

What to Do and What NOT to do

If you think your child is being bullied, or if your child has told you that he or she is being bullied, you can help. Parents are often the best resource to build a child's self-confidence and teach him or her how to best solve problems. Following are some ways parents can help:

Talk about it. Talk about bullying with your kids and have other family members share their experiences. If one of your kids opens up about being bullied, praise him or her for being brave enough to discuss it and offer unconditional support.

Remove the bait. If it's lunch money or gadgets that the school bully is after, you can help neutralize the situation by encouraging your child to pack a lunch or go to school gadget-free. Don't encourage your child to fight. This could lead to him or her getting hurt, getting in trouble, and beginning more serious problems with the bully.

Buddy up for safety. Two or more friends standing at their lockers are less likely to be picked on than a child who is all alone. Remind your child to use the buddy system when on the school bus, in the bathroom, or wherever bullies may lurk.

Keep calm and carry on. Help your child act with self-confidence. With him or her, practice walking upright, looking people in the eye, and speaking clearly. If a bully strikes, a kid's best defense may be to remain calm, ignore hurtful remarks, tell the bully to stop,

and simply walk away. Bullies thrive on hurting others. A child who isn't easily ruffled has a better chance of staying off a bully's radar.

Don't try to fight the battle yourself. Talk to your child's teacher about it instead of confronting the bully's parents. If the teacher doesn't act to stop the bullying, talk to the principal.

It's hard for any parents to believe that their child is a bully, but sometimes it happens. But just because your child bullies doesn't mean that he or she will bully forever. Parents are one of the best resources to help their child stop bullying and start interacting positively with their classmates.

Following are some ways parents can stop their child from bullying:

Take it seriously. Don't treat bullying as a passing phase. Even if you're not worried about long-lasting effects on your child, another child is being hurt.

Talk to your child to find out why he or she is bullying. Often, children bully when they feel sad, angry, lonely, or insecure and many times major changes at home or school may bring on these feelings.

Help build empathy. Talk to your child about how it feels to be bullied.

Ask a teacher or a school counselor if your child is facing any problems at school, such as if your child is struggling with a particular subject or has difficulty making friends. Ask them for advice on how you and your child can work through the problem.

Ask yourself if someone at home is bullying your child. Often, kids who bully are bullied themselves by a parent, family member, or another adult.

(Information from KidsHealth.org and the National Crime Prevention Council.)