

# Solutions Newsletter

October 2022



Effective School  
Solutions

*Solutions* is a newsletter published by ESS for parents, guardians, and caretakers. Each issue highlights an important topic related to children's mental health and provides practical applications for parents in the home environment.

## October is National Anti-Bullying Month

The middle and high school students who are the heroes of the TV series *Stranger Things* can attest to the fact that bullying by other kids can be scarier and ultimately more harmful than facing tentacled monsters and other dark forces. During the month of September, we recognized the many factors that contribute to the increase in youth suicide rates. In October, National Bullying Prevention Month, we are reminded that exposure to bullying is a sad and frightening reality in the lives of many students.

According to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), bullying is common in the United States: nearly 14% of public schools cite bullying as a discipline problem that occurs daily or at least once a week. About 1 in 5 high school students report being bullied on school property, and more than 1 in 6 have experienced cyberbullying. The frequency of both in-person and online bullying, however, is consistently highest in middle schools.

Some students experience bullying more than others: nearly 40% of LGBTQ high school students report being bullied in the prior year, compared to 22% of heterosexual students. About 30% of female high school students say they have experienced bullying compared to about 19% of males, and bullying is almost twice as common among white high school students compared to Hispanic and Black students.

Bullying happens whenever an individual uses his or her power *unfairly* and *repeatedly* to hurt someone. It exists at all levels of society, of course, and adults are certainly not immune, but developing young people are especially vulnerable to its toxic effects. Students who experience bullying are at increased risk of physical harm, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, school avoidance, anxiety, and depression, and are more likely to struggle academically and/or drop out of school entirely.

It is not uncommon these days for parents to feel overwhelmed in their efforts to address all their children's needs. The pandemic, the increase in gun violence, and ongoing racial and political tensions all create an environment that often feels unsafe. Children are exhibiting more mental health and behavioral problems than ever, and many are struggling to catch up socially and academically after months of remote learning. It is important to note, however, that bullying is preventable, and that parents play an important role in protecting both their own children and the entire school community.

Research has shown that school environmental factors (e.g., bullying policies and staff reactions to bullying) do impact the frequency of bullying and overall aggression within schools. In schools where teachers/staff reported a greater commitment to bullying prevention, and viewed teacher-student relationships as positive, students reported a lower frequency of bullying and aggression, and a greater willingness to intervene to help a peer. Parents can contribute to a positive and welcoming school culture that consistently strives to prevent bullying by:

- actively participating in anti-bullying activities at their children's schools.
- advocating for the consistent application of bullying policies and consequences.
- modeling respect for others in their interactions with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.
- having regular conversations with their children about whether they are experiencing or witnessing bullying in their schools; explaining to them that bullying is not acceptable and has consequences, that telling an adult is not "tattling", and that creating a positive school climate is everyone's responsibility.
- monitoring for signs that their children are being bullied – anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, frequent loneliness, unexplained injuries, missing or broken belongings, frequent physical ailments, and/or frequent school avoidance can all be signs of bullying.
- remaining aware of their children's social environment: for example, it is a myth that bullies are usually misfits with low self-esteem. Bullies are often popular students with high self-regard and who others look up to and think are "cool."

### Resources:

[Fast Fact: Preventing Bullying | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC](#)

[Preventing Bullying \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/preventingbullying/)