

Does Back to School Mean Back to Bullying?

August 29 2013 1:09 PM

[Over 3.2 million students are victims of bullying each year](#) (DoSomething.org, 2013). The [American Psychological Association](#) (2013) defines bullying as a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. The ways in which people are bullied can range from name calling and spreading rumors to physical aggression, like punching or kicking.

Bullying has serious mental health consequences. One study showed that [adults who have been bullied in childhood were 4.3 times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder](#). Victims of bullying can also experience increased aggression, feelings of depression, low-self esteem, and some children may also start to exhibit behavior problems at home or at school. Sometimes bullied youth retaliate by becoming bullies themselves.

In some serious cases, youth may attempt or commit suicide as a result of bullying. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Awareness and early intervention can help to prevent these tragedies.

What Should I do if my Child is Being Bullied?

In many cases, a child will not tell their parents that they are being bullied. A sudden change in attitude, like decreased self-esteem, or a change in behavior, such as skipping meals or binge eating, could be indicators that your child is being bullied.

“If your child is being bullied, contact the school and talk to teachers, administration and monitors about coming up with plan to help prevent the bullying from happening” says Charity Nevins, a therapist at WellSpring Resources. “Your child will also need to learn how to effectively stand up to the bully. Help them practice by roleplaying.”

Nevins suggests that you teach your child to tell the bully that their actions are not okay and are unwanted, and then to walk away, preferably to a place where they have friends.

What Should I do if My Child is a Bully?

Being a bully needs to be taken just as seriously as **being bullied**. Being a bully is often a sign of that your child is struggling with a deeper issue, like low self-esteem. Don't be afraid to seek help from a counselor or therapist.

“Many parents are hesitant of contacting the school if their child is a bully because they don't want their child to get in trouble,” says Nevins. “But most schools are more than willing to help educate kids on the consequences of bullying and to coach them on how to stop being a bully.”

Nevins says that role-play is also useful for helping children to stop bullying others.

“Help them explore options other than bullying that will help them get rid of their anger and frustrations, such as talking to a friend or playing a game,” says Nevins.

For more information mental health and bullying, or to learn more about WellSpring Resources, call 618-462-2331.

Founded in 1959, [WellSpring Resources](http://www.wellspringresources.co) is a total mental wellness resource serving Madison, Greene, Jersey, and Calhoun counties. With offices in Alton and Jerseyville WellSpring’s compassionate professionals work with children, adults and families to inspire hope and personal growth. Last year, over 6,000 people sought to change their lives for the better through WellSpring’s mental health and substance abuse services. Visit www.wellspringresources.co for more information.

The service’s Mental Health Court Case Management, Senior Services, Outpatient, Adult Community Support and Child/Adolescent Community Support and provider WellSpring Resources is funded by the Madison County Mental Health Board.

Text @RB to 618-202-4618 to sign up for Text Alerts from RiverBender!