



## Article for Murray's Bully Free Community Education Campaign

### Could Your Child Bully?

By

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In the fourteen years that I have tried to help prevent and stop bullying, a few parents have told me they are concerned that their child mistreats others. They find it heartbreaking, unbelievable, and troubling. They are good parents with children who have gone astray.

All parents should be aware that their child may not initiate attacks on others, but may be quick to join in, to laugh when someone is bullied, or quick to encourage someone to mistreat others. They do this to avoid becoming a target who will feel trapped because they are afraid to tell an adult about their mistreatment. Sometimes they participate in the bullying to be accepted by those who bully and/or because they are pressured by their peers to do so. Additionally, if your child is a target of bullying, she is at risk of becoming a bully. Approximately thirty percent of children who bully are also bullied. Sometimes victims of bullying don't want to be bullied everywhere they go, so they bully others – attack before they are attacked.

Therefore, this article is relevant for all parents. It is critical that all parents be sensitive to signs that their child has adopted or is adopting beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts that lead to hurtful or destructive behavior, such as bullying. Your child may be a bully or have potential to bully if he:

- Enjoys feeling powerful and in control
- Seeks to dominate and/or manipulate others
- Brags about her actual or imagined superiority over peers
- Is popular with other students who envy her power
- Is impulsive, easily angered, and has low tolerance of frustration
- Loves to win at everything, hates to lose at anything, and is a poor winner (boastful)
- Seems to derive satisfaction or pleasure from the fear, discomfort, or pain of others
- Equates respect with fear
- Seems to have little or no empathy or compassion for others
- Seems unable or unwilling to see things from another person's perspective or to "walk in someone else's shoes"
- Seems willing to use and abuse other people to get what she wants

- Defends her negative actions by insisting that others “deserve it,” “ask for it,” or “provoked it”
- Is good at hiding negative behaviors or engaging in them where adults can’t observe
- Gets excited when conflicts arise between others
- Stays cool during conflicts in which she is directly involved
- Exhibits little or no emotion (flat affect) when talking about her part in a conflict
- Blames other people for her problems
- Refuses to accept responsibility for her inappropriate behavior
- Shows little or no remorse for her hurtful behavior
- Lies in an attempt to stay out of trouble
- Expects to be misunderstood, disrespected, and picked on
- Interprets ambiguous or innocent acts as purposeful and hostile; uses these as excuses to strike out at others
- “Tests” your authority by committing minor infractions, then waits to see what you’ll do about them
- Disregards or breaks school and class rules
- Is generally defiant or oppositional toward adults
- Seeks or craves attention (positive or negative)
- Attracts more than the usual amount of negative attention from others; is disciplined more often than other children
- Seems mainly concerned with her own pleasure and well-being
- Seems antisocial
- Has a close network of friends who follow along with whatever she wants to do, even when it is wrong

Hopefully, this article has made you more aware of the signs that a child may mistreat others or is mistreating others. In the next two articles, we will discuss how parents can prevent their child from becoming a bully and how parents can help their child who bullies.

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