

KNOW! TO ADDRESS BULLYING

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Every young person deserves to grow and learn in a safe, supportive environment free from fear and violence. Unfortunately, bullying, whether in-person or online, can cause serious harm. According to UNICEF, it can lead to depression, anxiety, or even substance misuse. Talking openly and honestly about bullying helps young people feel safe sharing their experiences and builds trust when they need support most.

Bullying can be painful and complicated, but with open communication, empathy, and consistent support, young people can learn to navigate conflict in healthy ways. Whether your child is experiencing bullying or struggling with their own behavior, your calm presence and encouragement can help them grow into a kinder, more confident person.

WHY DO KIDS BULLY?

Bullying can happen for various reasons and understanding why can help you to respond with empathy. Younger children may act out because they struggle to express emotions or understand how their actions affect others. Older kids might bully to fit in, gain popularity, or cope with loneliness and social isolation.

It's important to remember that kids who bully are not "bad." Often, they're struggling with their own challenges, like stress at home, past trauma, or feeling powerless in other parts of their lives. With support and guidance from caring adults, they can learn how to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships.

PREVENTING BULLYING BEFORE IT STARTS

Check in early and often

Make time to ask your child about school, friends, and online experiences. Talk about the importance of respect, kindness, and empathy when interacting with others. Let them know you're a safe person to talk to, no matter what they are dealing with. Regular check-ins can prepare them to express their emotions in a healthy manner.

Be a role model

Children learn by watching adults. Show kindness, patience, and respect in your daily life, including your online interactions. Speak up if you witness bullying or unkindness and involve your child in practicing small acts of kindness regularly.

Build confidence

Confident young people are more likely to walk away from negative situations and stand up for themselves and others. Encourage your child's interests, celebrate their strengths, and help them find activities and friendships that make them feel valued.

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IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

Encourage Conversation

Kids may hesitate to talk to adults about being bullied because they feel embarrassed or are worried that things will get worse. Try asking indirectly, like asking what they think about a bullying scene in a TV show or movie. You might share your own experiences to help them feel less alone and remind them that you are always there for them when they're ready to talk.

Listen Carefully

If your child opens up to you, give them your full attention. Offer support and comfort and reassure them that they're not at fault and that you're proud of them for speaking up.

Offer Reassurance

Let them know they did the right thing by telling you. Emphasize that bullying reflects poorly on the bully's behavior, not on them. Work together to find solutions, including collaborating with the school or a mental health professional to support their well-being. Help rebuild their confidence through activities and relationships that make them feel good about themselves.

IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

Start the conversation

If you hear from their school or a parent that your child has been bullying others, approach the topic calmly and with curiosity. Ask your child open-ended questions like "What happened?" or "How did you feel in that moment?" Try to understand what is driving their behavior – are they feeling insecure? Angry? Left out?

Teach Healthy Coping Skills

Discuss examples of tough situations and brainstorm positive ways to respond. Acknowledge that everyone gets frustrated sometimes, but emphasize the importance of handling emotions in kind and respectful ways. Focus on 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do.'

Set Clear Boundaries

Make sure your child knows that bullying is never acceptable. Establish consistent rules and consequences and reinforce them calmly and fairly. Recognize and encourage positive behavior whenever possible. If you know or suspect your child has experienced trauma, seek support from a mental health professional. Change takes time, but your patience and guidance can make a lasting difference.

RESOURCES

- [Helping Kids Deal With Bullies | KidsHealth](#)
- [Helping Children Counteract Bullying Through Empathy | Bright Horizons](#)
- [Bullying in Kids: What Parents Need to Know and How to Help | The Kids Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Parents Page | Stomp Out Bullying](#)
- [Bullying Information for Parents | Nationwide Children's](#)

SOURCES

- [What if my Child Is Bullying Others? | The Kids Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Is Your Child a Bully? Understand & Address Bullying | Child Mind Institute](#)
- [Bullying: What is it and how to stop it | UNICEF](#)
- [Bullying: Tips for Parents | Mental Health America](#)
- [Bullying and Cyberbullying | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#)

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