Anti-Bullying Strategies and Supports for Families

Supporting Individuals with Special Needs

Why it Matters…

*Every person has a right to live their life without the fear of being bullied for who they are.*

BULLYING IS NOT ACCEPTABLE!
Signs of Bullying

• Physical evidence: ripped clothing, bruises, injuries
• Hesitation about going to school
• Decreased appetite
• Nightmares
• Weight loss; complaints of stomach pain
• General depression; crying
• Anxiety
• Change in special interest: shift to focus on violence/weapons/martial art

What Are the Effects of Bullying?

• Low self-esteem
• Increased levels of anxiety
• Depression
• Play becomes more like bullying, including teasing and physical discomfort
• General health issues
• Retaliation by hurting others
Where Might Bullying Be More Likely to Occur?

- Less Supervised/ Unstructured Areas:
  - Playground
  - Bus
  - Cafeteria
  - Hallways
  - Bathrooms
  - Neighborhood
  - Online/ Social Networking

What Makes a Child with a Disability a Target for Bullying?

*Individuals with disabilities are 2 to 3 times more likely to be bullied.*

- Low frustration tolerance
- Lack of social skills
- Motor difficulties
- Communication challenges
- Physical impairments
- Solitary play

http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/students-with-disabilities/
If You Suspect Bullying?

- Talk to your child
- Listen to them
- Be patient and supportive
- Be careful not to blame your child
- Don’t ignore your feelings that something might be wrong

*Some questions to start the conversation:*
Has it happened more than once? Did the child know you were being hurt? Who did you sit by at lunch?

For more questions, go to: [http://specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/conversation_starters](http://specialneeds.thebullyproject.com/conversation_starters)

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School-Wide Intervention: Anti-Bullying Programs

There are many resources for school-wide programs and information available:
- PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center [http://www.pacer.org/bullying/](http://www.pacer.org/bullying/)
What Can I Do to Help My Child or Family Member?

- Team approach: involve your child’s educational team
- Teach confidence to your child
- Teach who your child can trust and help him/her develop relationships
- Teach calming strategies
- Explore role plays and practice scenarios
- Educate about cyber bullying

Team Approach

- Contact the school to arrange a meeting
- Meet with educational team (teachers, principal, school counselor, psychologist, Special Ed. director)
- Legal obligation is protection
- Goals to consider for the IEP:
  - Social/ Emotional
  - Social Skills
  - Speech and Language
  - Self Advocacy and Self Awareness
Teach Confidence

- Help develop talents or positive attributes your child possesses
- Suggest and facilitate sports, music, and art activities
- Help your child identify “friendly” peers
- Talk with school staff and/or other parents to identify “friendly” peers
- Meet new friends outside of school environment

Building Trust and Relationships

- Identify adults that your child can trust in each environment
- Teach your child how to seek help from an adult (i.e. I feel__ when ____; emotion cards)
- Peer buddies and/or Circle of Friends
Building Trust and Relationships: Emotion Cards

- Teaching how to identify and share emotions can help a child communicate
- Using visuals, especially for an individual with communication challenges, allows them to share their feelings
- Knowing how to communicate successfully using vocalized words, pictures, or a device makes an individual less isolated and vulnerable

Emotion Card Examples

I feel when

www.freeprintablebehaviorcharts.com
Building Trust and Relationships: Circle of Friends

• Develops a network of support around an individual with special needs
• Promotes peer understanding and building of friendships
• Requires a facilitator and group of 6-8 volunteer peers
• Information available at: http://www.txautism.net/manual.html
• Module with details available at: http://cdd.unm.edu/swan/autism_course/modules/social/circle/index.htm

Calming Strategies

• Relaxation
  – Deep breathing techniques
  – Counting
  – Yoga
• Anxiety hierarchy scale
Calming Strategies: Relaxation

- Teach **deep breathing** as a coping mechanism to relax using a visual support if needed.
- Practice how to **count backwards** silently using visual cuing such as your fingers or written numbers with your child/family member.
- Explore **yoga techniques** with your child/family member using a DVD or book.

Calming Strategies: Anxiety Hierarchy Scale

- Most Anxious
- Least Anxious

- Mall or neighborhood without friends
- Bus
- School without friends nearby
- School with friends
- Home
Role Play and Practice Scenarios

- Role Play
- Cartooning
- SOCCSS

Role Play: Older Individuals

- After being taught a skill, students practice by acting out the situation
- Can use developed scripts or develop own scripts given a story starter
- May role play the situation “gone wrong” and then show it again using social competence strategies
- Talk about the situation
Role Play: Younger Children

- Can use puppets, figures, or dolls for younger children
- Act out bullying situations that might happen or have happened and how to respond

http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/activities/stick-puppet.asp?gclid=CIzIxcbf3K8CFVGCtpodEjckAq

Cartooning

- Draw out a cartoon of what happened, including speech bubbles of what people said
- Insert thought bubbles for the individual to fill in so you know how s/he is viewing the situation
- Use the cartoon to discuss what happened, to clarify what people might have been thinking, and to teach what to do differently
Example of Cartooning

SOCCSS
Situation-Options-Consequences-Choices-Strategies-Simulation

- **Situation**: Who, what, when, where, why
- **Options**: Brainstorm possible options to the situation
- **Consequences**: List a possible consequence to each brainstorm option
- **Choices**: Choose best option after prioritizing list
- **Strategies**: Develop a plan using the option in case the situation occurs again
- **Simulation**: Practice the plan

Texas Autism Resource Guide for Effective Teaching
SOCCSS Bullying Example

• **Situation:** After telling him to stop, I shoved Mark when he kept poking me with a pencil during class.

• **Options:**
  a) Shove Mark
  b) Yell at Mark
  c) Try to move away
  d) Tell him to stop
  e) Tell the teacher

• **Consequences:**
  a) Detention and maybe a fight
  b) Interrupt class and might get detention
  c) Avoid being poked
  d) Might stop, but not this time
  e) Get the help I need before getting myself in trouble

SOCCSS continued

• **Choices:** c), e), b), a), d)

• **Strategies:** I will try to move far enough away from Mark and his pencil first, but if that doesn’t work I’ll tell the teacher. It’s not tattling if I might get hurt, and Mark picks on me a lot. It needs to stop.

• **Simulation:** Role play getting poked at home and practice moving away. Then, practice telling the teacher by raising my hand or walking up to him.
Cyber Bullying

- Teach child not to reveal personal information online
- Limit time online
- Role playing or social stories
- Keep copies of inappropriate messages
- Don’t prohibit technology
- Research screening programs