

Is My Child in Danger of Becoming a Bully?

Bullies are commonly thought of as children who have low self-esteem and are unpopular. While many times this is true, bullies can also be popular and confident and act out to impress friends or assert their dominance over their victims. Bullies will often have many friends who contribute to and support bullying behavior. There are many reasons why children become bullies and there are risk factors for bullying behavior that increase the chances a child will become a bully. Not all bullies seemingly have these tendencies, but many do.

Bullying is different with males and females, although the risk factors for bullying behavior are similar. Male bullies are often bigger, more popular, and more aggressive than their victims are. Risk factors for bullying behavior in males include impulsive behavior, an angry disposition, general aggression, and poor ability to cope with problems or frustration. Having poor problem solving skills is the reason many children resort to bullying. Male bullies often feel the need to be dominant and have a hard time empathizing with others as well.

These risk factors for bullying behavior do not guarantee that a male child will become a bully but they do indicate an increased risk for bullying behavior. Giving children with these traits positive ways to deal with their stress is a good way to prevent bullying.

Female bullies have similar risk factors for bullying behavior although the way in which females bully each other is usually different. Females tend to use more social and psychological forms of bullying than physical forms. Girls tend to use mean comments and other emotional abuse to bully their victims. Girls who frequently exclude others in activities, are generally mean spirited, or frequently gossip have increased risk factors for bullying behavior. Impulsive behavior, an angry disposition, general aggression, and poor ability to cope with problems or frustration are also risk factors for bullying behavior in girls although girls tend to do their bullying in non-physical ways.

All children have risk factors for bullying behavior if they come from unstable home environments. Children whose parents give them little attention, emotional support, and supervision all have increased risk factors for bullying behavior. Parents who are not involved in their children's life or have extreme discipline practices are also giving their children an increased risk factor for bullying behavior. Children need to learn positive ways to problem solve and the importance of treating others kindly and with respect.

This type of home life can cause children to start bullying to seek attention, to make up for their home life, or just because they think that is the way to

solve their problems because they have no better examples of problem solving from home. Not all children from homes with a poor environment will become bullies, some overcome their home lives and understand on their own that bullying is not a good way to solve problems. If you know that your child has any of these risk factors, make sure you teach them positive problem solving methods and make it clear that bullying is unacceptable.