

POINTS TO REMEMBER

01

All children are born with different traits; some are more aggressive than others.

02

We as parents can shape our children's behavior by modeling good behavior ourselves.

03

We should also model intolerance of bullying from others.

Frequent and age-appropriate conversations about how to interact with peers and handle various social situations will help a child realize they do not need to resort to bullying.

Operation Survival was founded in 1988 in the hopes of stemming the inevitable tide of drugs and alcohol seeping into the community.

Operation Survival provides evidence-based programming in the local yeshivas and public schools, art programs, rap groups, positive alternatives, and crisis assistance to thousands of students each year.

The program also networks with other agencies to disseminate information to educators, clergy, social service and medical professionals, and community agencies.

Operation Survival is the first program to combat alcoholism and substance abuse in both the Jewish and African-American communities of Crown Heights, and has been credited with bringing the racially diverse community together in common cause.

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PREVENTION 101
Help Save a Life.



Is My Child a Bully?

A project of Operation Survival

It is difficult to determine what causes bullying but there are usually specific indicators which we can learn to recognize. In order to do so, we must first understand the temperament of children and how they develop.



All children have inborn, pre-wired temperaments which are evident from infancy. Some babies are more assertive about letting others know what they need, while other babies are more passive and will wait until someone takes care of them. Children who are aggressive and like to be in charge are at risk for becoming bullies while shy and passive children are much less likely to become a bully.

A lot of bullying, especially among girls, has to do with language.

A child who has very strong language skills knows how to use a turn of phrase to make people laugh or to make people cry.

These children are at greater risk of being bullies than a child who struggles with language.



Since no one is actually born a bully, what can parents, educators and communities do to prevent it?

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT CHILDREN MAY BE BORN WITH BULLYING TENDENCIES, BUT AS WITH EVERYTHING WE DO WITH OUR CHILDREN, WE SHAPE THEM. We do that by modeling appropriate behavior. If our children see us abuse our power and deliberately torment the dry cleaner, the butcher, the principal, our neighbors, or people in our own families, then they learn to do so as well. By demonstrating these behaviors, we teach our children that bullying is a reasonable way to accomplish our goals.

WE ALSO MODEL BASED ON HOW WE RESPOND WHEN WE SEE BULLYING. We may not do it, but when we see an older sibling mistreating a younger sibling, do we turn a blind eye? Every time a parent or an educator reacts with neutrality to children's behavior, children read that neutrality as approval. If children bully in front of us, either to their siblings or their peers, and we do nothing, then they have every reason to believe this is acceptable behavior. They will continue to do it.

When we hear from the school or parents of our children's friends that our child is bullying, what can we do?

We need to talk with them. We need to give them alternate ways to accomplish their goals socially. We need to teach our children the rules of social discourse. We need to explain how to be a mentch and how to become a good person with a kind heart. Children must understand that good people with kind hearts would never deliberately abuse their power to hurt another person. Every parent will need to have this conversation with their children at some point. Even the best of children may inadvertently bully others. Parents need to talk with their children and explain how to avoid that behavior. Prevention is worth twenty tons of cure.



► Based on interviews with Dr. Rona Novick, PhD, for Prevention 101 series.

BEFORE children become Bar Mitzvah age or Bat Mitzvah age and before a Shabbaton or trip, parents should sit down with their children and talk about how to respond to invitations from people. As a family, the following questions should be discussed. Do we only go to parties of the people we like or is our job to rejoice with the celebrant of every occasion? On a school trip, do we ask to room only with our friends or will we be open and welcoming to others? Discussing these questions and making the decisions as a family will help children learn appropriate behavior and how to deal with social situations in a polite way.

Having frequent and age-appropriate conversations about how to interact with peers and handle various social situations will help a child develop into a well-balanced individual who does not need to resort to bullying.

