



Bullying Summary

Why Bullying?

Since about one in five children/teens (21%) report experiencing 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.¹

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child/teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

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?”
- Practice active listening. The best way to find out whether or not your child/teen is being bullied is by offering a safe space for them to talk about their upset without fearing judgment.
- Paraphrase what you hear your child/teen say: “James grabbed my notebook in study hall last week; yesterday he pushed me in the hallway; and today he threatened to hit me. I don’t know what to do.” Parent modeling paraphrasing: *“I hear that James took your notebook away from you, then pushed you another day, and then today threatened to hit you. I hear you were scared. I imagine you were also hurt and humiliated in front of others like when he pushed you.”*
- 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 Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Model constructive language. Ask yourself if your child/teen repeated what you are saying to someone else in public, would you 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 More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied.²

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. Hold back on your own comments, even if they are flying through your mind, and keep your child/teen safe. If your child/teen is in physical danger, contact school authorities right away. Coaching your child/teen to fight back will be leading them into harm's way -- by the hand of the attacker AND in getting caught and reprimanded by the school.

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.

Tip Do you recall how hard it was not to stand in agreement when rumors were spread as a child or when other children/teens were harshly judged? Your child/teen can walk away with your encouragement that it will truly make a difference. Share how that kind of act is taking leadership. Your child/teen can stop untrue stories from spreading.

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 To learn more about the power of social and emotional learning in schools, check out the following sites:

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

[Edutopia \(George Lucas Educational Foundation\) on Social and Emotional Learning](#)

[Responsive Classroom](#)

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

- Use “Show me...” statements like, *“Show me how you would tell someone to stop their mean words.”*
- Use “I notice...” statements like, *“I notice how you stand tall when you say ‘Stop!’ That’s excellent!”* or *“I notice how you’ve been practicing what you’ll say and do. That’s excellent!”*
- Accept feelings: *“I hear you’re upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better? How can we examine ways to take action?”*
- Appreciate your child/teen when they share information with you. For example, you could say, *“I 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.
- Include reflection on the day in your bedtime routine. Ask: *“What happened today that made you happy?”* or *“What were the best moments in your day?”*

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

- Ask key questions: *“You are going to see Julie today. What are some of the things you can do to assert yourself and get away if you need?”*
- 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. Tell me more... What about trying out some role plays tonight so that you can go in tomorrow knowing what you can say and do?”*
- Stay engaged. Working together on ideas for trying out new and different coping strategies can help offer additional support and motivation for your child/teen when tough issues arise.

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

- Notice even small successes: *“I noticed you enlisted a safety buddy after school today, and Julie left you alone. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, *“Let’s try out a few role plays and then play a game or watch a show together.”* Include high fives, fist bumps, and hugs in your repertoire of ways to appreciate one another.

References

1. National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2016. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017064.pdf>
2. Hawkins, D.L., & Pepler, D.J. (2001). Naturalistic observations of peer interventions in bullying. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

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