



How to Talk with Your Kids About Bullying

- Talk about what bullying is *before* it happens, if possible. Discuss the signs and tell your child that if something happens in school or online, (s)he should tell you so you can make a plan together for addressing it.
- Discuss the importance of standing up for others who are being bullied. This helps empathy become part of school culture and makes it more likely that others will stand up for your child, as well.
- Use books, TV shows, and movies as a launchpad for conversations with your child about bullying. Ask questions like:
 - “Was that bullying? Why or why not?”
 - “How did the character handle the situation? Would you have done anything differently?”
 - “Have you ever seen a situation like that? What happened? How did you feel?”
- Role-play appropriate responses that your child can use if bullying occurs. This helps your child have the tools necessary to respond firmly and constructively rather than adding fuel to the fire.
- Especially with older kids, try to avoid asking about “bullying”—if they *are* being bullied, they may not want to admit it, as doing so can feel embarrassing. Instead, ask broader questions to help them open up, like:
 - “How are things going with your friends?”
 - “What’s been going on in (class/activity) lately?”
 - “What was the best and worst part of your day?”
- Talk with your child’s teacher(s) and school to find out what they’re doing to be proactive about preventing bullying. Social and emotional learning (SEL) builds positive climate and culture, creates authentic bonds among students, and gives children the tools to manage their emotions in positive ways—all of these make bullying less likely to occur.