

For Parents & Families

Bullying is hard for both a child and a parent. Learn how to deal with it together.



My child is being bullied

If you found out your child was being bullied what would you do?

Bullying is a serious issue for everyone involved. It's important to have strategies for how to handle it.

The first step towards helping your child is to be a good listener and let them talk through the problem without interrupting. As you work towards a solution, remember that you're the expert about your own child, and you're also their role model for how to handle difficult situations.

step | one

Prepare for a successful conversation

- 1. Take your child seriously.** If your child wants to talk to you about being bullied, listen to them. Taking time to listen and understand your child will mean so much to them.
- 2. Think of a good place to have the conversation.** Your child will find it easier to talk to you in a space where you both feel comfortable. Consider taking a walk or going for a snack.
- 3. Make sure you're calm.** It makes sense that if your child is being bullied, you'll be emotional. But try to stay calm and keep the conversation positive. Take time to process the situation and hold off on talking about it until you're not upset.
- 4. Remember, you're the role model.** Your feelings are contagious and bullying is a challenging situation, but if you stay calm, your child will likely stay calm, too. And if you're both calm, you'll be better prepared to handle the situation.



step | two

Talk about the problem

Bullying can take place anywhere and happens in many different ways — from spreading rumors to posting inappropriate photos to threatening someone. Whatever form the bullying comes in and no matter what the level of severity, it's just not OK. Here are some ways to help your child deal with a bullying situation.

- 1. Be supportive.** Your child needs to feel safe to be open and honest with you. Don't interrupt or criticize — let them tell the full story. Let them know that you'll work with them to fix the problem, and won't go behind their back to report the problem to the school or the bully's parents.
- 2. Be empathetic.** If you ever experienced being bullied, share that experience with your child. Relating to your child's situation will encourage them to share what happened and how they feel about it.
- 3. Lead the conversation.** Helping your child with the situation means you'll have a lot to say and many questions. Explain to your child that you need to ask a lot of questions to help gather all the facts to help them deal with the situation. Here are some ideas on how to start the conversation:
 - "I'm sorry this happened to you. I'm glad you told me. Can you tell me more about what happened?"
 - "That sounds upsetting, and I can understand why you are feeling [angry/ afraid/ sad/ embarrassed]. Let's go find a quiet place so we can talk privately."
 - "I'm so glad you told me. You did the right thing and I promise I will do my best to help you manage this."
 - "Bullying isn't OK. I know it's difficult for you to talk about it. I really want to help you figure out what to do."

Avoid saying things that could come off as insulting or criticizing, like telling your child they shouldn't be friends with the bully in the first place or that bullying isn't a big deal.

If your child doesn't want to talk about it, it might be because they're afraid of getting someone in trouble, what will happen if the situation is escalated or being bullied even more. If you think that's the reason your child doesn't want to do anything about the bullying, explain that tattling is meant to get someone in trouble but telling someone about bullying is not tattling, it's getting help — and that's the right thing to do.

As you talk through the bullying situation, if you find out it's happening online, it's a good idea to print or save a copy of the bullying incident, just in case you need it in the future.

step | three

Develop an action plan with your child

Your child needs to believe in and feel like a part of the action plan for it to work. Don't dictate, but suggest solutions and encourage them to come up with their own ways of dealing with the situation. Ask your child what they want to do and how you can help. Come up with more than one option to deal with the situation.

If it's an urgent or severe situation (e.g. someone is threatening your child), take immediate action. If it's someone at your child's school, talk to the Discipline Master or Principal. Your child's safety is the priority.

If your child is really upset or shows signs of self-harm, get help immediately. Don't leave your child alone. Learn more about the available [self-harm resources](#).

You should also report serious incidents such as threats, intimidation or exploitation to the police. If the situation involves nude or intimate photos of your child that they shared with someone, turn to the police for help.

If the bullying happened on Facebook, let your child know there are ways to report and handle it on Facebook.

Facebook tools and options:

If the bullying situation is happening on Facebook, you can help your child choose an option that's right for the situation.

- **Report the photo or post.** Facebook will review the post or photo to see if it violates the Facebook Community Standards, which are the policies that describe what's OK and what's not OK to post on Facebook. If it does violate the standards, Facebook will remove it. Facebook reports are confidential — the person who posted it will know it's been reported, but not who reported it.

If the photo or post is upsetting but doesn't violate the Facebook Community Standards, through the reporting process your child can choose to [contact the person who posted it](#) directly, or share it with a trusted friend or adult, and ask them for help.

- **Unfriend the person.** This means the person will be removed from your child's Facebook friend list. They won't see the person's posts in News Feed.
- **Block the person.** The person won't be able to start a conversation with your child or see their profile, and your child won't be able to see theirs. They also won't appear in each other's search results.

You can also share the Teens section of Facebook's Bullying Prevention Hub with your child, so they can get more information and resources to help manage the situation.

step | four

Follow up

After you follow through with your action plan, make sure you follow up with your child to make sure everything's OK.

1. **Make sure your child feels safe to going to school.** You can also help make sure that they have someone to turn to if they start to feel unsafe at school (like a close friend or teacher). Let the teacher or friend know that your child might need their help.
2. **Roleplaying can help your child learn and practice some possible scenarios that might occur at school.** This could be, for example, seeing the bully in class or the corridor. For these types of situations, help your child come up with simple, direct language that will help them stay calm and confident.

3. **If the problem was resolved (e.g. the post or photo was removed) your child shouldn't go out of their way to approach the bully.** However, if the relationship can be repaired, they could thank them and let them know that they did the right thing.

It's a good idea to have regular chats with your child for a few weeks after the initial incident — you want to be sure that the situation has been handled in the best way possible.



My child is bullying others

If you found out your child was bullying others, what would you say or do?

The first step towards helping your child is to be a good listener. Give them time to tell the full story and let them know you'll help them work it out. As you work towards a solution, remember that you're the expert about your own child, and you're also their role model for how to handle difficult situations.

step | one

Prepare for a successful conversation

- 1. Think of a good place to have the conversation.** Your child will find it easier to talk to you in a space where you both feel comfortable. Consider taking a walk or going for a snack. Give your child the physical distance they need during the conversation.
- 2. Make sure you're calm.** Recognize and manage any strong emotions you may have about the situation before you talk with your child. Try to stay calm and keep the conversation positive. You may want to take time to process the situation and hold off on talking about it until you're not upset.
 - **Don't say something you might regret.** It's important to remember that everyone makes mistakes. You have an opportunity to help your child develop empathy and learn healthier ways to treat others.
- 3. Remember, you're the role model.** Your feelings are contagious and bullying is a challenging situation, but if you stay calm, your child will likely stay calm, too. And if

you're both calm, you'll be better prepared to handle the situation.

- 4. Be supportive.** No matter what happened, your child needs to feel safe to be open and honest with you. Let them know you'll listen to them and don't interrupt or criticize. Give your child time to tell the full story and let them know you'll help them work it out.

You'll likely have judgments about what happened, but it's important for you not to express those judgments in a critical way.

- Try your best avoid statements like, "What's wrong with you?" or "What were you thinking?"
- Instead, try something like "I'm disappointed that this happened, and this is serious. It's not OK for you or anyone else to spread rumors/say mean things/threaten someone/etc."

step | two

Talk with your child about the problem

- 1. Find out what happened.** It's important to find out what happened, how long it's been happening, and if anything has happened since you found out about this incident.
 - Your background knowledge of the situation could influence how you discuss and handle it.
 - When you ask your child about what happened, be a good listener. Don't put words into their mouth or jump to conclusions.
 - Learn as much as possible. Find out whether this behaviour is new for your child or whether something else might have occurred that you don't know about. This will help you decide on how you will handle this at home.
- 2. Communicate your values.** Let your child know that bullying behaviour is unacceptable. Remind your child why kindness, respect, and empathy are important.

Here are some ways to start a conversation when you think your child might be bullying someone:

- "Tell me about what's been happening between you and _____."
- "I was disappointed to hear about this, and it's not OK. Tell me exactly what happened so we can decide what action we need to take."

If your child comes to you and admits to bullying someone:

- "It took courage for you to tell me this when you know how upsetting it would be for me and that there will be consequences. It's never OK to say mean things/spread rumors/etc. Let's sit down and talk through the situation so we can figure out the best way to handle this."

step | three

Explore solutions

- 1. Decide on consequences.** Let your child know that there are consequences for being mean or hurtful to others. Sometimes that means taking away something, a phone or time with friends.
 - Be firm and consistent. You need to follow through with the consequences you explain.
 - Don't make promises you can't keep, but let your child know that you want to find a successful resolution to the problem.
- 2. Recommended solutions.** If the bullying happened online, have your child remove the posts. If it happened at school, tell the principal and let them know you're working with your child. Offer to work with the school on any consequences that have to do with the school's policy.
- 3. Encourage your child to apologize.** Help your child with either writing it or choosing the right words to verbally apologize. Here are some suggestions to help get you started:

- "_____, I'm very sorry for what I did. I understand why you're upset. I'm going to take down the photo/post right away. I should never have done that. I hope you'll forgive me."
- "I'm so sorry for what I did. I had no idea that what I said was so hurtful. I really didn't mean to hurt you. Please let me know what was wrong with what I said so I can be sure not to do it again. Can you accept my apology? Please let me know if there is anything else I can do."
- "What I just posted was not OK and I'm sorry. I was upset about what you said to me the other day and instead of telling you I posted that message. I still feel that what you said was wrong too. I want to apologize and I hope you can too. I'll let everyone know that what I did was wrong and hope you will too."
- "On Thursday, I wrote something on _____'s wall that was seen as disrespectful. I thought it was funny, but I now realize why they were upset. I apologized, and want everyone to know that I'm sorry."

If you need to reach out to the school (or the school has reached out to you):

- “I’m here because I got a call that my child has bullied another child. I’ve heard my child’s story, but please tell me what you know about the situation. Who else was involved? Has this happened before?”
- “I’d like _____ to apologize to the child he/she hurt, and I’d like your help figuring out the best possible way to do that.”
- “I know my child did something that was wrong and he/she has apologized to the other child. How can we make sure both my child and the other child feel safe coming back to school?”

step | four

Follow through

- 1. Be clear about the consequences.** If you have not established consequences for bullying behaviour, do it now and follow through. Be firm in applying whatever consequences you decide on. Take the severity of the incident into consideration.
- 2. Get more involved with your child’s activities both offline and online.** Pay close attention to your child’s Internet and mobile phone activity. Make sure they’re behaving in ways that align with your family’s values.

If you need to reach out to the parent of the child your son/daughter bullied:

- “I’m so sorry. I just learned that my son/daughter spread a rumor about your child. He/she understands that this is completely unacceptable. I want to make sure your child knows that _____ wants to apologize if you and your son/daughter are ready to accept it. We will make sure this never happens again.”



- 3. Talk with the principal of your child’s school.** Find out what your school is doing to build a positive climate so your child feels safe, comfortable, and is able to learn. Find out more about the school Cyber Wellness Curriculum and how you can encourage your child to demonstrate care and respect for self and others.
- 4. Consider counseling.** For severe or ongoing cases, counseling can help explore the reason for your child’s behaviour, and help them find healthier ways to express feelings and behaviour.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CHECK OUT THE LINKS BELOW:

Media Literacy Council
medialiteracycouncil.sg

Facebook Family Safety Center
facebook.com/safety