



Bullying Summary

Why Bullying?

Since more than one in five children (21%) report experiencing bullying at some point, helping your 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 teen are not tired or in a rush.

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

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

- *“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?”*
- *“How do the peers around you make you feel?”*
- *“If you feel bad about someone, what’s happening to make you feel that way?”*
- Practice active listening.
- Paraphrase what you heard your teen say. Teen: “James asked me to come to a party tonight, and when I said no, he told me I was a loser and called me a name.” Parent modeling paraphrasing: *“So, I hear that when you said no to James, he was hurtful towards you.”* Parent reflecting feeling: *“I hear you were hurt and perhaps humiliated as well.”*
- Is it a one-time event? If so, it’s not bullying. Are there regular or ongoing interactions that are hurting your teen? Do they sound like words or actions that are intended to belittle and dominate your teen?

Trap What upsets a parent can differ greatly from what upsets a teen. Listen closely to what is most concerning to them without projecting your own thoughts, concerns, and feelings.

Trap Be sure you talk about your teen’s upsetting situations at a calm time when you are not under time pressures and can genuinely listen.

Step 2. Teach New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Model constructive language. Ask yourself if your 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 teen's emotional safety. Do not allow a relative, neighbor, or friend to criticize or demean your 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 to be brief, speak up, and walk away to safety.
- **CAUTION:** If your teen has been dangerously threatened with severe harm, do not follow the next steps. Instead, 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 teen to fight back with words or fists. And, 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 teen in immediate danger. Hold back on your own comments even if they are flying through your mind. If your teen is in physical danger, contact school authorities right away. Coaching them 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 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 tech 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 teen or when other teens were harshly judged? Your teen can walk away with your encouragement that it will truly make a difference. Share how that kind of act is taking leadership. Your 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 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 “I’d love to see...” statements like, *“I’d love to see you ask your friend to stop using those hurtful words with you.”* Or you could say, *“Show me how you would tell someone to stop their mean words.”*
- Recognize effort by using “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?”*
- Practice deep breathing. Because deep breathing is such a simple practice that can assist your 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: *“What happened today that made you happy?”*

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

- Ask key questions: *“You are going to see James today. Do you remember what 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 upset about how James acted at school yesterday. Did you have a hard time paying attention in class? What about trying out some role plays tonight so that you can go in tomorrow knowing what you can say and do?”*
- Stay engaged.

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

- Notice: *“I notice you enlisted a friend after school on the walk home today, and James left you alone. Yes! 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.

References

1. 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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