

What do I do if I suspect that my child is being bullied?

What are parents to do if their child tells them that he is being bullied?

- First, listen; gauge the seriousness of the incident and whether there is a history of such bullying.
- Then find out what has been tried and work out options with your child - such as being more assertive, avoiding people and places, and seeking help through the school.
- It is tempting to confront the bully's parents or even the bully. Don't. It seldom pays and commonly makes matters worse. When bullying occurs at school, work through your teacher and principal.
- When help is needed, call on the school. It has the prime responsibility for keeping students safe. Schools can help, especially if parents work closely with them.¹

One of the most important things that a parent can do in this situation is to talk with your child. Tell your child that you are concerned and that you'd like to help. Here are some questions that can get the discussion going:

- I'm worried about you. Are there any kids at school who may be picking on you or bullying you?
- Are there any kids at school who tease you in a mean way?
- Are there any kids at school who leave you out or exclude you on purpose?

Sometimes, more subtle questions are needed:

- Do you have any special friends at school this year? Who are they? Who do you hang out with?
- Who do you sit with at lunch and on the bus?
- Are there any kids at school who you really don't like? Why don't you like them? Do they ever pick on you or leave you out of things?

It is also important that parents talk with staff at school. Share your concerns about your child and ask the teacher such questions as:

- How does my child get along with other students in his or her class?
- With whom does he or she spend free time?
- Have you noticed or have you ever suspected that my child is bullied by other students? Give examples of some ways that children can be bullied to be sure that the teacher is not focusing only on one kind of bullying (such as physical bullying).²

References on www.education.com

1. Ken Rigby, *Children, Parents and Social Bullying* 2. [Stop Bullying Now!](http://www.education.com) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Warning Signs that a Child is Being Bullied*.

What do I do if my child tells me that he or she is being bullied?

Communicate With and Support Your Child

- First, focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying.¹
- Reassure your child that sharing this information is not the same as tattling.²
- Adults must ensure that the trust implicit in disclosures of bullying is not violated.³
- Address these experiences as soon as they arise. For example, checking in with children at the end of the day can include conversation about academic subjects as well as peer relationships. Questions such as:
 - "What did you do at recess today?"
 - "How is your friend (name) doing these days?"may encourage children to discuss their friendship experiences with their parents.⁴
- When children express negative emotions about their peers, it is helpful to acknowledge these feelings, encourage them that it's normal to feel this way, and discuss practical strategies together, especially those that the child considers most helpful.⁴
- Help your child become more resilient to bullying.
- Help to develop talents or positive attributes of your child. Doing so may help your child be more confident among his or her peers.
- Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment where he or she can take shelter, physically and emotionally.
- Always maintain open lines of communication with your child.¹
 - Encourage your child to stick with a friend at recess, lunch, in the hallways, on the bus or walking home because she is more likely to be targeted when she is alone.
- Arrange opportunities for your child to socialize with his or her friends outside of school to help him or her maintain a strong social support system
- Pay attention to how your child is sleeping, eating, feeling and doing in school. If you notice changes in any of these areas, have your child see the school counselor.²
- Teach your child to say "Stop!" Most bullies stop bullying within 10 seconds, when someone tells him or her to stop.⁵

Work With Your Child's School

- Contact your child's teacher or principal and provide specifics on how your child is being bullied. Parents are often reluctant to report bullying to school officials, but bullying may not stop without the help of adults.
- Request that the principal and classroom teacher tell other teachers, recess aides, hallway monitors and cafeteria staff, so everyone who comes in contact with your child will be on the lookout and poised to intervene.¹

- The incorporation of all levels of school personnel in interventions is a necessary component of the reduction of student aggression and victimization incidents.

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- Parents and teachers must ensure that children are receiving appropriate care from school-based health care personnel.
- School-wide interventions that target bullies and victims with a focus on the development of social and emotional skills are especially helpful.³

References on www.education.com

1. Stop Bullying Now! U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. What to Do if Your Child is Being Bullied.
2. Laurence Owens. Indirect Aggression Amongst Teenage Girls and How Parents Can Help
3. Linda A. Cedeno, Maurice J. Elias. How Do You Know When Your Student Or Child Is Being Victimized and How Can You Help?
4. Tanya Beran. Bullying: What are the Differences between Boys and Girls and How Can You Help?
5. Wendy Ryan, Mary C. Cappadocia. Four Strategies for Teachers and Parents to Pass on to Kids who Witness Bullying.

What do I do if my child is bullying others?

Your child needs to hear from you explicitly that it's not normal, okay, or tolerable for him or her to bully, to be bullied, or to watch other kids be bullied.

- Make sure your child knows that if he or she bullies other kids, it is harmful to all kids involved.
- Communicate to your child that you will help them to find other ways to exert his or her personal power, status, and leadership at school, and that you will work with them, their teachers, and their principal to implement a plan at school. ^{1, 2}
- Schedule an appointment to talk with school staff such as your child's teacher(s) and the school counselor.³ Share your concerns. Work together to send clear messages to your child that his or her bullying must stop.⁴
- Explain to your child that this kind of behavior is unacceptable. Stop any acts of aggression you see, and talk about other ways your child can deal with the situation. Establish appropriate consequences for his or her actions.³
- Develop clear and consistent rules within your family for your children's behavior. Praise and reinforce your children for following rules and use non-physical, non hostile consequences for rule violations.⁴
- Examine behavior and interactions in your own home. Is there something going on at home that is encouraging this type of behavior? ³
- Spend more time with your child and carefully supervise and monitor his or her activities. Find out who your child's friends are and how and where they spend free time.⁴

- Talk with your child about who his or her friends are and what they do together. Peers can be very influential, especially for teens.
- Build on your child's talents by encouraging him or her to get involved in prosocial activities (such as clubs, music lessons, nonviolent sports).⁴
- Model respect, kindness and empathy. You are your child's role model and he or she will learn to treat others with respect by watching you.

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- Avoid aggressive, intimidating, and abusive behaviors. Try to model social and emotional behaviors in the classroom and home setting that you would like to see reflected by children and teens.

Consider talking to your child's pediatrician about your child's behavior.

Be realistic. Your child's behavior will not change overnight.

Continue to work and communicate with school staff for as long as it takes. They should be your allies.³

If you or your child needs additional help, talk with a school counselor or mental health professional.⁴

References on www.education.com

1. Dagmar Strohmeier, *Bullying and its Underlying Mechanisms* 2. Debra Pepler, Wendy M. Craig, *Bullying, Interventions, and the Role of Adults* 3. OneToughJob. *I Think My Child Is A Bully—What Should I Do?* 4. Stop Bullying Now! U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Children Who Bully*

What do I do if my child is a witness to bullying?

Four strategies for teachers and parents to pass on to kids who witness bullying

1. Stop! You're Bullying!

Most bullies stop bullying within 10 seconds, when someone tells him or her to stop. A child or youth who witnesses bullying is very likely to make a positive difference simply by saying something like, "What you're doing is bullying and it isn't fair!" or "If you don't stop I am going to report you!" It is important, however, that the witness keeps his/her own safety in mind too.

2. Support the Victim

If the witness feels uncomfortable saying something to the bully, then they may choose to focus on supporting the victim instead.

3. Reduce Attention to the Bully

Research indicates that bullies need an audience, and that passively watching, which may seem harmless, actually encourages the bullying to continue. If the witness feels uncomfortable intervening in a bullying episode, then they can help by just walking away.

4. Report the Bully.

Tell witnesses that they should report any bullying they see to a responsible adult such as a teacher, principal, playground supervisor, or bus driver.

References on www.education.com

1. Wendy Ryan, Mary Catherine Cappadocia. Four Strategies for Teachers and Parents to Pass on to Kids who Witness Bullying.

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