



Bullying Summary

Why Bullying?

Since more than one in five children/teens will experience bullying at some point, helping your child/teen learn to understand and deal with bullying behavior is important for their success in school and in life.

Step 1. Get Your Child/Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *“How do the peers around you make you feel?”*
- *“What are some ways you have seen other kids at your school treat each other badly?”*
- *“What’s your definition of bullying?”*
- *“What would you do if you felt bullied?”*
- *“What would you do if you saw someone else being bullied?”*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Tip Often children/teens do not really understand the difference between bullying and one-time meanness. So you will likely need to decode what your child/teen tells you if they confide in you. Questions to help you decode what they are telling you to determine if the behavior is bullying include: *“Is it a one-time event?”* (If so, it’s not bullying.) *“Are there regular or ongoing interactions that are hurting your child/teen?”* *“Do they sound like words or actions that are intended to belittle and dominate?”*

Step 2. **Teach** New Behaviors by Interactive Modeling

- Model constructive language. Ask: *“If my child/teen repeated what I am saying to someone else in public, would I be upset?”* If your answer is yes, then it’s time to rethink and rephrase what you are saying or try to not say it at all.
- Cultivate sibling kindness. Create chances for siblings to appreciate one another. At dinnertime ask, *“What did you notice your sister do today that was kind?”*
- Learn strategies that promote responsibility instead of resorting to yelling and/or punishment.
- Advocate for your child’s/teen’s emotional safety. Do not allow a relative, neighbor, or friend to criticize or demean your child/teen. Remove them and set a boundary with the adult.

- Secure a safety buddy. Find a friend, and talk about how to easily and simply stand up for one another and walk away to safety. Teach your child/teen to be brief, speak up, and walk away to safety.
- **CAUTION:** If your child/teen has been dangerously threatened with severe harm, call the school and involve the teacher, the school psychologist, the vice principal - someone at the school level who will take it seriously and pursue the issue immediately. All schools by law are supposed to have an anti-bullying policy in which they have a clear procedure for dealing with it. Severe harm can be identified if there is a weapon or threat of a weapon involved, if hate has been voiced (racism, homophobia), serious bodily harm has already occurred or been threatened, sexual abuse or threat of, or illegal acts are involved such as, robbery, destruction of property, or bribery.

Tip Did you know... More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied.

Tip If cyberbullying is occurring at school or at home by a classmate, it's important to let your child's/teen's school know about it. It will give them the chance to take action at school to shut it down.

Tip In the case of cyberbullying, you can encourage your child/teen to take steps to stop the attacks. Learn together how to block a "friend" or "follower." If you are unsure, each social media outlet has its own method. Research it and if you cannot figure it out, contact a friend or help support to figure it out for you.

Trap DO NOT encourage your child/teen to fight back with words or fists. Do not model a verbal attack inadvertently by criticizing the attacker. A hurtful retort (referencing character, calling names) could escalate the conflict and put your child/teen in immediate danger.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Use "Show me..." statements like: *"Show me how you would tell someone to stop their mean words."*
- Accept feelings: *"I hear you're upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better?"*
- Appreciate your child/teen when they share information with you. For example, you could say, *"I so appreciate when you talk with me about how things are going at school."*
- Practice deep breathing. Because deep breathing is such a simple practice that can assist your child/teen anytime, anywhere, particularly if they are scared or nervous, it's important to get in plenty of practice so that it becomes easy to use when needed.

Trap Do not dismiss your child's/teen's worries and fears. Your child's/teen's reaction to a classmate's minor verbal attacks may seem bigger to you than necessary, but to them they pose a real threat. Deal with those worries by practicing coping strategies.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions: *"What are some of the things you can do to assert yourself and get away?"*
- Reflect on outcomes: *"Seems like you couldn't get to sleep last night because you were feeling bad about how Julie acted in the hallway. What about trying out some role plays tonight so that you can go in tomorrow knowing what you can say and do?"*
- Stay engaged. Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Engage in further practice. Role play or rehearse when needed.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: *"I notice you've been practicing what you'll say and do. That's excellent!"*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include high fives, fist bumps, and hugs in your repertoire of ways to appreciate one another.

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your child's/teen's success today and in their future!

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