

Social Conflicts Among Children: Typical or Not?

Play fair. Don't hit people. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Robert Fulghum

Developmentally normal "unkindness" might include:

- Meltdowns from very minor incidents
- Tattling to get someone in trouble
- Rudeness
- Teasing
- "You can't..."
- Exclusion
- Impulsive "blurt outs"
- Comparing and criticizing
- Name-calling
- Best friend or not
- What's "cool" or not
- Peer pressure
- Pushing, shoving, bumping
- Cutting into line
- Taking your seat
- Choosing last for team

Children also may grow apart from friends or groups, which can be painful but not necessarily malicious or bullying

These words might come up with meanness, but less often with bullying:

- Selfish
- Nasty
- Despicable
- Cruel
- Spiteful
- Disgraceful
- Miserly
- Stingy
- Inferior
- Wretched
- Disagreeable
- Unpleasant
- Ill-tempered

Bullying generally is negative behavior towards a less powerful person

- May be verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or racist; may be written, drawn, cyber...
- Often occurs as a pattern (single incidents can become patterns)
- Is intended to harm, not accidental and may include a threat to property or to the person
- Results in substantial distress of the child

It does not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.

These words come up with bullying, rarely with everyday unkindness:

- Tormentor
- Persecutor
- Oppressor
- Tyrant
- Intimidator
- Aggressor

There are other behaviors that seem like bullying but require different approaches. Other problematic social dynamics that may happen, especially with older kids, include harassment, dating violence, gang violence, hazing. Bullying has an everyday meaning, may have a specific school definition, and also is a legal term at different levels of government.



Types of Bullying

- * **Physical bullying:**

kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling, or threatening such.

- * **Verbal bullying**

name-calling, rumors, and persistent teasing.

- * **Emotional intimidation:**

deliberately excluding a child from a group activity.

- * **Racist bullying:**

racial slurs, graffiti, mocking cultural customs, offensive gestures.

- * **Sexual bullying:**

unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Signs of Stress in Children

Stress has visible effects. Under stress, children may **regress**-return to younger behaviors and be unable to do more mature thinking and behavior. **Over- and under reactions** are also common. Signs of stress in children include physical, emotional, or behavioral changes. **Changes in activity patterns** are also important to watch for, as they may be signs of stressful situations including difficult social situations.

When stress symptoms last a long time and/or are more intense than you'd expect of typical development, it's important to understand and respond to your child's needs. Unsafe thoughts and behaviors require an immediate response from adults.

Physical

headaches
stomachaches
trembling
teeth grinding
sore jaw
bedwetting
tired even when getting sleep
sweaty palms
nervous tics
change in hygiene habits
change in eating habits
change in sleeping habits
weight loss or gain
scratches, scrapes, bumps,
bruises
rumpled, stained clothes
covering up inappropriate to
weather/activity
clumsy and/or accident prone

Communication patterns

rapid talking
talk too much
evasive
euphemisms
vague troubling statements
refusal to talk
significant reduction in talking
unable to speak up in class or
other activity

Emotional

easily overexcited
irritable
easily cry
confused
forgetful
anxious, nervous
feel rushed
depressed
clingy
lonely
change in self esteem
change in self image
angry
sullen
insecure
suicidal thoughts

Social

increased time alone
more sibling conflict
change in friends
loss of friends
excluded from peer group
frequent target of ridicule,
mimicking or teasing
upset after texting or time online

Behavioral

increased impulsiveness
restless
rapid walking
do too many things at once
difficulty saying what you want
to; getting the words out
withdraw from enjoyable
activities & people
change in dress or make up
running away from school
running away from home
cutting self, harming self

School and Activities

lower grades
feels sick before school/activity
pretending illness to avoid
activities
claiming an activity was
cancelled and/or ended
earlier or later than planned
waits to get home to use the
bathroom
frequent lost lunches
comes home very hungry from
school (didn't eat at school)
lost money, stealing money
missing or damaged belongings
changes route to school
fearful of going to school
home late from school



