

Bullying is not always physical. Another common form of bullying is relational (social) bullying. This includes nonphysical behaviors that occur over and over to damage a youth's reputation or social standing among peers.

Examples of relational bullying are:

- Excluding someone from a social activity
- Spreading a rumor behind someone's back
- Giving someone the silent treatment
- Threatening to stop being friends with someone if they don't act a certain way

What Parents Need to Know

- **Relational bullying often goes unnoticed by adults.** It is sometimes wrongly assumed that children go through this as a normal part of growing up — as a “rite of passage.”
- **Relational bullying often leads to physical conflicts.**
- **Depression, anxiety and loneliness are often seen with relational bullying.**
- **Bullying is different between boys and girls.**
 - Girls use relational bullying more often than physical bullying. This is partly because they greatly value close-knit friendships and often judge their own worth based on their social relationships.
 - Boys may participate in relational bullying, but they are more likely to bully in a physical way such as hitting or pushing.

Strategies to Handle Relational Bullying

Tips for Parents

- Take all incidents seriously while staying calm, without overreacting emotionally.
- Keep communication open with your child in order to recognize if he or she is bullying others and/or being bullied. Talk about how to respond and when to ask for help.
- Assist your child in making friends outside of school.
- Locate a trusted point person at school (teacher, counselor, etc.) to collaborate with you in supporting your child.
- Alert school administrators (principal, dean of students) and/or police as necessary and report the facts calmly.

Tips to Share with Youth

- Recognize what is happening and that excluding a person and spreading rumors can be forms of bullying.
- Stay calm. Do not show emotion if it gives the bully the reaction he or she wants.
- Avoid “bullying hot spots” at school, where there is less adult supervision (for example, empty hallways and areas on the playground that are not visible to most adults).
- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Join welcoming groups of youth, either inside or outside of school.

The “All About Bullying” fact sheets are brought to you by the Partner for Prevention Program at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Violence Prevention Initiative, a Hospital-wide effort to interrupt the cycle of violence. For more information about bullying, visit chop.edu/violence.