

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT BULLYING

(Source: www.kidshealth.org)

Consider asking the following questions to make it easier for your child to talk about bullying. The questions aren't personal and they convey the fact that other kids experience bullying, too.

- What's it like walking to the bus stop or home from school?
- What's it like on the bus ride to and from school?
- What happens on the playground during recess or before or after school?
- What happens in the hallways at school or during lunchtime?
- Have any bullies in the neighborhood or at school threatened anyone you know?
- Do some kids you know get e-mails, instant messages, or text messages that are upsetting, threatening, or insulting?

If your child is being bullied, offer him/her the following suggestions:

- **Hold the anger.** Showing your anger makes the problem worse. It gives the bully the response he/she is looking for and makes him/her feel more powerful. (**Do find a safe person to express your anger to.*)
- **Never get physical or bully back.** This shows anger and you can't be sure of how the bully will respond.
- **Act brave, walk away, and ignore the bully.** Look the bully in the eye and use a firm voice to say, "I want you to stop right now." Then, walk away. Keep your head high. Ignoring the bully means you don't give him/her the reaction he/she is looking for.
- **Use humor.** If you can't walk away with poise, use humor or give the bully a compliment to throw him/her off guard. Do not use humor to make fun of the bully.
- **Tell an adult.** Faculty and staff members at school are there to help you. Talk to your parents about what is happening.
- **Talk about it.** Talking is an excellent outlet for fears and frustrations. Seek support from others.
- **Use the buddy system.** There is strength in numbers. Surround yourself with friends on the bus, in the hallways, and at lunch. Offer to do the same for a friend who's having trouble with a bully.
- **Develop more friendships by joining social organizations, clubs, or sports programs.** Regular interactions with positive friends will build your self-esteem and give you a larger support network.



If your child is the bully, remember to express disappointment, not anger. You'll have to ask some hard-hitting questions:

- How do you feel about yourself?
- How do you think things are going at school? At home?
- Are you being bullied?
- Do you get along with other kids at school?
- How do you treat other children?
- What do you think about being considered a bully?
- Why do you think you're bullying?
- What might help you to stop the bullying?

Encourage your child to give up bullying:

- **Emphasize that bullying is a serious problem.** Make sure your child understands that it will not be tolerated and outline the consequences. For example, if your child is cyber bullying, take away the technologies he/she is using to bully others (i.e. computer, cell phone, etc.) Instruct your child to research bullying and the effects it has on people. Other examples of consequences include: restricting your child's curfew, taking away privileges but allowing the opportunity to earn them back, and requiring your child to do volunteer work to help those less fortunate.
- **Teach your child to treat people who are different with respect and kindness.** Teach your child to appreciate differences (i.e. race, religion, appearance, special needs, gender, economic status, etc.) Explain that everyone has rights and feelings
- **Find out if your child's friends are also bullying.** If so, seek intervention through your child's school.
- **Set limits.** Immediately stop any inappropriate behaviors and help your child practice alternatives.
- **Observe your child interacting with others and praise appropriate behaviors.** Positive reinforcement weighs in more than negative discipline.
- **Talk with school staff and ask how they can help your child change his/her behavior.** The school counselors are available to discuss positive choices, peer relations, and social skills.
- **Set realistic goals and don't expect an immediate change.** Assure your child that you still love him/her – it's the behavior you don't like.

If your child is neither a bully nor a victim, but has witnessed bullying taking place, he/she can help by:

- Not spreading rumors
- Refusing to join in when someone is being bullied
- Creating a distraction to draw the bully away
- Assisting a rejected or lonely person
- Getting adult assistance during a bullying situation
- Speaking up when they see someone being bullied