

WARNING SIGNS: BULLIES MAY BE VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Behavioral Signs

- Extreme aggression or frequent outbursts (especially when triggered by minor events)
- Controlling or manipulative behavior
- Cruelty toward animals or younger children
- Frequent lying or stealing
- Bullying that escalates in intensity or frequency
- Sudden changes in friend groups or social withdrawal
- Hyper-awareness of power dynamics or unfairness

Emotional Signs

- Lack of empathy or difficulty showing remorse
- Low self-esteem masked by arrogance or bravado
- Explosive temper or unpredictable mood swings
- Anxiety, depression, or signs of emotional distress
- Fear of being alone or abandoned

Physical & Environmental Clues

- Unexplained injuries or frequent “accidents”
- Neglect in appearance, hygiene, or clothing
- Hesitation to go home or stay after school
- Stories of intense punishment or fear of caregivers
- Witnessing violence or substance abuse at home

Academic & Social Indicators

- Frequent trouble with authority or school staff
- Sudden drops in academic performance
- Detentions, suspensions, or other disciplinary action
- Little or no involvement in positive extracurricular activities

Children who bully are not always “bad” kids—they may be using power as a shield to hide pain, fear, or neglect. Recognizing these signs can help intervene early and shift the cycle from harm to healing.

