

# Your Three-Step Plan to Stopping Bullying

Discovering that your child is being bullied can be devastating. You may feel bewildered, scared, sad, guilty, angry, or helpless. You may even feel like a target yourself.

While it is important to recognize and acknowledge all those emotions, remember that feelings alone will not change the situation. The most effective thing you can do is focus on the issue and develop a plan.

Here are tools, strategies, and tips that can help you develop successful short-term and longer-term plans for protecting your child from bullying.

## 1. First, make sure that the issue is bullying and not routine childhood conflict.

It's bullying if the action is hurtful, intentional, and repetitive, and there is a power imbalance between the children. Sometimes, children are afraid or embarrassed to talk about bullying. If you suspect your child may be a target of bullying, you may want to try these approaches to find out for sure.

Ask and listen:

- Did someone hurt you on purpose?
- Is the other person bigger than you or scary to you?
- Did the child know you were being hurt?

Watch for signs, such as:

- Suddenly wanting to be driven to school instead of taking the bus
- Unexplained stomachaches or headaches
- Changes in sleep routines or temperament

## 2. If your child is being bullied, you can take action at home to help your child learn how to respond more effectively.

Teach direct and indirect techniques for dealing with bullies. You may want to encourage your child to:

- Avoid situations where bullying occurs
- Hang out with classmates, friends, peers, or siblings
- Tell the child who is bullying to stop
- Do something the bully does not expect or want: yell, blow a whistle, laugh

Encourage group involvement. Children who interact with peers are less likely to be bullied. You may want to help your child:

- Join an after-school program or activity
- Develop a hobby that allows interaction with others

## 3. If your child is being bullied at school, you can work with teachers and administrators to create a safe environment.

Talk with teachers and administrators.

- Notify them of the situation in writing. Schools are obligated to respond to bullying.
- Discuss ways the school can help, such as by developing a bullying awareness program.

Be part of your child's school.

- Join the PTA and raise awareness of bullying as an issue.
- Offer to speak to the school board and be the "bullying expert."
- If your child has disabilities, you can build bullying prevention goals into your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

For more information on bullying prevention, contact PACER Center at 952.838.9000 or 888.248.0822 (national toll free).



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