



# 13 Reasons...Why you should Talk to your Child about Bullying

By Southeast Health Group

"13 Reasons Why," a new series out on Netflix based on a 2007 novel by the same name, has created a stir in the media about youth depression and suicide. Health advocates fear the show will promote copycat suicides by triggering pain and loneliness in already vulnerable young people. Netflix has agreed to put a stronger warning on the show so that parents are informed about its contents. Here at Southeast Health Group, we have our own list of 13 reasons why...you should talk to your child about bullying.

**1) Your children are living in a cyber age that is different from the world you grew up in.** Bullying on the playground is easy to spot, but when it happens on Facebook or Snapchat, how would you know? The rules of parenting have changed because of the technological age we now live in. As a parent, you need to know how your child is interacting online, and how those interactions affect him.

***"Even if your child is not a bully or a victim of bullying, they can still be affected by it."***

**2) Bullying can be physical or emotional.** The absence of a black eye or bruises is not enough to rule out bullying. It can include gossiping, spreading hurtful rumors, or leaving people out. Name calling, teasing, or criticizing—when done with the intent to harm—is bullying. Any act of aggression, verbal or physical, should be addressed with your child.

**3) You may not know that your child is a victim of bullying.** Your child may be caught in a powerless situation and not be able to make it stop on his or her own. At the very least, they need your support and coaching to stand up for themselves. They may also need you to advocate on their behalf with a teacher, principal, or other adult in a position of authority.

**4) You may not know that your child is bullying other children.** Have you asked your child about the line between good natured teasing and intentional bullying? Do they

understand when they have crossed that line? Can they recognize it in role playing, and communicate it back to you? Have you seen bullying behavior in their friends? Take time to gauge your child's style of communicating with peers.

**5) Witnessing bullying can be traumatizing.**

Even if your child is not a bully or a victim of bullying, they can still be affected by it. Bullying is an act of violence. Giving your child an opportunity to share what they experienced as a bystander will make a difference in their ability to move past it. Practice good listening skills and reassure the child so he can feel safe again.

**6) Bullying makes children feel powerless.** It can cause anxiety and depression in the child who is the victim of bullying. Does your child ask to stay home from school? Does she avoid social situations? Does he get frequent stomach aches or headaches? They may be trying to avoid the pain of running into a bully, but don't feel safe enough to tell anyone. Open up the conversation and give the child a chance to tell you what's really going on.

**7) Bullying does not make children tougher.** In fact, being subjected to bullying often has the opposite effect and lowers a child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Don't "wait and see" how your child overcomes the problem. Address the problem today to prevent more emotional damage.

**8) The scars from bullying last a lifetime.** Sticks and stones can break your bones, and words can hurt, too. Children need to understand the impact of their words from a young age. As a parent, you are an important role model in showing your child how to treat others. If you embrace the differences between people and speak kindly of others, so will your child.

**9) Bullying is different from conflict.** Every child needs to learn how to navigate his or her way through conflict, such as a disagreement or a difference of opinion. The solution for conflict is communication and compromise. Often, people can just agree to disagree. Bullying is different because it involves aggression and disrespect. It is intended to



hurt the other person. Find out if your child knows the difference between conflict and bullying.

**10) Ignoring bullying is not an option.** Research has shown that children who experience bullying from their peers are more than twice as likely to think about and attempt suicide. Students who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood. Whether your child is the bully or the one being bullied, you can prevent future problems by addressing the one at hand.

**11) Your child may have been told not to "tattle."** Bullies use secrecy as a way to protect themselves and their behavior. Telling is different from tattling. Telling an adult is the best way to protect a peer who is being bullied. Help your child know it is safe to tell an adult when they see bullying, and reward their heroic behavior.

**12) Bystanders are powerful allies.** Your children will know who is being bullied at their school and they can have an incredibly powerful role in the situation. They can make the situation worse by encouraging the bully or by joining in the aggressive action. Or, they can make the situation better by stepping in to defend the victim or by calling for help. Let your child know that he or she can make a difference when they see bullying happen.

**13) Resources are available.** If your child is being bullied, has witnessed violent bullying, or has been involved in bullying behavior, **call Southeast Health Group today at 1-800-511-5446. Private, confidential, school-based counseling services are available.**