

# The Queens of Mean: Dealing With Female Bullies

From [Robin McClure](#),  
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## It's Hard To Cope With Bullies At Any Age

The movie *Mean Girls*, created a buzz about behaviors of queen bees bullies who experts warn come in all ages and sizes. Most everyone knows a female who considers herself a diva of sorts, but when that girl is in pre-school and is saying mean things to classmates and being a bully, it is especially hard to handle.

There's a growing buzzword about this type of bully behavior, and "mean girls" doesn't paint a flattering picture. The movie, written by *Saturday Night Live* author Tina Fey, was sparked by a 2002 book by Rosalind Wiseman, *Queen Bees and Wannabees* (Three Rivers Press, \$14.95). The author suggests that males use their fists and physical threats to bully others, but females' weapons are words and behind-the-scenes school bully manipulation.

Gossipy cliches, social snobs, and popularity contests are nothing new.

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But, the alarming trend is that in some cases, bullies and bully behavior are starting earlier. So, short of shrieking "bully, bully, bully" to a 7-year-old, what should you do if your daughter is a target of bullies?

### Bully To You! Parent Tips For Helping Kids Cope With Bullies

- **Listen.** The most important tip for adults to do is to talk with their daughter and to maintain open lines of communication about bullies and bully behavior. Ask questions about their relationships with identified bullies and their bully actions and then be quiet and listen. You want to hear what your daughter says and

thinks. This is not the time to get emotional or preachy about how bad you think bullies are or disapprove of their bully actions.

- **Don't overreact.** As much as we want to protect our kids, remember that it is not your fight. Outward intervention in many cases may make a bad bully situation worse. Many well-meaning adults interfere in their offspring's issues. In most all cases, a grown-up should remain neutral, listen, and offer some non-emotional responses about bullies and any bully threats.
- **Be a strategic planner.** If your daughter is older, often a sympathetic ear and support is all she needs when discussing bullies and bully behavior. Younger ages, however, may need help in deciding how to best cope with young bullies. Offer various scenarios and suggest solutions about avoiding bullies or dealing with bullies head-on. Determine whether she wants to remain friends with these girls or if she wishes to make different ones. The approach may be different. Does she want to confront those peers acting like school bullies and being mean? If so, offer ways to accomplish this.
- **Build self-esteem.** Youngsters who excel at something--whether it is sports, music, art, dance, or something else, are less likely to fall prey to aggression. Having a talent or an outlet in another area builds strong self-esteem. Involvement lets your kid know she can thrive and succeed, and often provides that extra empowerment to deal with bullies or bully behavior.
- **Involve other adults.** The message of not interfering with how your daughter resolves the situation of bullies does not mean you should not approach another adult about bully actions. If the bully is someone in your kid's daycare or school, find an opportunity to try and walk with the mom or dad (without the kids present). Avoid blame. You should say something like, "Our girls have been fighting. Can we meet for coffee and talk about it?" You may also learn a different perspective, in that there could be behaviors that have somehow contributed to the school bully situation. The key is to seek the help of other adults to help resolve and stop the bullying. If the issue is serious enough, don't hesitate to talk with a classroom teacher, provider, school counselor, or therapist. If your daughter is older, you should inform her that you plan to talk with someone at the school about bullies or specific bully actions, but that the conversation will be held confidential.
- **Never ever think 'bully is as bully does.'** Although it might be tempting at a certain level, never encourage your child to bully back or become a bully to others herself. Parents must teach kids to rise above bad bully situations, and parents should discuss ways to have their daughter avoid the possible temptation to become a bully herself or think that if she bullies others she might be better received. The key is to stop bullies in their tracks, and not join forces with a bully pack.

Girls may not always be "sugar and spice and everything nice" but everyone deserves to be treated with respect and be bully-free. Although you may not be able to prevent gossip or hurtful comments or bullies in general, there are steps you can take to ensure your daughter feels welcomed among her peer groups.