



Suggestions for Teachers When Bullying Behaviors are Reported.

Things Teachers Should Never Say

- I didn't see it happening and I can't just take your child's word that it did.
- Kids will be kids, you know.
- This stuff just happens. It'll all blow over soon.
- Your child just needs to have a thicker skin.
- The child you are accusing of bullying is an honor student and Vice President of the Student Council. I just can't believe he would do such a thing. Are you sure your child isn't exaggerating?

Reasons Teachers Don't Always React Appropriately

Lack of Awareness One recent study reports that in school settings, bullying is missed by adults 96% of the time. "How can this be?" many parents ask. Easier than it seems, I am afraid. While most teachers are very focused on what goes on in their classrooms, the majority of bullying occurs in locations like the lunchroom, the locker room, the playground, the bathroom, the hallways, the bus, and perhaps most infamously, online. When classroom teachers tell concerned parents that they are not aware of bullying incidents taking place in their classroom, they are usually quite accurate.

The straight-A student may well be the bully that "rules the school" safely below the radar of his unsuspecting teachers.

The Teacher's Plate Runneth Over Teachers today have so much on their plates that safe-guarding kids' emotional well-being is a real challenge for them. Educators are duty-bound to address.

Feelings of Helplessness Bullying among school-aged children is widely regarded as an epidemic problem in the United States. If there were an easy solution to the problem, it would have been suggested and implemented long ago. You wouldn't be thinking about it and I wouldn't be writing about it. Getting a handle on bullying in schools is a complex challenge that leaves many Educators feeling overwhelmed and helpless. More often than they would care to admit, the teacher who downplays an incident of bullying is the teacher who simply has no idea how to handle the problem in his classroom.

"Kids Will Be Kids" Mentality When it comes to the "kids will be kids" mentality, no adults should ever dismiss bullying as a "rite of passage" or tolerable fact of childhood. When they do, they violate a child's trust and abdicate their role as responsible adults. Period.

Document, Document, Document Have a parent ask the child to write down your child's account of the incident(s) of bullying. Record as much detail as possible, since memory tends to be short and details can get easily and understandably distorted by emotion. When a parent does the "gotcha!" process, it is upsetting. Better to document and give the teacher a copy of the child's account.

Keep At It Keep in mind: By the time a child has told a parent about the bullying he has faced, he has in all likelihood been dealing with the problem for quite some time and is feeling beaten down.

Public Service Announcements and Posters that tell victims to "Speak Up" in the face of bullying mean nothing at all if, when kids and families find the courage to speak up, they are met with disbelief, denial, and downplaying by school staff. What kind of message are adults sending? What better way is there to violate a child's trust and create a sense of hopelessness and helplessness? Adults cannot continue to fail children in this way.

References: DiMarco, J.E. & Newman, M.K. (2011). *When Your Child Is Being Bullied: Real Solutions for Parents, Educators & Other Professionals*. Vivisphere Publishing. Simmons, R. (2011). *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*. Boston: Mariner Books