Help Your Children Create a Positive Learning Environment

What does a positive learning environment look like?

A positive learning environment is where students, teachers and parents feel comfortable, safe and welcome. It is an environment where respect, trust and kindness are key aspects of the school and where students and teachers want to spend time. This creates the optimum environment for learning.

What does an unsafe learning environment look like?

An unsafe environment is aggressive behavior among school-age children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. It includes actions such as: making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Negative digital communication is when someone repeatedly and intentionally harasses, mistreats or makes fun of another person online, or while using cellphones or other electronic devices.[1] Of the students age 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, 16% were also bullied online or by text.[2]

Today, even with a growing awareness of these unsafe behaviors, one out of every five students say that they have experienced negative interactions at school.[3]

What can you as a parent do to help your child deal with this critical issue?

You are your child's role model throughout their lifespan (birth through adulthood). How you talk to your child, your spouse and your parents— your tone of voice and the words you use—teaches your child how to relate and communicate with others.

Starting at a young age, talk to your child for a few minutes each day. Have conversations about life and feelings. Ask questions about good things and upsetting things that happened during the day. This lets your child know that they can come to you with their problems. Describe what kids are like when they are mean to others. Help them have a plan of action should they have peer conflict or observe someone else being harmed.

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"Target" – Fifth grader

"I am a bully" – Sixth grader
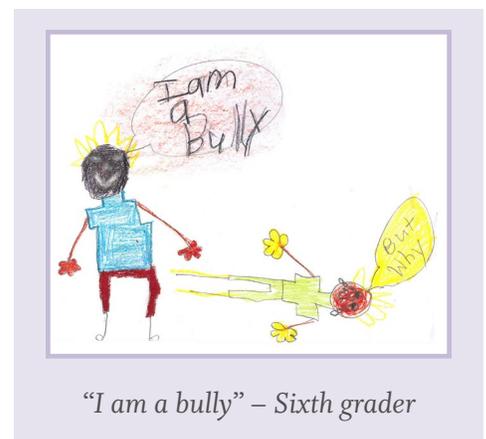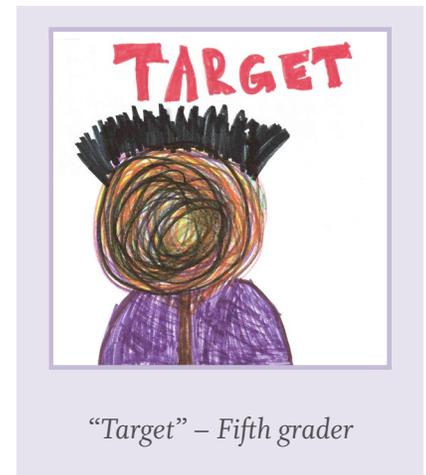
1. Hinduja & Patchin, 2019
2. School Crime Supplement, National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice, 2019
3. Center for Education Statistics, 2019

You are your child's advocate. If they are experiencing conflicts with peers in person or online, inform your child's school. The school will have ways to help. Please know that your child will not be the only one who is experiencing this type of situation.

Teenagers tend to keep to themselves. For children in secondary school, it is important to create a trusting environment so that your child will want to talk to you and seek you out if they are being bullied or observe a classmate being bullied. Teens can step in and help others who are being targeted by supporting and befriending them.

Four simple parent tips:

1. Discuss good feelings and bad feelings with your child(ren).
2. Define unsafe behavior in person and online (as described in this resource guide).
3. Help your child(ren) create a plan if they are the target of negative behavior.
4. Work with your child's school to find a good resolution to the situation.

Teach your child about acts of kindness and how kindness can help prevent negative behavior and meanness.

Schools are created as a place for children to come together to receive a wonderful education, to make friends and to learn important social skills. Schools are not put in place for students to hurt and harass one another and to put fear and panic into their fellow classmates, causing them to be afraid to attend school daily. The children who are being picked on or who are hurting others may have serious, lasting problems and might need professional help.

The more children understand about this type of behavior, the more they will be able to deal with it. It's important that children understand the various types of unsafe behaviors. Help them develop approaches to each of these types of situations.

Cyberbullying Resources:

- cyberbullying.org
- netsmartz.org
- wiredsafety.org

"I felt good after helping a friend." – Seventh grader

Elementary school students write acts of kindness notes they did for others.

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