

Six Warning Signs That Your Child is Being Bullied

Red flags include a disconnect from family, friends

Approximately 160,000 children miss school every day in the United States for fear of being bullied; more than 50 suicides have been linked to prolonged bullying; and approximately 85 percent of school shootings have revenge against bullies as a major motive, according to Dr. Ted Zeff, a practicing psychologist and author.

The costs of bullying are high. Unfortunately, many children suffer alone, keeping their bullying experiences to themselves. Dr. Zeff provides parents with six warning signs that their child is being bullied.

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Many children are taught that it is a sign of weakness to ask for help, and frequently fail to tell anyone when they are being bullied for fear of appearing weak. Many children feel shame and assume, "Something must be wrong with me. Why else would they target me?"

When children experience traumatic experiences like bullying, they often become frozen and exhibit feelings of helplessness and shame. This sometimes renders them unable to defend themselves when attacked or put under pressure. Traumatized children then bring this state of helplessness to other situations that they perceive as threatening. The more withdrawn these children become, the more likely they will slip into serious emotional trouble.

Parents need to be aware of the warning signs for when their children experience depression, severe anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder due to bullying. The following is a list of red flags to look for:

Is your child disconnecting from people and isolating him/herself in their room? Although teens usually separate from the family, they normally connect more often with their friends.

Has your child developed physical problems such as stomachaches and headaches that interfere with their life?

Has your child's schoolwork recently suffered, and is it difficult for your child to concentrate?

Does your child have trouble falling or staying asleep or experience frequent nightmares?

Does your child seem listless, unenthusiastic, and uninterested in life?

Have you noticed that your child seems hypervigilant, extremely nervous, depressed, or emotionally explosive (beyond the normal teenage angst and moodiness)?

If you suspect that your child is suffering from any of the above symptoms that is interfering with his or her life and you have not been able to help alleviate their suffering, you should consider having your child evaluated by a licensed psychologist, licensed marriage and family counselor, or licensed social worker. If you can't afford to pay for private therapy sessions, virtually all cities have low-cost therapy clinics (check with your city or county department of mental health).

*Dr. Ted Zeff is the author of *The Strong, Sensitive Boy: Help Your Son Become a Happy, Confident Man*. For more information please visit DrTedZeff.com.*