

HOME	ABOUT	LEARNING PLAZA	THE SUMMIT	NEWS	LEARN MORE	SPONSORS
------	-------	----------------	------------	------	------------	----------

[What's the Connection?](#)

[Nurturing Student Management](#)

[Teacher's Hall](#)

[Pete's Robbed](#)

[What's on TV](#)

## NEWS

You Just Found Out Your Kid Is Being a Bully. Now What?



Ada Calhoun for iVillage.com

2:35 PM EST // Sep. 08 2010



Share

19 0

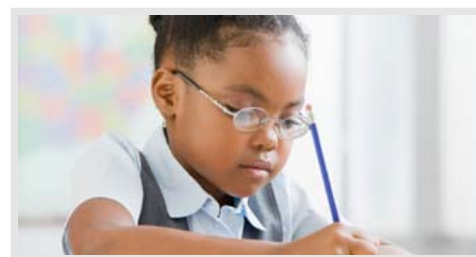
@ email this

Like

One person likes this. Be the first of your friends.

### [You Just Found Out Your Kid Is Being a Bully. Now What?](#)

Kids fight. It's part of childhood. But you never thought you'd be the parent called into school because your child was the instigator in a conflict. And here you are, fresh out of the principal's office, stunned. Don't worry, say the experts. Putting an end to your kid's bullying behavior is totally possible -- as long as you, the parent, are brave enough to face the facts and tackle the issue head on. Not only will you stop the principal's office visits and calls from other parents, but you'll also help your child learn how to get along in the world by treating people right. Unless she's heading for a career in crime or reality television, it's something she'll need to know.



#### **Recognize the Signs**

As parents, we love our kids more than anything else, so it's hard to hear they're behaving badly when we're not around. "Generally, there will be calls from the school saying your child has been involved in altercations," says Dr. Dorothy L. Espelage, co-author of *Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Realistic Strategies for Schools*.

Other warning signs? "He tends to solve problems by either hitting or with verbal sarcasm," says Michele Borba, parenting expert for iVillage and author of *The Big Book of Parenting Solutions*. If you hear yourself telling him, "That wasn't kind" repeatedly, and the behavior isn't changing, perhaps it's time to admit there's a real problem.

#### **Bullying or "Kids Being Kids?" Know the Difference**

"All kids tease," says Borba. But if there's a cruel intention or a relentless stream of abuse, or if a child is told to stop and they don't, then it crosses the line into bullying. If the other kid doesn't feel like he can tease back or is physically intimidated or hurt deep-down, it's not OK to allow it to continue.

#### **Get to the Bottom of It**

Kids usually don't lash out at other kids arbitrarily. So if your kid is doing it, there's probably a reason. "Bullying is a relational problem," says Borba. Could it be that your child lacks friends? Does he want to feel powerful? Is he lacking self-esteem? Or empathy? Is he rebelling? Has he figured out that's how to get his way? Some of these problems can be fixed through lessons, changes at home or with some maturation. Knowing why it's happening may help you stop it.

#### **See It For Yourself**

In order to really understand the situation, you have to face reality. And that means witnessing -- or at least hearing credible accounts of -- what's going on when you're not around. "Watch your kid without him knowing you're watching," says Borba. "Talk to others who know your child well. You may not be seeing him in a social setting, so you need to talk to the teacher or daycare worker or coach who can give you clues." You should find most of them cooperative; people tend to want to help, even if they think your kid's behavior is negative.

#### **Intervene Directly**

The first time you see your child behaving inappropriately, address it. Let her know that the action was disrespectful and hurtful. Borba uses the acronym CARE: "Call out the behavior. Ask your kid how the bullying must make the other kid feel. Review why it was wrong. Express your disapproval and say, 'Here's what we're going to do differently next time.'"

#### **Interact with the Other Kid's Parents**

You may feel guilty about your child's behavior, so it's tempting to want to avoid the kid who's being bullied -- and his parents. But swallowing your pride and opening a dialogue with the other family can work out quite well, says Espelage. "But rarely does that happen," she says. I wish we, as adults, could talk straight about this more often." You may be surprised that they don't blame you for the issue, but are really more interested in seeing it end. And together, you can come up with constructive ways to make that happen.

#### **Make the Punishment Fit the Crime**

How you discipline your child for her bullying behavior should depend on the frequency and intensity of her actions. "The first time, just say, 'I never want to see that again,'" says Borba. "All kids test-out being cold-hearted at some point. Maybe that's all it is." But if it continues and you're hearing it's a problem from a teacher or coach, then connect with that authority figure and work out a plan together. It may be a matter of making some strict rules, like, "You may not be within a certain number of feet of this child."

Plus, your kid should make amends. If she ripped the other child's coat, she needs to save up money and buy her a new one. Give her the right lessons. If she needs to learn empathy, make plans to volunteer to help the needy together. If it seems like she's having trouble solving problems, teach her how to do that without bullying.

### Prevent Bullying in the Future

Some kids start bullying because they've seen similar behavior work for someone else, like a parent or a sibling. If someone you know is acting badly around your kid, consider asking them to make some big changes or keeping them away completely. Another reason kids bully? "Because it works for them," says Espelage. They often gain popularity, get laughs and feel the power of holding a captive audience. If you think this is why your kid is acting out, open a dialogue with her. "When your kid comes home and says school was 'fine,' do not accept that as an answer," says Espelage. And don't forget to teach your kids about healthy relationships and friendships.

Tags: [Article](#) [Bullying](#)

Share

19 0



email this

Like

One person likes this. Be the first of your friends.

Related Stories:



[More black parents turn to home schooling as alternative](#)



[School district fights cyber-bullying](#)



[Education in the News: September 25, 2010](#)



[PHOTOS: Learning Plaza Takes Shape \(UPDATED\)](#)

Comments:

**Add New Comment**


Optional: Login below.

Type your comment here.

Post as ...

Showing 1 comments

Sort by **Popular now** [Subscribe by email](#) [Subscribe by RSS](#)

 **Family Matters** 4 days ago

So simple, yet so important.

Like Reply

blog comments powered by DISQUS

[Video \(134\)](#)

[Public Schools \(65\)](#)

[Teachers \(58\)](#)

[Education Nation \(37\)](#)

- [Charter Schools \(26\)](#)
- [Elementary School \(26\)](#)
- [Waiting for Superman \(22\)](#)
- [Opinion \(22\)](#)
- [Federal Spending \(22\)](#)
- [Parents \(22\)](#)

 FOLLOW EDUCATION NATION VIA RSS [Email Signup](#)

Sign up to receive updates and newsletters from Education Nation.

email signup



Or text **ENATION** plus your email address to **622639**. Message & Data rates may apply.

[Facebook](#)



Education Nation  
on Facebook

Like 12,665

[Twitter](#)

If 100,000 pledges are received by tomorrow, Oct. 1, AmEx will donate \$1 million to DonorsChoose.org. <http://bit.ly/aPjP4e> #educationnation 12:36 PM

[Follow on Twitter >](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

## ACTION FOR EDUCATION CHALLENGE






Take a pledge with Members Project® from American Express to help improve education. If we receive 100,000 pledges by October 1, \$1,000,000 will be donated to DonorsChoose.org.


**TAKE THE PLEDGE**

**MEMBERS PROJECT**  
FROM AMERICAN EXPRESS AND TAKEPART



Recent Activity

-  **Bill Gates: Excellence in teaching is measurable**  
462 people shared this.
-  **Following Finland's lead on education**  
241 people shared this.
-  **Teacher Town Hall**  
312 people shared this.
-  **Powells on ending 'drop-out crisis'**  
292 people shared this.
-  **Becoming a top-ranked nation**  
132 people shared this.

 Facebook social plugin

ADVERTISEMENT

### HOW WILL YOU HELP SUPPORT EDUCATION?

Take a pledge with Members Project® from American Express to help improve education. If we receive 100,000 pledges by October 1, \$1,000,000 will be donated to DonorsChoose.org.

**TAKE THE PLEDGE**

**MEMBERS PROJECT**



© COPYRIGHT NBC UNIVERSAL 2010

[CONTACT US](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)

