

Bullying & Healthy Peer Relationships

A Resource for Children & Adolescents

What is a healthy peer relationship & why are they important?

Healthy and positive peer relationships help you develop social and emotional skills, confidence, empathy, increase self-esteem, resiliency, a positive self-image, and much more. Positive peer relationships and acceptance have been found to also increase engagement in school and have been associated with higher GPAs. In adolescence, positive peer support promotes health and well-being. (APA, 2023)

Healthy peer relationships include:

- Companionship
- Validation
- Support
- Trust
- Caring & Kindness
- Comfort



Peer relationships start forming at a young age, and as a child, making new friends can be intimidating and unfamiliar. As a Child or Teen, you are also susceptible to bullying so recognizing what bullying may look like, how to develop positive peer relationships, and knowing how to deal with bullying is important.

What is bullying & What to do if you are being bullied?

What is a bullying?:

Bullying can come in many different forms..

- Physical bullying- shoving, tripping, punching, or hitting. Any physical touch that is unwanted.
- Verbal Bullying- taunting or teasing
- Psychological bullying- gossiping about or excluding people to make them feel bad.
- Cyberbullying- when people use the internet or social media to say hurtful things



(Adapted from Kidshealth.org, 2023)

What To Do If you are being bullied?:

- Tell a trusted adult- adults in position of authority like parents, teachers, and coaches.
- Ignore the bully and walk away- bullies like getting a reaction, if you ignore them and walk away you are not giving them the reaction they are looking for.
- Walk tall and hold your head high- using this type of body language send a message that you are not vulnerable.
- Don't get physical- you're more likely to get hurt and get in trouble if you try to fight the bully, learn how to manage your anger in other ways, such as exercising or writing it down.
- Practice confidence- practice how to respond to the bully, practice feeling good about yourself
- Try to talk to the bully- try to point out that their behavior is harmful and serious.
- Talk about it- it may help to talk to a guidance counselor, teacher, or friend- anyone who can give you the support you need
- Remember you are not to blame- bullies can make you question yourself, affect your self-esteem, and self-love. You are not to blame for being bullied and what a bully says/does says more about who they are as a person then it will ever say about you.

(Adapted from TeensHealth, 2023)

How to develop healthy and positive peer relationships?

Step 1: Recognize what makes up a healthy relationship and assess your current relationships

Step 2: Assess your interests/values & get to know yourself better

- Knowing yourself can help you connect with peers who share the same interests and values with you!

Step 3: Develop a positive attitude and practice being kind.

Step 4: Build on your communication skills and recognize areas for improvement.

Step 5: Boost your confidence!

- Confidence will help you win friends easily!

Step 6: Implement your new skills & put yourself out there!



Additional Resources (Websites/Workshops/Books/Apps)

Parent Recommendations:

- “8 Keys to End Bullying: Strategies for Parents and Schools” by Signe Whitson
- “The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School- How Parents and Teachers can Help Break the Cycle” By Barbara Coloroso
- “Brighter Futures: A Parents’ Guide to Raising Happy, Confident Children In The Primary School Years” By Dr. Liz Dawes

Children Recommendations

- “Speak Up and Get Along!: Learn the Mighty Might, Thought Chop, and More Tools to Make Friends, Stop Teasing, and Feel Good About Yourself” By Scott Cooper
- “The Smeds and The Smoos” By Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler (ages 2-6yo)
- “Llama Llama and The Bully Goat” By Anna Dewdney (ages 2-5yo)
- “Mud Boy: A Story About Bullying” By Sarah Siggs (ages 5-11yo)

Adolescent Recommendations

- “The Survival Guide To Bullying: Written by a teen” By Aija Mayrock
- “Surviving Bullies and Mean Teens” By Mary P. Donahue, PhD