



BULLYING

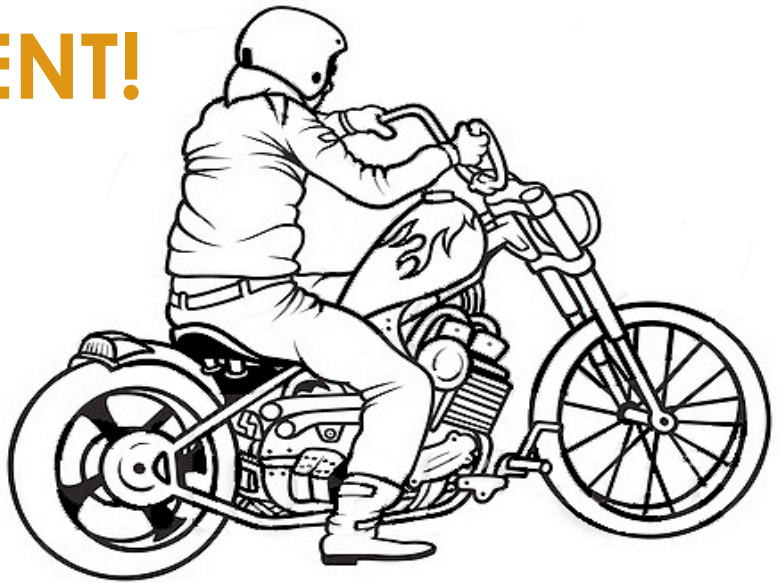
A PARENT'S GUIDE:

HOW TO TELL &
HOW TO MAKE IT STOP

BY JOE WOJCIK

WELCOME PARENT!

Do you worry about what is happening to your child at school? Do you stay up at night wondering if your children are being bullied and how to approach the subject with them? Are you confused about how to effectively approach school administrators to guarantee the safety of your children at school? Are you concerned?



I understand the frustration and anxiety parents experience when they are unsure of how to face a bullying issue. I was bullied as a child and have firsthand experience that can help you get a handle on bullying using educational materials, books, presentations, performances, and consultations.

As parents, we need to make sure our children are protected. We can do this by establishing and maintaining open channels of communication with our children to guarantee we know what is happening in their lives. With this guide, I hope to be able to give you the tools to protect and connect with your child using information on traditional bullying, cyberbullying, and LGBTQ bullying, as well as to provide you with a list of further resources.

I believe students can learn that there is no need to participate in malicious behavior, and that accepting or engaging in any behavior that negatively impacts another person is wrong. I believe that by teaching children that bullying is wrong, they will develop a sense of service toward others. As adults and parents, we need to develop an atmosphere of community in which each member is respected and protected. By leading by example, we can change the culture of schools and our society and have a positive impact not only on our own children, but on children nationwide.

- Joe

Joe Wojcik a.k.a. Joe the Biker
Executive Director of The Yubbie Movement (Foundation)
113 NE Charleston Oaks Drive, Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
Tel No. 772-323-0064

www.joethebiker.com

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INTRODUCTION

Since bullying in schools and cyberbullying are hitting epidemic levels, parents must have access to tools that help their children deal with this disruptive behavior. The solution starts in the home, and it is imperative for parents to advocate on their children's behalf, and also to give them tools to handle unwanted advances.

It is paramount that students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the entire community play roles in eliminating bullying in our schools. Here are some facts to know:^[1]

- ❖ 77% of adolescents admit to being victims of some type of bullying during their school years.
- ❖ Students report that 85% of teachers or other adults in the classroom ignore bullying incidents or do not intervene to help stop them.
- ❖ Approximately 160,000 school children stay home each day out of fear of being bullied, often without telling their parents why.
- ❖ Most bullying occurs during grades four through eight; 90% of adolescents were reported as victims of some kind of bullying.
- ❖ Suicide rates in adolescents have grown more than 50% in the past 30 years, with most cases related to bullying.
- ❖ Adults who were bullied as children have higher rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, and other violent crimes.^[2]
- ❖ Analyses of high-profile shootings such as Santana, Columbine, and Virginia Tech reveal that up to 71% of these incidents involved attackers who felt bullied, persecuted, attacked, or injured.^[3]

Some people believe that bullying is a rite of passage, or that it builds backbone and hardens a child's disposition. However, bullying does not build character. Children who are exposed to bullying tend to exhibit self-destructive behaviors in their teen and adult lives. The impact can manifest itself in many ways including low self-esteem, animosity towards others, and even a heightened risk of suicide.

[1] "Bullying Statistics," www.bullyingstatistics.org.

[2] Ballard, M., Argus, T., Remley, T. "Bullying and school violence: A proposed prevention program." NASSP Bulletin, 1999: 83 (607), 38-47.

[3] "The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States," United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education: Washington, DC, 2002.

If left unresolved, bullying could even lead to violent acts of aggression such as those witnessed in the Santana, Columbine, and Virginia Tech shootings. In these instances, young adults turned their pain into a hatred that was heard throughout the world.

According to experts, “children who are targets often exhibit poor social skills, opening them up to further isolation and torment.”^[4] The results of bullying have only negative effects on a child’s character development, which leads to low self-confidence and a deficit of social skills necessary to live a healthy and happy life within their communities.

As a parent, it is important that you remain aware of what your child is experiencing at school. Bullying is a serious issue that is often overlooked, which causes many cases to go unreported. This guide will provide you with information and resources to help you recognize and deal with these issues, allowing you to become an advocate for your child and prevent further bullying behavior.



[4] Parker-Roerdon, Laura, David Rudewick, and Donald Gorton. “Direct from the Field: A Guide to Bullying Prevention.” Massachusetts, 2007.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is a form of intimidation or domination toward someone who is seen to be weak. It can include verbal name calling, teasing, the spreading of rumors in schools, or even physical violence. Bullies use these threats and other methods to get what they want. They target children for a wide variety of reasons including differences in social groups, culture, race, or gender.

Massachusetts' state law defines bullying as: "The repeated use by one or more students [aggressor(s)] of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of requirements related to this law, bullying shall include cyber-bullying."^[5]

As of 2010, more than 45 states have anti-bullying laws and/or policies that define bullying and state what you and your child can do when faced with a bullying issue. To find out more about your state's anti-bullying laws and policies, visit <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/>.



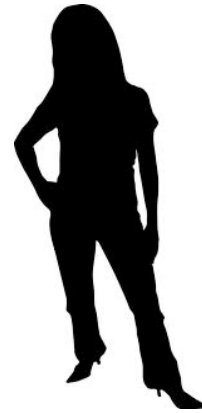
Signs Your Child Is Being Bullied

The most important things to watch for are changes in your child's behavior. Remember that not all children exhibit the same warning signs, and some don't show any at all. The most common signs of bullying are:

- ❖ Coming home with torn, dirty clothing or damaged books
- ❖ Losing things without being able to explain why
- ❖ Having unexplained bruises, injuries, cuts, or scratches
- ❖ Losing interest in school and getting poor grades
- ❖ Rarely spending time with other classmates or bringing friends home

[5] "Central MA Special Education Collaborative Student Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan," Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative. <http://www.cmsec.org/Collaborative%20Plan.pdf>.

- ❖ Seeming afraid or unwilling to go to school in the morning or having mysterious ailments
- ❖ Choosing an illogical route to and from school
- ❖ Appearing unhappy, downhearted, or depressed
- ❖ Having headaches, stomach aches, and little appetite
- ❖ Having sudden outbursts of irritation or anger
- ❖ Sleeping restlessly or having nightmares
- ❖ Stealing or asking for extra money from family members (to soften up bullies)



Is Your Child a Bully?

Bullying can be a complicated issue. Not only do you have to watch for signs of your child being a victim of bullying, but you should also make sure your child isn't participating in bullying others. It can be hard to admit that your child is a bully, but if you identify the warning signs and communicate with your child, you can keep the behavior from advancing. The following behaviors may indicate that your child is a bully:^[6]

- ❖ Getting into verbal and/or physical fights
- ❖ Hanging out with children who are bullies
- ❖ Frequently getting into trouble at school
- ❖ Having unexplained money or new belongings
- ❖ Showing signs of aggression and competitiveness

What You Can Do To Prevent and Deal with Bullying

Parents play a key role in the prevention and elimination of bullying. Here are some things you can do to help ensure that you are preparing your children to be ready for and to cope with these situations to the best of their ability.

[6] "Warning Signs," US Department of Health and Human Services: Washington, DC. <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/warning-signs/index.html>

Keep the Channels of Communication Open

Have frequent conversations with your children. Ask them about their school day and probe for answers, if necessary. Nurturing the relationship helps you keep the channels of communication open and gives you a sense of what your children experience on a daily basis. Having meals and participating in activities together allows you to observe subtle changes in their behavior and provides the opportunity for you to respond.



Allow Your Child To Talk About Bullying Experiences

Be a good listener when children tell you about bullying. Don't criticize the way they handled the situation. Let them know they can always talk to you and that bullying is not tolerated. Make them aware that you are on their side and that they are safe. Empathize with them and make sure they know that it isn't their fault. Keep your emotions in check and be calm. For protocols about approaching school officials, see page 14.

Build Self-Confidence in Your Child

The number one defense against bullying is a child's self-confidence. Research shows that children with high self-esteem can brush off the offensive insults of a bully, and if necessary, can stand up and make an incident report. One way to build children's self-confidence is to help them discover special talents. Encouraging children to participate in sports, arts, or any extracurricular activities can provide a strong foundation for positive development. Physical training of any kind can also help children's self-esteem.

Encourage Your Child To Be Active Outside the Family Unit

It can be difficult to let your child participate in outside events. You want to protect your child, but there is a point when it can be considered restrictive. You have to be able to keep an eye on your child while also nurturing social development. Take the time to verify activities with school personnel and create situations that allow your child to build social skills.

Teach Your Child Social Skills

Help your child join groups and get involved. Encouraging children to socialize is an important defense against bullying. The greater children's social connections, the less likely they are to be targeted.

Set Good Examples

Don't bully your children or others in front of them. In many cases, children who are bullied at home react by bullying other children. If children see you gossip about, hit, or ridicule someone else, they are more likely to do so themselves.

Support Bully-Prevention Programs

Ask about programs already in place at your child's school and see if there are volunteer opportunities or ways you can help. If there aren't any programs, consider starting one with other parents, teachers, or community members.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?



Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs over electronic media and can sometimes be an extension of physical bullying. It can occur through instant messages; social media, such as Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, or Reddit; text or picture messaging; online gaming; or any other form of electronic communication. Cyberbullying is particularly dangerous because it can happen anonymously. This means that it is not always possible to identify the cyberbully, and many bullies feel that they can say hurtful things online that they would not say in person. Some examples of cyberbullying are:

- ❖ Sending mean or threatening emails, instant messages, or text messages
- ❖ Tricking someone into revealing personal or embarrassing information and sending it to others
- ❖ Creating websites or false social media profiles to make fun of another person

- ❖ Using websites to rate peers as prettiest, ugliest, etc.
- ❖ Hacking or logging in to someone else's email, instant message, or social media accounts and doing any of the following: sending/posting mean or false messages as that person, changing profile information in a degrading manner, or uploading embarrassing photos

Signs Your Child Is Being Bullied Online

If children are being cyberbullied, they may exhibit any of the traditional signs of bullying in addition to the following:

- ❖ Appearing distressed or secretive when online
- ❖ Appearing nervous or jumpy when receiving instant messages, texts, or emails
- ❖ Appearing unhappy or irritable, particularly after using the computer
- ❖ Exhibiting drastic changes in computer or cell phone use
- ❖ Being secretive regarding online activities
- ❖ Becoming abnormally withdrawn from friends and family
- ❖ Seeming uneasy about going to school or going outside

Is Your Child a Cyberbully?

It can be hard to face the possibility that your child may be bullying another child online. However, there are signs you can look for to see if children are engaging in cyberbullying activities. You may want to note that some of these activities and traits could be signs of being bullied as well, so it is important that you open up channels of communication with your child. Signs to look for include:

- ❖ Switching screens or closing programs when you walk into the room or near the computer
- ❖ Using multiple accounts on social media sites, or accounts that are clearly not theirs
- ❖ Becoming abnormally upset if they cannot use a computer or cell phone

- ❖ Laughing excessively while using the computer or reading text messages
- ❖ Avoiding discussions about what they are doing online
- ❖ Using the computer at unusual hours of the night



What You Can Do To Prevent and Deal with Cyberbullying

The first thing that you should understand is that the Internet is not inherently a bad place, and many instances of cyberbullying are one-time taunts or mild teasing. However, cyberbullying can sometimes become very serious, and it is important to talk to your child about Internet and cell phone use. About 90% of cyberbullying goes unreported, so keeping open and honest channels of communication with your child is imperative.



Learn About Online Safety

Become familiar with blocking software and other online child-safety tools. Try to block contact from bullies by blocking their phone numbers, emails, or usernames. For example, Facebook allows you to block and report users if they engage in activity that violates Facebook's terms and conditions.

Know Your Child's Login Information

If your child has social media or instant messaging accounts, ask for login information. Let children know that you respect their privacy, but you need the information to keep them safe. Many children are reluctant to talk to their parents about cyberbullying incidents because they are afraid their Internet use will be restricted. If your child is a victim or witness of cyberbullying, keep the evidence. Hold on to text messages, emails, photos, etc., as these could help identify bullies.

Find Out if Your Child Knows the Bully in Person

If children are being bullied online, ask them if they know the bully. Also ask if the cyberbullying is related to offline bullying. Contact the bully's parents and show them proof of the bullying behavior. It is possible that the conflict can be resolved with parental intervention.

Stop Secondhand Bullying

Encourage children not to lash out against or encourage cyberbullies. Encourage them not to "like" negative comments or pages, or to share bullying content with others on social media.

Establish Rules

Make sure your child knows about proper Internet use, online etiquette, privacy, and the existence of cyberbullying.

If your child is being threatened, harassed, or is sent illegal content, contact the police and give them the details—include usernames of the bully and any other identifying information you can collect. Also, contact your child's school and let them know what is happening. Even if cyberbullying occurs at home, school administrators should be made aware of the situation.

Common Internet Acronyms

While use of these terms does not necessarily mean children are bullying or being bullied, the acronyms can be warning signs.

CD9: Code 9
(parents are around)

PAW or PRW: Parents are watching

MOS: Mom over shoulder

PIR: Parents in room

P911: Parent emergency

POS: Parents over shoulder

WHAT IS LGBTQ BULLYING?

As the parent of a child who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or gender nonconforming, it is important to pay close attention to signs of your child being bullied in school. As victims of bullying, LGBTQ students often feel unsafe in school because of their orientation and/or gender expression. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual classmates,^[7] and more than half of bullied transgender students attempt suicide.^[8] While 81.9% of LGBTQ-identified students have been bullied because of their sexual orientation and 63.9% because of their gender expression, only 39.6% of LGBTQ students who have been victims of in-school bullying have reported the incident to school staff.^[7] Bullying of LGBTQ children is a serious issue, but it can be hard to address because so many incidents go unreported. Because of this, it is important that, as a parent, you know what to look for so that you can help keep your child safe.



Signs Your LGBTQ Child Is Being Bullied

Children may be victims of bullying if they display the following signs:

- ❖ Missing school frequently
- ❖ Dodging plans for post-secondary education
- ❖ Avoiding locker rooms and school bathrooms
- ❖ Exhibiting signs of adolescent depression^[9]

If you are unsure if your child is being bullied for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, talk to them. Open communication and acceptance is the best way to know what is going on in your child's life.

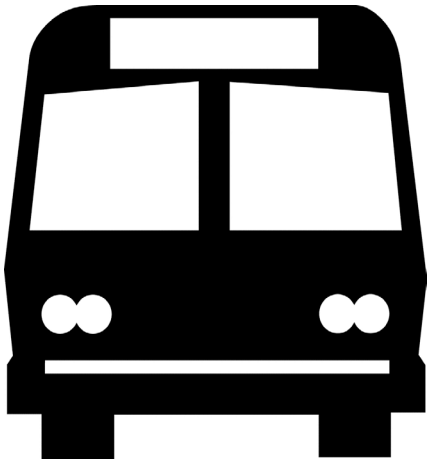
[7] "The 2011 School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools" (GLSEN: 2012).

[8] "Safe and Supportive Schools," National Center for Transgender Equality: Washington, DC, 2011. <http://transequality.org/Issues/education.html>.

[9] Smith, Melinda, Suzanne Barston, and Jeanne Segal. "Teen Depression: A Guide for Parents," Helpguide.org, March, 2013. http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm.

What You Can Do To Prevent LGBTQ Bullying

If children are victims of bullying because of their LGBTQ identities, there are additional steps that you can take to help ensure that children are safe. If lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender nonconforming children have been victims of bullying in their schools, you can take the following steps:



Check Your State's Anti-Bullying/Harassment Laws

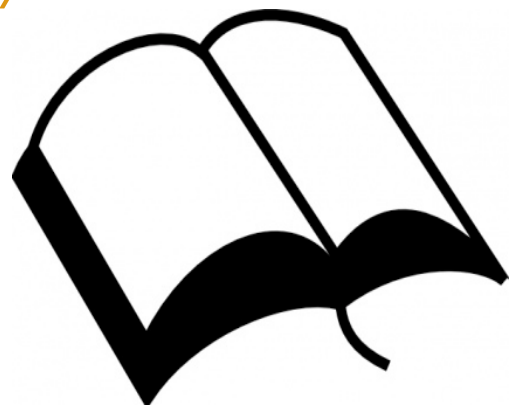
If the laws are comprehensive and include sexual orientation and gender identity, make sure that the school's policy is in agreement. If your state does not have comprehensive and inclusive anti-bullying legislation, consider widening your goals from changing the school policy to changing your state's legislation.^[10]

Create a Gay-Straight Alliance at the School

This type of organization can help make a child feel more welcomed and accepted into the school environment. It can also help to educate other students so that this type of bullying occurs less often.^[7]

Visit Your Child's School Library

Check out some of the LGBTQ resources if they are available. If none exist, consider helping to expand the amount of resources available. The more LGBTQ resources available through the school, the more comfortable LGBTQ children will be, and the more educated their peers can become.^[11]



[7] "The 2011 School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools" (GLSEN: 2012).

[10] "Policies & Laws," US Department of Health and Human Services: Washington, DC. <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html>.

[11] Marra, Andy. "The 2011 School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools," GLSEN: 2012. <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2897.html>.

Encourage and Organize “Safe Space” Training for Staff

Receiving proper education and training will help staff to appropriately handle bullying situations, and “Safe Space” stickers and posters will let children know who they can go to when they need to report an incident.^[12]

In addition, you should remain open, available, and accepting. If children are victims of bullying at school, they need you, first and foremost, to be on their side.

Additional Resources

Parents, Families, and Friends of
Lesbians and Gays

Trans Youth Family Alliance

SOFFA Support Trans-Mentors
International

The Trevor Project

TAKE ACTION

After you find out that your child is being bullied, the next step is to immediately contact the principal of your child’s school. Schools should provide a safe environment for learning, and if your child is being bullied, that safe environment is compromised. This can be an emotionally-charged time, but the most important thing to keep in mind is cooperation. Conflict management is the best approach; teamwork and respect will be paramount in addressing the situation. Your primary objective is to resolve the problem rather than create more conflict.

Some key elements of conflict management are:^[13]

- ❖ Speaking your mind and heart
- ❖ Remaining rational for as long as possible
- ❖ Expressing strong feelings appropriately
- ❖ Avoiding all harmful statements
- ❖ Listening well

[12] “Anti-Bullying Resources,” GLSEN, 2003-2013. <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/antibullying/index.html>.

[13] McCorkle, Suzanne. “Skills for Conflict Managers,” Conflict Management: 2002. http://www.cios.org/encyclopedia/conflict/Eskills2_shortcourse.htm.

What To Do

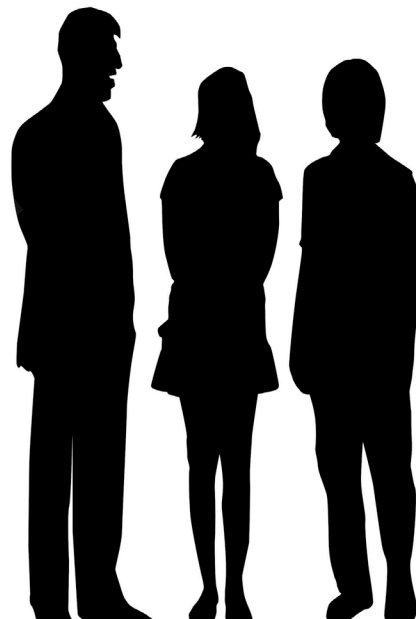
Knowing the right course of action to take makes a huge difference in your child's situation. Here are some steps you should take when contacting schools.

Immediately Inform the School

Contact the school as soon as children tell you that they have been targeted. Most schools have bullying policies in their student handbooks, and some schools have liaisons to handle the reports. Do your homework and know if there is a zero-tolerance policy in place at the school.

Keep a Record of All Incidents

When you contact the school, you should document instances of the bullying in chronological order. Have your child keep a journal describing the incidents of bullying and who was involved. This documentation will help organize the situation and help you build your case. No detail is too small to include—dates, times, what exactly happened, and where it happened.



Don't Give In

Sometimes children do not want their parents to talk with school officials for a number of reasons. Children who have been targeted may not want to have attention drawn to them. They may have been threatened by the bully to keep quiet, or are afraid that there will be retaliation by the bully if the incident is reported. This causes a targeted child to suffer in silence. Despite a child's efforts to dissuade the parent, it is imperative to report the incident and take action. It is the only way to get results.

Involve All Parties

Once the bullying has been discovered, the school should inform all parties involved. This means establishing an atmosphere of cooperation early on between the parents of both the targeted individual and the bully. Only this attitude of commitment will allow constructive steps to be taken.

Hold Schools Accountable

Keep vigilant and know your rights. Parents have the right to expect that the school will take each case seriously and investigate the facts.

Protect the Targeted Child

It is imperative that the targeted child be protected during this process. School administrators and teachers have the responsibility to take steps to guarantee the safety of the child. This will require constant follow-up in the initial stages, which must be maintained until the bullying has subsided.

In the event that speaking with the principal does not resolve the bullying, you should work up the chain of command as necessary. Don't hesitate to speak with the superintendent or your city council member if need be. Remember: It is incumbent upon the administration to provide safety for your child, and it is incumbent upon you as the parent to do what you must to ensure your child's safety, and to do so in a calm manner.

TEMPLATE EMAIL/ SCHOOL CONTACT LETTER

Phoning the school may give you immediate access to the principal or administrator; however, an email or letter is a better option. Emails and letters allow you to calmly gather your thoughts and evidence. They also provide a written record when referring to bullying events and your efforts to have the school intervene and prevent further incidents. Below is a template you can follow.

RE: (Child's First and Last Name)

Dear (Name of Principal or Other School Authority),

My child, (Child's First Name), is in (Grade Level) at (Name of School). At school, (he/she) has been bullied and harassed by (Name of Harasser(s)). This has occurred on (Date or Approximate Period of Time), when (Describe as Many Details of the Incident(s) as Can be Recalled). When this happened, (Name of Witness(es)) heard or saw it and (Their Response(s)). (I/We) became aware of this incident when (Describe How You Were Informed).

(First Name of Child) was hurt by this bullying and harassment. (He/She) had (Describe Physical Injuries, Emotional Suffering, and any Medical or Psychological Treatment Required). (My/Our) child has the right to be in a safe environment at school so (he/she) can learn.

Please investigate this problem and respond to (me/us) as soon as possible. Please let (me/us) know, in writing, of the actions you have taken to rectify the situation and to ensure it does not happen again. Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious problem.

Sincerely,
(Your Name)

If you know the school's policy on bullying, or your state's anti-bullying law or policy, mention it in the letter so that the school is aware of its legal obligations to provide a safe environment for your child. For other letter templates, visit <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullying.asp>.

DEAR PARENT,



I hope you have found this information useful, and that it has given you a better understanding of bullying and prevention. Remember that bullying is defined as any action that causes another person emotional pain. This pain is often internalized and can cause irreparable damage. It is important to know that bullying exists in multiple forms and affects every child differently.

Seeking information on this issue and advocating for children creates a better chance of eliminating bullying. The final page of this guide contains resources to further your understanding of the issue. Please share this guide with other parents to put a stop to bullying.

- Joe

Please visit www.joethebiker.com and www.yubbiefoundation.org for more information.

If you believe bullying is a serious issue, please consider helping our cause and donating to the Yubbie Movement (Foundation) today. The Yubbie Movement (Foundation) is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization. We rely on individual donations and corporate sponsorships, so your donation is important to us and would directly impact the work we do. Less than 15% of our funds are used for management and fundraising; 85% of your tax-deductible donation goes directly to programs, presentations, performances, and services offered to schools.

Please visit our website to donate, or make checks payable to:
The Yubbie Movement (Foundation)
113 NE Charleston Oaks Drive
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983



RESOURCES

Websites

- Common Sense Media: Educate Parents on Cyberbullying and Online Relationships
- Crisis Prevention: School Bullying Resources and References (including cyberbullying)
- GLSEN SafeSpace
- Kids Against Bullying
- Love is Louder
- National Bullying Prevention Center
- National Crime Prevention Council
- Nickelodeon
- Stop Bullying
- Stop Bullying World
- Stop Cyber Bullying
- The Trevor Project

Online Articles About Bullying

- TSHAC Bullying Prevention Website and Resources
- The Nature and Extent of Bullying at School
- Bullying in Schools—Problem-Oriented Guide for Police

Additionally, the University of Colorado, Boulder has a list of publications on the subject.

Books About Bullying

- *And Words Can Hurt Forever* by James Garbino
- *Bullying in American Schools* by Dorothy L. Espelage
- *Schools Where Everyone Belongs* by Stan and Julia Davis
- *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy* by Emily Bazelon
- *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander* by Barbara Coloroso

Also see the Stop Bullying World's book list and check the "bullying" tag on Goodreads.

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