

INTERVENTION

“I suspect my child is being bullied - Now What?”

Having a child who is being bullied can be a scary and frightening thing. It can be a stressful time for both parent and child, and children may be reluctant to involve you in the situation. Keeping this in mind it is important that you handle the situation carefully and safely making sure to reassure your child that you are here to help them through this situation.

It is equally important for you, as a parent or caregiver, to not dramatize nor play down the situation; rather that you are able to handle it calmly with the perspective that your child may be lacking.

Below are a few tips on how to take charge of the situation and put an end to the bullying:

Become Informed

- Spend time alone with your child. Listen to your child – and make it easy for them to talk to you. Talk about feelings. Try to get your child to tell you how they feel in general – their hopes, ambitions and worries.
- Get the facts. Find out the whole story – slowly and calmly.
- Tell the school. Regularly engage in two-way communication with their child’s teacher(s) and support staff; Share all the facts that you know, and allow the school time to find out more and respond. It’s important to be as honest and open as possible.
- Think about becoming a volunteer, joining a parent organization or the School Council. By doing this, you will create many opportunities to network with other parents and get to know the teaching staff. If your time is limited, choose to be involved in one or two events that demonstrate your support both for the school and your child.
- Keep a diary of events based on when the bullying started and when it happens. Keep talking to, reassuring and supporting your child.
- Decide what to do. What does your child want to happen next? Involving your child can help them cope if something similar happens. strategies together about how to cope with the bullying



Remember! It takes a lot of courage for children to disclose when they are being bullied. Make sure to support children when they talk to you by reinforcing the message that:

“No one deserves to be bullied, and we are going to do everything we can to stop it.”

Encourage Strong Supportive Relationships

Children’s positive peer relationships depend on positive relationships with adults. Teachers, parents, and other adults involved in children’s lives not only model relationship skills and attitudes, but they are also active in creating contexts in which children and youth interact. Children will only learn positive relationship skills and attitudes if they observe and interact with adults who exemplify these elements of positive relationships in their interactions with children and with other adults.

- Encourage your children to join clubs of interest in school.
- Allow children to get involved in community events that interest them.
- Encourage children to spend time with a person whom they admire (such as a cousin, grandparent, or you!)
- Provide them with a list of characteristics of a good friend. Such as:
 - Offer support when needed.
 - Are kind to their friends.
 - Laugh at each other’s jokes and are fun to be around.
 - Have a smile on their face when their friend comes around.
 - Are always willing to share.
 - Offer to help their friend.
 - Invite their friend to do so something together.
 - Show an interest in what their friends do



Work on Self-Esteem

- Teach your child to take a stand. This doesn’t mean retaliating but being strong and assertive. Practice together how to tell the person who is bullying to stop. This could include learning about:
 - Body language - stand tall, eyes up, arms open, serious expression
 - Voice - clear, short messages, practice what you’ll say

- Message - tell them to stop, tell them why, use "I" messages such as "I feel embarrassed when you call me names"
 - Action - walk away, find a positive crowd, seek adult assistance.
- Role play effective methods for responding to bullies.
 - Each day, acknowledge at least one thing your child says or does that you appreciate.
 - Be specific when giving your child feedback. Tell her / him what it is that you are pleased with. For example, "You shared your toys with your sister."
 - Be aware of what you say to or about your child. Avoid speaking negatively about your child in her / his presence. What your child hears may influence his or her perception of self.
 - Provide opportunities for your child to make choices, and respect the choices that are made. Remember to only offer choices that you believe to be suitable.
 - Encourage your child to do her / his best and emphasize effort rather than success.
 - Provide realistic expectations for your child. Understanding the developmental ability of your child at each age will help you to determine if your expectations are appropriate and enable your child to feel success.
 - Identify your child's abilities. For example, if your child says I can't put my shoes on, say "It is really hard for you to put on your shoes, but look at what you have done. You put your jacket on and zipped it up all by yourself."
 - Acknowledge your child's feelings as important and valuable. This will enhance her / his feelings of self-worth



Diffuse the Situation

- Show your child when to walk (or run) away. Let them know that physical attacks or a threat of physical attack means they should leave the area and not engage the person bullying them. Always seek adult help.



- Discuss with your child when the bullying tends to take place and how to avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- Establish a walking group to and from your child's school by including other children who live near-by. The group can then walk to and from school together.
- Work with the school to ensure that your child is safe, that effective consequences are applied and that monitoring at the school is adequate. Ask the school to work with the student doing the bullying to help them change their behavior and develop more appropriate social skills.
- In most provinces and territories of Canada, school administrators and teachers are required to follow legislated safe school policies and to enforce a code of conduct to ensure a violence-free learning environment for all their students. Many schools go much further to foster a positive and caring learning environment by introducing school-wide anti-bullying programs and other cooperative classroom and playground strategies. If you are not familiar with the safe school policies within your Board of Education, you can ask the principal for a copy.

Successful interventions are comprehensive and systemic. They comprise broad-based efforts to address bullying by involving peers, parents, significant adults, and communities. Success depends upon change at each of these levels because interactions within each of these levels can either promote or reduce the likelihood of bullying and victimization.

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