



# Bullying Summary

## Why Bullying?

Since more than one in five children (21%) 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

- *“How do the peers around you make you feel? If you feel badly about someone, what’s happening to make you feel that way?”*
- Practice actively listening to your child’s thoughts, feelings, and worries.
- 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?”*
- Is it a one-time event? If so, it’s not bullying. Are there regular or ongoing interactions that are hurting your child? 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 repeated what you are saying to someone else in public, would you be upset? If the 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.
- Practice social and emotional skills at home. Instead of running to help a neighbor on your own, take your child with you.
- 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** More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied.<sup>2</sup>

**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. Hold back on your own comments even if they are flying through your mind, and keep your child safe. If your child is in physical danger, contact school authorities right away. Coaching your child 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.

**Cyberbullying 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 technical support to figure it out with you.

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

**Cyberbullying 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** 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.”*
- Accept feelings: *“I hear you’re upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better? How can we examine ways to take action?”*
- Recognize effort: *“I notice how you’ve been practicing what you’ll say and do. That’s excellent!”*
- Practice deep breathing.
- Include reflection on the day in your bedtime routine: *“What happened today that made you happy?”* or *“What were the best moments in your day?”*

### Step 4. **Support** Your Child’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?”*
- Learn about development. Each new age will present different challenges.
- Reflect on outcomes: *“Seems like you couldn’t get to sleep last night because you were feeling bad about how Julie acted at recess. 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.

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

- Notice even small successes: *“I noticed you enlisted a safety buddy at recess today, and Julie left you alone. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. *“Let’s try out a few role plays and then put our worries away and enjoy snuggling up to a good book.”*

## 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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