



My Child is Being Bullied. What can I do?

It is difficult for a child to deal with bullying. They can feel powerless and alone. Having supportive, caring adults who want to help them can make a world of difference. If your child is being bullied, it is important for you to take action quickly. If you think your child is being bullied, here are some things you can do to help:

- **Listen to your child.** Tell your child you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about the bullying. Then, be quiet and let your child lead the conversation. Keep the focus on the child and his or her problem.
- **Believe your child.** When your child first tells you they are being bullied, you may be shocked and upset. If you want your child to trust you, you need to react in a way that encourages him or her to trust you. Express your concern and make it clear that you want to help.
- **Support and empathize with your child.** Respond in a positive and accepting manner. Let your child know that bullying is wrong, and that it is not his or her fault.
- **Be patient.** Your child may not be ready to open up right away. He or she may be feeling insecure or fear retaliation from the bully. They may also believe that nothing will change even if they tell you. Continue to let your child know you are there to support them, and look for opportunities to discuss the issue.

Take your child seriously.

Research tells us that 49 percent of children say they've been bullied at least once at school, but only 32 percent of their parents believed them. So reassure your child that you believe him or her, thank him or her for coming to you, and stress that you will help him or her deal with the situation.

- Education.com

- **Work with your child to find solutions.** Ask your child what they think can be done to help. What have they already tried? What worked and what didn't?
- **Seek help from your child's school.** If the bullying is occurring in school, ask your child's teacher, the school social worker, and the principal to help you find solutions. Find out what bullying prevention programs are in place at the school. If none are currently in place, ask administrators to find out about programs other schools and communities use. Offer to help with the research, if you are able.
- **Document ongoing bullying.** Work with your child to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If it involves cyberbullying, keep a record and copy of all messages or postings.

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- **Help your child develop strategies and skills for handling bullying.** Provide suggestions for ways your child can respond to bullying. Role play with your child so he or she can gain confidence.
- **Seek professional help, if necessary.** If you notice that your child becomes withdrawn, depressed or reluctant to go to school, or if you see a decline in school performance, consult the social worker at your child's school, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, or other mental health professional. Seeking professional help early will reduce the risk of long term emotional consequences.

What NOT to do

- **Never tell your child to ignore the bullying or to "just walk away."** What he or she may "hear" is that you are going to ignore it. Also, trying to ignore bullying often allows it to become more serious.
- **Do not blame your child for being bullied.** Do not assume that your child did something to provoke the bullying.
- **Do not encourage your child to fight back.** Fighting back could get your child hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- **Do not contact the parents of the students who bullied your child.** It may make matters worse.
- **Do not demand or expect an immediate solution from school personnel.** Ask for a follow-up meeting to discuss the issue. Also, be aware that the law limits the ability of school personnel from revealing disciplinary actions taken against other students. Just because they cannot tell you if or how another student was disciplined, does not mean action was not taken.
- **Avoid judgmental comments about the child who bullies.** Your child may already be feeling isolated and hearing negative statements may only further isolate him or her.

