

## **Bullying Prevention ~ Eight Effective People Safety Actions Adults Can Take**

Kidpower is an educational charitable organization that, since 1989, has brought "People Safety" education to over 1.2 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from many different cultures - close to home and around the world. For publications; free articles, podcasts and e-newsletter; and information about our services and locations, please visit [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org).

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Bullying can be prevented and stopped if enough adults take action. Everyone deserves to feel emotionally and physically safe at school, at home and in the community. Here are eight effective People Safety actions from Kidpower that you can use to protect the young people in your life from bullying.

### **1. Address bullying – it's not harmless**

Bullying behavior – whether it's through threatening words or gestures, physically hurting, name-calling, mimicking, harassing, or shunning (isolating someone) – is a destructive force in the lives of too many kids.

Being the victim of a bully is an attack on a young person's self esteem and joy in life. Being the bully allows a child to build behavior that will be socially and professionally destructive later in life. Witnessing bullying creates an upsetting distracting environment in which to play and work and learn.

Potential bullies, victims and witnesses can learn to be assertive rather than aggressive or passive in dealing with problems that they experience directly or that they see happening.

### **2. Make bullying against the rules**

Make sure that your child's school has a clear written Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy that everyone agrees to uphold. Pay attention when kids are acting upset with each other and take the lead in helping them develop skills for handling conflict.

Set an example for your children by not allowing people to bully you and by exercising the self-control necessary not to bully others. At home, work at stopping bullying behavior with the same commitment with which you'd stop someone from throwing all the dishes on the floor and breaking them.

### **3. Teach kids to act aware, calm, and confident**

Bullies pick on kids who act scared, oblivious, or defensive. An alert, assertive attitude can help possible victims and witnesses stop most bullying before it starts.

### **4. Teach kids target denial skills**

Target denial is an official martial arts technique that means, "Don't be there!" Target denial means not giving a bully a physical advantage by being too close. For example, kids can move away from someone who they know is a problem.

Target denial means not giving a bully an emotional handle. One technique is to leave by smiling and waving and saying cheerfully, "No, thanks!" very calmly and sincerely instead of acting scared or angry.

### **5. Teach kids the protective power of words**

Kids tell us that trying to just ignore it when someone says something mean to them doesn't really work. Stop serious name-calling with the same commitment you use when stopping serious hitting. Teach kids to protect themselves from hurtful words by imagining throwing them into a trashcan instead of taking them inside their hearts or their heads.

Teach kids not to let insults, rude behavior, or guilt trips trigger them into feeling intimidated or emotionally coerced by a bully. Kids need to learn how not to let what others say or do control their choices. They also need to learn how not to behave in emotionally damaging ways towards others. Teach kids how to set clear strong verbal boundaries in a respectful assertive way with people they know.

### **6. Teach kids to defend themselves physically**

To be effective in using other bully prevention tactics, kids need to know that they can protect themselves physically. As a last resort when they cannot leave or get help, kids need to know if, when and how they can hurt someone else to stop that person from hurting them.

### **7. Teach kids to get help**

Be someone your kids can come to with their problems without fear of you overreacting or belittling them, or lecturing or getting mad at them. Even if the issues they bring might seem trivial to you they're big to your child.

Most of the time kids just need someone to listen so they won't feel alone. Being able to talk about problems can help a child figure out what to do and put things into perspective – getting our kids into the habit of talking to us can also alert us to more serious issues.

### **8. Give kids the chance to practice**

Kids learn more by doing than by being told what to do. Programs such as Kidpower and Teenpower give kids the chance to develop skills that can change their lives in a few short hours. We also offer educational resources to prepare adults on how to present and practice these skills with their children.