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Don't Stand Still for Bullying

Wherever it happens, bullying can make a victim's life miserable. Enabled by an imbalance of power such as size, strength, or status, bullying can take many forms—teasing, rumor spreading, social exclusion, threats, intimidation, and violence. It can occur almost anywhere, including school, work, social settings, and now through electronic communication, or “cyberbullying”, such as social media and text messaging, too.

Regardless of its setting, bullying can have severe and long-lasting effects. Victims may feel stress, anxiety, vulnerability, depression, and a range of uncomfortable physical symptoms. The bullying can lead to retaliation violence and, in extreme cases, even suicide.

Fortunately, more people than ever are now aware of bullying behavior—including workplace harassment—and more institutions are adopting anti-bullying policies. However, victims of bullying still often feel isolated and may not know what they can do to stop the abusive behavior.

Bullying at School: What Parents Can Do

Bullying behavior—whether it is physical abuse or less direct forms of intimidation—is far from a new phenomenon in schools. But today, we know more about how common bullying is and how much it can cause long-term harm to victims. It's more important than ever to have anti-bullying programs in schools. Parents can serve as a frontline of support.

Look for the Warning Signs

Signs that your child may be a victim of bullying can include withdrawal from interaction with friends and family, hesitation to attend school, loss of interest in typical activities, decreased appetite, torn clothing, bruises, sleep problems, and depression.

Keep the Dialogue Open

Ask your child each day about classroom activities, peer relations, and any problems he or she may have. Bullied children may be too embarrassed to report abuse, so it's vital to listen closely and step in if you suspect bullying. Parents can connect with their EAP for guidance and strategies.

Have a Safety Strategy

Work on equipping your child with tactics to stay safe. Teach your child nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, such as walking away or talking out issues. Teach them to stay near adults and other students, to find alternate routes away from bullies in school, to eat lunch in a group, and to sit near the front of the school bus. Instruct them to immediately go to a teacher or administrator if bullied. An EAP counselor can help adults create a safety strategy.

Work with the School

Many schools now have anti-bullying awareness events and policies. If your child's school doesn't have such a program, encourage the school administration to develop one. Get help from your parents' association if needed.

Build Resilience and Confidence

If your child is struggling with the effects of bullying, a mental health professional such as a psychologist or social worker or your EAP provider can help him or her build resilience and confidence.

Utilize Your EAP

Talking to a trained EAP Counselor can give your child another advocate to speak with, whom can assist them in building their confidence and developing strategies to deal with bullying. ERC can also help you as a parent develop strategies to support and encourage your child. **1-800-222-8590.**

Sources: National Crime Prevention Council, American Psychological Association, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/StopBullying.gov

HOW TO USE YOUR EAP:

ERC is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). For additional information, visit our website www.ERCincorp.com or simply call 1-800-222-8590.