

## Tips for Parents: What to Do If Your Child Is Being Bullied

If your child is being bullied at school, this can be a very painful experience for your child and your family. Here are some things you can do to support your child if he or she is being bullied:

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying.
- Don't blame your child for the bullying. Don't assume your child did something to provoke the bullying.
- Allow your child to talk about his or her bullying experiences. Write down what is shared.
- Empathize with your child. Tell him or her that bullying is wrong, that it is not his or her fault, and that you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about it.
- If you disagree with how your child handled the bullying situation, don't criticize him or her. It is often very difficult for children to know how best to respond.
- Do not encourage physical retaliation.
- Check your emotions. A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, step back and consider the next steps carefully.
- Contact a teacher, school counselor, or principal at your school immediately and share your concerns about the bullying that your child has experienced.
- Work closely with school personnel to help solve the problem.
- Encourage your child to develop interests and hobbies that will help build resiliency in difficult situations like bullying.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in his or her class, or help your child meet new friends outside of school.
- Teach your child safety strategies, such as how to seek help from an adult.
- Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment.
- If you or your child need additional help, seek help from a school counselor and/or mental health professional.

This list has been adapted from a publication originally created for "Take a Stand. Lend a Hand. Stop Bullying Now!" a campaign of the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov](http://www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov). Used with permission.

The names "Olweus" and "Olweus Bullying Prevention Program" are protected as trademarks, and may not be used in any way that involves self-promotion or the sale of products without the written permission of Hazelden as the publisher.



## How to Talk About Bullying

Parents, school staff, and other caring adults have a role to play in preventing bullying. They can:

- Help kids understand bullying. Talk about what bullying is and how to stand up to it safely. Tell kids bullying is unacceptable. Make sure kids know how to get help.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with kids often. Listen to them. Know their friends, ask about school, and understand their concerns.
- Encourage kids to do what they love. Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help kids make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- Model how to treat others with kindness and respect.



### Help Kids Understand Bullying

Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. They can talk about bullying if it happens to them or others. Kids need to know ways to safely stand up to bullying and how to get help.

- Encourage kids to speak to a trusted adult if they are bullied or see others being bullied. The adult can give comfort, support, and advice, even if they can't solve the problem directly. Encourage the child to report bullying if it happens.
- Talk about how to stand up to kids who bully. Give tips, like using humor and saying "stop" directly and confidently. Talk about what to do if those actions don't work, like walking away.
- Talk about strategies for staying safe, such as staying near adults or groups of other kids.
- Urge them to help kids who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.
- Watch the short webisodes and discuss them with kids.

[Back to top](#)

### Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Research tells us that children really do look to parents and caregivers for advice and help on tough decisions. Sometimes spending 15 minutes a day talking can reassure kids that they can talk to their parents if they have a problem. Start conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like these:

- What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?
- What is lunch time like at your school? Who do you sit with? What do you talk about?
- What is it like to ride the school bus?
- What are you good at? What would you like best about yourself?

Talking about bullying directly is an important step in understanding how the issue might be affecting kids. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important to encourage kids to answer them honestly. Assure kids that they are not alone in addressing any problems that arise. Start conversations about bullying with questions like these:

- What does "bullying" mean to you?
- Describe what kids who bully are like. Why do you think people bully?
- Who are the adults you trust most when it comes to things like bullying?
- Have you ever felt scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying? What ways have you tried to change it?
- What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?
- Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying? Why or why not?
- What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?
- Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel?
- Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

Get more ideas for talking with children about life and about bullying. If concerns come up, be sure to respond.

There are simple ways that parents and caregivers can keep up-to-date with kids' lives.

- Read class newsletters and school flyers. Talk about them at home.
- Check the school website
- Go to school events