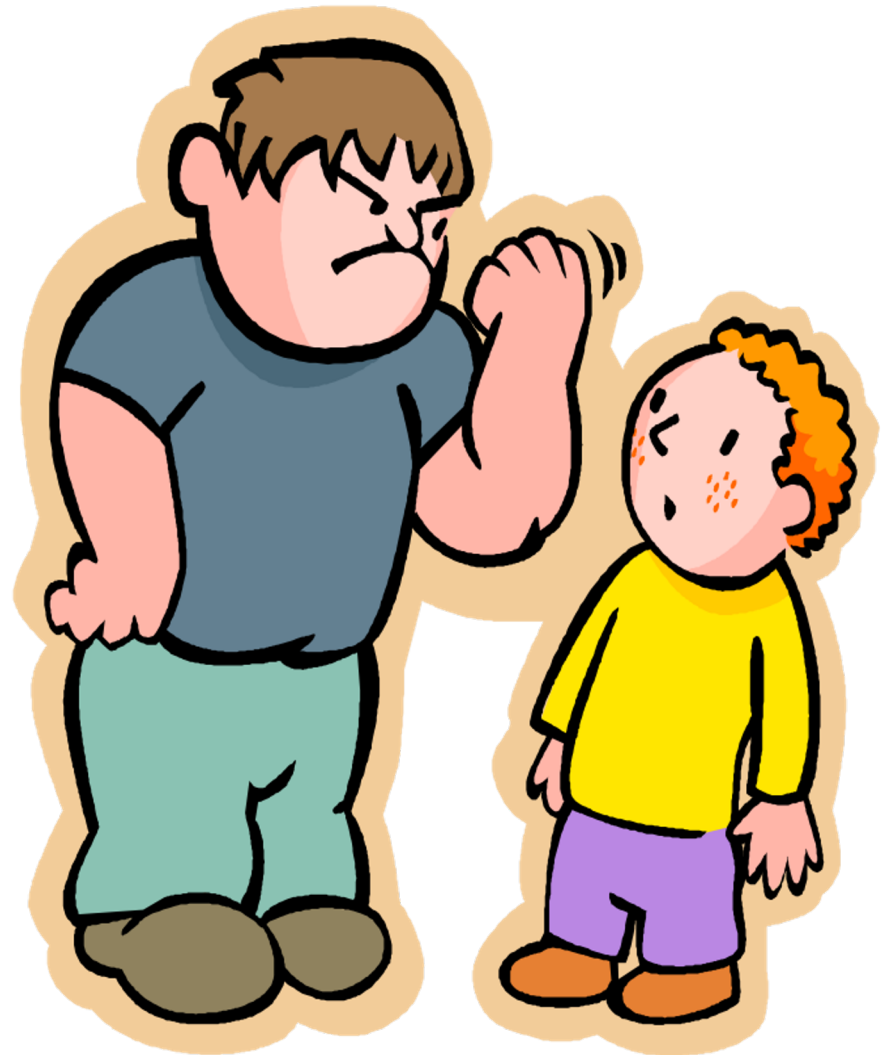
## Florida Department of Education (2023)

**Systematically** and **chronically** inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. Bullying includes instances of cyberbullying. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, **repetitive** instances of teasing, social exclusion, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, theft, harassment, public or private humiliation, or destruction of property.

# What is bullying?

Must include 3 elements: (RIP)

- 1) repeated
- 2) intentional
- 3) power imbalance



# Rude vs Mean vs Bullying

**Rude:** Inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else.

**Mean:** Purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (or maybe twice).

**Bullying:** Intentionally aggressive behavior, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power.

# Social Conflict

vs.

# Bullying

Equal power or friends

Accidental

Not Serious

Equal emotional reaction

Not seeking power

Not trying to get something

Remorseful

Effort to solve the problem

Imbalance of power

Purposeful

Serious threat of harm

Unequal emotional reaction

Seeking power/control

Material/emotional gain

Not remorseful

No effort to solve problem



# Social Conflict

- Arguments about who goes first, what game to play, rules, winning/losing, what happened during a conflict, etc.
- Annoying/impulsive behaviors that create conflict (grabbing others' possessions, skipping classmates in line, poking others for attention, intrusive behaviors, not reading social cues, etc.)
- Shifting of friend groups, inadvertent social rejection

Remember that bullying has to involve a **power imbalance** and **repeated, intentional** behaviors that cause harm.

# Verbal Bullying

- Verbal threats
- Name-calling
- Mocking
- Teasing
- Intimidating phone calls, e-mail
- Taunting



# Physical Bullying

- Shoving, pushing
- Hitting
- Spitting
- Kicking
- Stealing
- Physical acts that are demeaning
- Defacing property
- Using physical restraint

# Relational Bullying/Social Alienation

- Gossiping, spreading rumors
- Embarrassing
- Public humiliation
- Intentional social rejection
- Setting the victim up to look foolish
- Shunning, ostracism, exclusion
- Conditional friendships

# Intimidation

- Mean tricks/pranks
- Taking possessions
- Coercion



# Written Aggression

- “Slam books”
- Note-passing
- Graffiti
- **Cyberbullying** - threatening or harassing behavior conducted through electronic technology such as social media, text messaging, emails

# Sexual Harassment

- Any comments or actions of a sexual nature that are unwelcome and make the recipient uncomfortable

# Racial & Cultural Harassment

- Ethnic slurs
- Any comments or actions containing racial/cultural/ethnic content that are unwelcome and make the recipient uncomfortable

## Strategies for:

- Bullying behaviors
- Victims of bullying behaviors
- Bystanders to bullying behaviors

# Strategies if your child has engaged in bullying behaviors

- Use a no-nonsense style
- Use pro-social consequences (e.g., your child has to work to verbally repair the relationship)
- Give brief, clear descriptions of unacceptable behavior and consequences
- Do not have a long discussion of the situation
- Correct your child's thinking errors (e.g., that the behavior is someone else's fault, that someone deserved it...)
- Identify the other child's emotions
- Build empathy for the other child
- Re-channel power and do not try to suppress



# Strategies if your child has been a victim of bullying behaviors

- Use a supportive, fear-reducing style
- Demonstrate compassion and empathy
- Reduce self-blame by clear identification of cruel behavior and the message that they deserve to be treated with kindness and respect
- Self-reflection without shame: children are free to ask themselves, “what may have given the bully power, and are there ways I can change my behavior to reduce the chance that it will happen again?”
- Connect your child to helpful peers
- Consider individual help with friendship skills
  - Practical strategies: find other friends, seek out others with similar interests, prioritizing values v. trying to fit in
  - When trying to fit in is just too hard and it’s time to find friends who are “your people”

# Strategies for Victims of Bullying: HA-HA-SO

“What can I do if I am being bullied?”

HA-HA-SO

get  
**Help**

**Assert**  
yourself

use  
**Humor**

**Avoid**  
the bully

**Self-**  
talk

**Own**  
it

# HA-HA-SO

<b>Get Help</b>	When someone bullies you, ask parents, teachers, siblings, other students to help you.
<b>Assert</b> yourself	When someone picks on you, you can say, "Please stop that. I don't like it."
<b>Use Humor</b>	You can try to find a funny way to deal with the bully.
<b>Avoid</b> the bully	Stay away from kids who are mean.
<b>Self-Talk</b>	When someone is mean to you, say to yourself, "I'm okay. This is that kid's problem. I'm a nice kid, and being mean isn't right."
<b>Own</b> It	Sometimes you can deflect a put-down by owning it. For example, if someone says, "That's an ugly dress," you can say, "I don't like it either, but my mom made me wear it."

## Strategies for both parties

- Organize supervised activities that include both the bully and the victim
- Promote learning to interact in positive ways

# Strategies with Bystanders

- Normalize fears and worries
- Emphasize strength in numbers
- Communicate the expectation to take action
- Teach skills and strategies to take a stand
- Acknowledge and reward caring behaviors

# Strategies with Bystanders: CARES

<b>Creative</b> Problem-solving	Come up with helpful ways to deal with bullying.
<b>Adult</b> help	This is not tattling when it keeps others safe.
<b>Relate</b> and join	Join with and support the victims. There is safety and strength in numbers.
<b>Empathy</b>	Try to understand the feelings of the victim and speak out against bullying.
<b>Stand</b> up and <b>speak</b> out	Say, "Bullying is not allowed."

# Creative problem-solving for bystanders and levels of risk

## Low Risk:

- Relating behaviors that don't upset anyone such as saying, "I'm sorry that happened," or "He shouldn't be saying that. It's rude and it's not O.K."

## Medium Risk:

- Joining or other caring gestures that may pull some attention to the helper. For example, asking others to join if they are not included in an activity.

## High Risk:

- Confronting behaviors. Assertive stances that may go against the group or the bully such as saying, "Stop that. We don't do that at our school," or "No, I won't give Margaret the silent treatment. I'm not angry with her. You are."

# Things to keep in mind as a parent

- Remember that not all social conflict is bullying (RIP: repeated, intentional, power imbalance)
- Avoidance of social conflict or even avoidance of a bully is not the goal
  - Avoidance increases anxiety in the long run
  - Repairing interactions and practicing prosocial interactions helps children feel more competent and empowered
- One of the best things you can do for your child is help them feel confident navigating social conflict independently!
  - Trying to save children from discomfort unfortunately prevents them from learning vital skills
  - BUT if there is bullying/serious social harm, adults will intervene to help



# What can you do?

- Talk with your children often and listen carefully to what they have to say
- Lead with empathy
- Discuss bullying behaviors and how hurtful they can be to others
- Be consistent with discipline when children engage in hurtful teasing and bullying
- Model friendly behavior and respect for others
- Promote healthy, team-based communication between your child, teachers, and staff

## If your child reports social conflict/bullying to you:

- Ask more questions
- Be patient, kind, not alarmist
- If it sounds like social conflict that can be solved independently, talk through strategies
- If there is social conflict with a peer but it's not bullying, try not to send the message that it's a huge problem. Ask about other things. Ask what went well for your child during the school day. Ask about friends/peers they enjoy. Avoid fixating on the difficulties and empower your child to know: **THEY CAN HANDLE (MANY) SOCIAL CHALLENGES!**

# Social Problem-Solving

- Talk with your children about size of problems (Small, Medium, Big), and appropriate reactions for each one.
- Helpful reactions match the size of our problem.
- Under reactions and overreactions are unhelpful.
- Assume a hands-on approach.
  - Role-plays. Problem-solving scenarios.
- Tattling vs reporting

# Small Problem

You can solve it yourself in almost no time at all.

Can be flexible and ignore it.

Not a safety problem.

Don't need help from an adult.

Can have uncomfortable feelings but requires a **small reaction** ( stay calm, let it go, fix it yourself).

# Medium Problem

You need to ask someone else (usually an adult, like a parent or teacher) for help.

Usually takes a little longer to solve.

Not a safety problem.

Should not be ignored.

Requires a **medium reaction** (ask for help from someone else, stay calm).

# Big Problem

Safety problem or emergency.




Take a lot of time to solve.

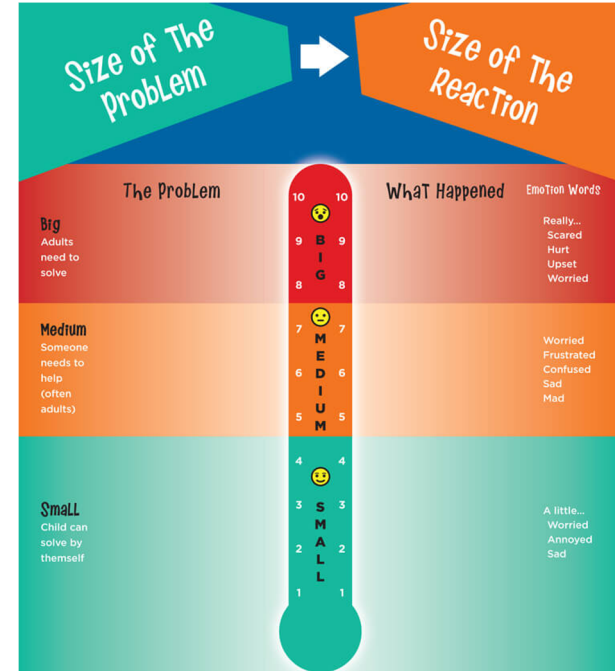
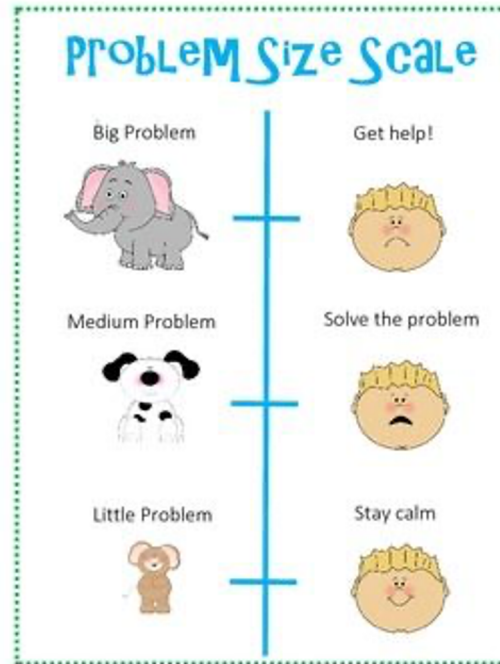
Should not be ignored

Only adults can solve this problem - oftentimes a professional (Doctor, Police Officer).

Requires **big reaction** (might have to shout or run to get help, immediately tell an adult).

# Problem Solving Tools

ARE THEY THE SAME?			
SIZE OF THE PROBLEM		SIZE OF THE REACTION	
<b>BIG</b>	NEED LOTS OF HELP TO FIX	YELLING, CRYING, VERY ANGRY	
<b>MEDIUM</b>	NEED A LITTLE HELP TO FIX	TALKING LOUDLY, FRUSTRATED	
<b>SMALL</b>	CAN FIX MYSELF	CALM, A LITTLE UPSET OR NOT UPSET	



- Think about the size of the problem; write it in that section.
- Circle the size of the problem number (left side).
- Circle the size of the reaction number (right side).
- Explain how I or someone reacted (What happened?).
- Draw a line from the problem number to the reaction number.

- If the reaction size was the same size as the problem, or smaller, people usually don't think a new problem was created.
- If the reaction size was bigger than the problem size, this often creates a new problem for people watching.
- If the reaction size is bigger than the size of the problem, what's the new problem?



# Tattling vs Telling

## Tattling:

Unimportant

Typically harmless behavior

Can handle independently

Purpose – get other in trouble

Behavior is accidental

## Telling:

Important

Harmful/dangerous behavior

Solution requires help

Purpose – keep people safe

Behavior is purposeful





Questions?



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