

# The Kinship Connection

For grandparents raising grandchildren



## The Many Faces of Bullying

Dear Grandparents:

Raising children, in general today, can be challenging. Raising your grandchildren is even more difficult and, in fact, can be overwhelming. That is one reason I started this program, to provide you with information and resources to help you navigate the daily challenges you face while raising your grandchildren.

One subject that we have addressed through the years is bullying. In this edition, we examine both bullying and cyberbullying which can be life threatening issues.

While the internet and social media present many opportunities for us to learn and have social connections, there are also many dangers for children and it is important to be mindful of consequences of being online. But staying informed and knowing what to look for are a good start in keeping your children safe.



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### What is Bullying?

It's behavior that's intentionally hurtful and repetitive, not a one-time act. It usually involves a child with greater physical or social power dominating a child with less.

Bullying can take several forms:

- Physical
- Verbal
- Psychological

### How Serious is the Problem?

Bullying is linked to teen and preteen suicide as well as school shootings. Research shows that 15-25% of US students are bullied with some frequency.

A reported 15-20% of US students admit they bully others. Only 25-50% of children talk to an adult about being bullied.

### How do you Recognize a Bully?

The real answer is that you don't always know the bullies that may be in your grandchild's life. Some bullies are easy to recognize while others are better at hiding it.

## Bully, Victim or Bystander

Preventing bullying in early childhood settings involves more than focusing only on the child who is doing the bullying. The emergence of bullying is based on the formation of specific relationships among children who bully, children who are bullied, and children who observe the bullying.

### What Role Does Your Grandchild Play?

**Bully:** Children who bully tend to be friends with other children who bully. They may be leaders in their group, though they also tend to be less cooperative and to engage in fewer pro-social skills. Children who bully can easily become involved in fighting and disruptive behavior that may lead to trouble with classmates and even removal from the school. If not stopped, they may develop strong and persistent patterns of bullying behaviors that carry over beyond childhood.

**Victim:** Once children become repeated victims of bullying, other children often show a dislike for them and don't want to be their friend. Children avoid or exclude victimized children because they want to maintain their position in the social hierarchy and fear becoming targets themselves.

**Bystander:** Children who do nothing to help the victim may feel bad or guilty about it later. Bystanders who laugh or join in the bullying are at risk for becoming bullies themselves. Children who are bystanders need to understand that they have the power to stop the bullying.

**Source:** [promoteprevent.org](http://promoteprevent.org)

### Some Signs of Bullying Behavior

- Aggressive attitude and dominate behavior toward others
- Sullen, secretive and difficult to approach
- Received a number of reports from other children about bullying
- Regularly has jewelry, clothes or money which can't be accounted for
- Have evidence that a child has vandalized or damaged someone's property
- Likes to use others to get what he/she wants
- Constantly tells lies about his/her behavior
- When questioned, the child justifies the inappropriate behavior in the most strident and often surly terms and refuses to admit to doing anything wrong or accepting blame
- When admitting wrongdoing, there is no real remorse or sense of empathy
- Appears to enjoy hurting others and seeing them suffer
- Tells stories or makes malicious remarks about others that are untrue in order to get them into trouble
- Other children are nervous or silent in the particular child's presence
- Has changed friends and demonstrates deviant behaviors
- Lacks foresight to consider consequences of his/her behavior

## Bullying at School

All New Jersey schools are required to have an Anti-Bullying policy. Check the school's website for its latest policy.

### Signs a Child is Being Bullied

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Faking illnesses
- Changes in eating habits, i.e. skipping meals or binge eating
- Child may come home from school hungry due to skipping lunch
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away, harming themselves or talking about suicide

**Bullying** doesn't have to happen at school to affect the people in school.

## Cyberbullying

Bullying by using computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices to send abusive or threatening messages.

### What You Should Know About Cyberbullying

- It is a relentless teasing in a mean or negative tone that is used to make someone feel bad.
- It causes fear and tension among students and gets in the way of learning.
- Cyberbullies may start hate campaigns online against their victims or send messages supposedly from the victims.
- It is a serious problem. It follows kids anywhere they go, making it hard to escape. The hurtful messages or images posted online can be viewed by a wide audience and last for many years.
- Research shows that 43% of teens have reported being cyberbullied.
- In extreme cases, some teens have committed suicide.

Page sources: [www.Stopbullying.gov](http://www.Stopbullying.gov) and the Cape May County Prosecutors Office

### Ways To Protect Your Grandchildren from Cyberbullies

- Monitor their online activity and help them to use the privacy settings on social media sites.
- Learn how to use your grandkids' cell phones and have access to all their accounts.
- Search for them online and read postings about them.
- Tell your grandkids to avoid sites where cyberbullying occurs and to only allow people they know to have access to their accounts.
- Warn them to never post or send anything mean about others or share others' mean comments.
- Don't respond to bullies; and report their actions to the internet or cell phone provider, your child's school, and or the police, if you feel your child is in danger.

### Why Don't Kids Ask for Help?

- Bullying can make a child feel helpless and they may want to handle it in order to feel in control.
- They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale.
- Kids also may fear repercussions from the kids that bully them.
- This may be a humiliating experience for the child and they may not want adults to know what is being said about them.
- They may fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated and that no one cares.

Source: [www.stopbullying.org](http://www.stopbullying.org)

### Build Your Grandchildren's Self-Esteem

*Kids with high self-esteem and many friends are less likely to be bullied.*

- Raise your children's confidence with frequent words of love and praise.
- Acknowledge efforts as well as achievements.
- Talk with your kids often and listen attentively.
- Spend quality time together as a family, playing games and sharing other activities.
- Encourage positive friendships as well as school and community involvement in clubs, sports, or other youth groups.

Source: Facts on Bullying  
(What Every Parent Should Know)

**The Kinship Connection** is published for grandparents raising grandchildren. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group and all of Rutgers Cooperative Extension's educational programs are offered without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

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### **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group**

A program of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County Family & Community Health Sciences provides educational and social support to grandparents residing in Cape May County who are primary caregivers for their grandchildren. The group meets the third Wednesday of the month except in June and July.

For more information about the **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group**, please call **(609) 465-5115 Ext. 3609**

*If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call (609) 465-5115 ext. 3609.*