



Bullying Summary

Why Bullying?

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

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

- *“How do the peers around you make you feel?”*
- *“Do you ever feel scared of or unsafe with your classmates?”*
- *“If you feel badly about someone, what’s happening to make you feel that way?”*
- *“Was this a one-time event?”* (if so, important to talk about but it’s probably not bullying)
- Listen for and reflect back thoughts and feelings, for example: *“I hear you were scared. Were you also hurt and humiliated in front of others like when he pushed you?”*

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

Tip Practice actively listening with your child’s worries. The best way to find out whether or not your child is being bullied is by offering a safe space for them to talk about their upset without fearing judgment. You don’t want your child to fear further embarrassments, punishment, or disappointment.

Trap We can make assumptions, project our worries, or skip fast to problem solving to fix our child’s pain. Take time to discover what’s really happening by listening for understanding.

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

- Model constructive language. Ask: *“If my child 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 emotional safety. Do not allow a relative, neighbor, or friend to criticize or demean your child. 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. Lock arms and walk away to safety.
- Teach your child to be brief, speak up, and walk away to safety.
- Coach your child on what to say. As the bullying child approaches, your child can say: *“Stop! You know you are wrong!”* Then, walk to safety.

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 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 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 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 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?”*
- Recognize effort: *“I notice how you talked to your friend about being safety buddies.”*
- Proactively remind: *“Remember what you can say at recess? And what can you do?”*

Tip Practice deep breathing. Because it’s such a simple practice, it can assist your child anytime, anywhere, particularly if they are scared or nervous.

Trap Do not dismiss your child's worries and fears. Your child'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 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 at recess. 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. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

Tip Be specific. "Good job" seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior - "*You talked to Ben about being a safety buddy. Love hearing that!*" - can promote more of the same.

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 success today and in their future!

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