

CHRIS 2E NEWS



Dealing with student bullying

Now that the school year is in full swing, it is important to look out for signs of student bullying. Being both gifted and learning disabled, 2e persons definitely stand out from peers and are more vulnerable to bullying. Sometimes, twice-exceptional persons bully others. Either way, bullying damages lives and should be taken seriously. Contrary to popular belief, many bullies are neither stupid nor socially inept. Although insecure and status-focused, bullies can be popular, smart, and accomplished. Bullies often know who to target and how to control them. Here are some tips to deal with bullying.

Find a common interest with peers

Because 2e brains work anomalously, twice-exceptional persons think and act differently than peers, leading to misunderstandings and alienation. Once 2e kids are separated from social circles, it doesn't take long for bullying to take root. For this reason, 2e students should try to find a common interest with peers. It could be anything, like watching sports,

playing an instrument, or even hiking. Joining a club also helps. With a shared interest, other kids may start warming up to 2e students, seeing that these learners aren't so "weird" after all, and friendships will develop.

Bullies won't be as tempted to pick on twice-exceptional kids with a group of friends. Healthy, cohesive friendships act as a buffer, where each friend mutually supports another; in this way, a bully's taunts aren't as potent and wide-reaching. Having positive social interactions reduces stress and builds self-confidence. With better confidence, 2e students will learn better and achieve more, gaining respect from peers for their talents.

Find collaborative environments

Bullying thrives in competitive environments, where status and power are in limited supplies. In such situations, people become insecure, behaving aggressively towards others who pose a threat. Or, to feel better about themselves, bullies may pick on struggling students. In high-pressure environments, 2e students are very vulnerable to bullying, especially when student rankings matter or there's a lot at stake. In competitive settings, 2e talents intimidate competitors while 2e deficiencies irritate peers, often simultaneously.

In collaborative environments, people don't focus so much on outdoing each other. Labels like winner/loser or smart/dumb don't matter as much. Students are more receptive to each other, looking past deficiencies and seeing positive strengths. For example, other students may notice a dyslexic 2e kid's creativity, even though the same 2e student finished last place in a spelling bee. Twice-exceptional kids can make friends more easily in collaborative settings than in competitive ones. While the world is generally competitive, there are always ways to find congenial environments.

Trust your gut

It's important to use your intuition when dealing with bullying. Sometimes, a 2e kid should actually befriend his or her bully. The bully may just have a tough exterior and be a nice person inside. Or, peer pressure may influence the bully to act a certain way. If both kids connect in some way, hostility, resentment, and hurt may subside. However, this approach requires caution. Sometimes, bullies may completely lack empathy, and trying to reason with them will only make matters worse. It's important to track how a bullying situation unravels: which strategies work, which do not.

It helps to observe how bullies interact with others. Are the bullies status conscious, acting very nice only to the popular kids? Or are the bullies social outcasts? Rarely, bullies may be genuine sociopaths, who are unfazed by their mean behaviors. Because bullying hurts both the bully and the victim, it's best to find constructive ways to resolve the conflict. In some situations, trying to get close to the bully helps, but in others, avoiding them works better. Good judgement and advice from parents, teachers, and psychologists may improve outcomes.

Conclusion

Bullies target 2e kids because they are wired differently than other students, leading to quirky and baffling behaviors. Since 2e students often struggle with academics, social skills, and fine motor coordination, other kids may label these learners as stupid or awkward. As a good first step, 2e kids should connect with others, trying to find some common interest in a group-focused activity, where there is less focus on competition. If twice-exceptional kids make healthy friendships, they will be better protected from bullying. It is always important to use good judgment when dealing with bullying: some strategies are effective, other less so.