

Parents: Take action if child is being bullied

We recently moved to the U.S. from Ireland. We live in a large city, and my 14-year-old daughter is being bullied at school. Where can we find resources to help her? She wants very badly to fit in.

I'm so sorry to hear of your situation. Bullying is an extensive problem for young people — estimates indicate that up to half of all children are bullied at some point during their school years, and the effects can be long-lasting.

You are one step ahead of the game, though. Many children and teens who are victimized by bullies don't tell their parents or any adults of the abuse. Parents might guess what's going on if they notice their child:

- Comes home with torn, damaged or missing pieces of clothing, books or other belongings.
- Has unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches.
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus or taking part in organized activities with peers.
- Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed when he or she comes home.
- Frequently appears anxious or suffers from low self-esteem.

While there are no easy solutions, there is plenty of good guidance available online. Two good sources are the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (go to <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/> and click



on "For Adults" and then on "Tip Sheets") and the National Mental Health Information Center (go to <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/> and search for "Bullying is Not a Fact of Life"). Guidelines include:

- Be supportive of your daughter. Don't tell her to "just ignore" the bullying -- she has probably tried that already. Find out as much as you can about the incidents that have occurred so far — what tactics are being used? When and where is the bullying taking place? Can your daughter name others who have witnessed the bullying?
- Contact the school principal or other staff member who handles bullying problems. Keep your cool; position yourself as a partner with the school to help your child and other students who may be affected. If you become emotional, the school might focus more attention on you than on finding a solution to the problem. If the school isn't initially responsive, it may help if your daughter keeps a log book describing the incidents and when and where they took place. Most schools today recognize the seriousness of bullying, but it is easier to encourage action with concrete information in hand.
- Encourage your daughter to seek out friendly faces among other students, and see if she can walk with them between classes. Teachers may be able to suggest students for her to approach.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Kara Newby, program specialist for Family Relations and Human Development for Ohio State University Extension.

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