

Table Talk

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT BULLYING

DEFINITIONS

CONFLICT - A disagreement or difference of opinion

RUDE - Thoughtless behavior

MEAN - Intentional behavior that hurts others

BULLYING - Repeated, aggressive behavior with a power imbalance

What Does NOT Constitute Bullying?

These behaviors are hurtful and should still be addressed.

Simply disliking someone. It is normal to not like everyone. Verbal or non-verbal messages of “I don’t like you” are not bullying.

Exclusion. It is normal for people to gather with their friends. However, shunning, alienating, or leaving someone out on purpose can be considered bullying.

Making a joke about someone. Occasional teasing is not uncommon and is not bullying when no one is truly offended. When the intention is hurtful or harmful, it can be bullying.

Arguments. People disagree about many things. Unless there is a power imbalance or the intent is to be mean or control someone, it is not considered bullying.

A single incident of conflict, aggression, intimidation, or other inappropriate behavior.

Bullying typically involves a pattern of repeated behavior. A single incident may not meet the definition of bullying, but that does not mean the behavior is acceptable or will be ignored. Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation, harassment, or other harmful behavior should still be reported and may require intervention or disciplinary action.



Have the Conversations

Questions to Start the Conversation

- Do you know what bullying is? How is it different than mean behavior?
- Is someone engaging in bullying just because they are mean to you?
- Have you ever experienced mean behavior? What about bullying? Can you tell me more about it?
- Have you ever been mean to someone else? Do you think you have bullied someone behavior? Please explain.
- What do students do when they see bullying take place in school? What do you do?

Questions to Dig Deeper

- Have you ever acted as a bystander when someone was being bullied? What was that like?
- Have you ever acted as an ally (or upstander) when someone was being bullied? What was that like?
- Have you seen students targeted for bullying based on an aspect of their identity (race, religion, disability, etc.)? What was that like?
- How can we make your school safer and decrease or eliminate bullying?

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BE AN UPSTANDER

An **upstander** is someone who notices when another person is being bullied, excluded, or mistreated and chooses to help rather than simply watching or joining in. When peers stay silent, it can unintentionally make hurtful behavior easier to continue. Being an upstander **does not mean your child has to confront another student or put themselves in an uncomfortable or unsafe situation**. Instead, teach your child that there are several ways to help.

Teach the 4 D's

DIRECT — Speak up

If it feels safe, calmly address the behavior.

"That's not okay." • "Come on, leave them alone."

DISTRACT — Interrupt the situation

Change the subject, invite the targeted student somewhere else, or create a reason to leave.

"Come sit with us." • "Hey, come with me."

DELEGATE — Get help

Tell a teacher, counselor, coach, parent, or another trusted adult.

DELAY — Support them afterward

Sometimes the best response happens after the situation is over.

"I saw what happened. Are you okay?" • "Want to walk with me?"



Tattling vs. Reporting: Helping Your Child Know the Difference

Children often hesitate to speak up because they do not want to be labeled a "tattletale." Use this simple framework to help them understand when it is necessary to involve an adult:

- **Tattling** is when a child shares information to get someone in trouble or to get attention. The situation is usually minor, harmless, and can be solved by the kids involved (e.g., "He took the blue crayon first").
- **Reporting** is when a child shares information to keep someone safe from physical or emotional harm. The situation involves behavior that is dangerous, unfair, or destructive, and requires adult help to fix (e.g., "She is being pushed on the playground and asked them to stop").

Help Them Practice at Home

Talk about situations your child may encounter at school, online, in group chats, or with friends. Ask, *"What could you do if you saw that happening?"* Younger children may rely more on getting an adult or inviting someone to play, while older students may feel very real pressure about social consequences. Help your child choose an upstander response that is both kind and safe.

Also remind them:

- Don't laugh, encourage, "like," share, or pass along hurtful comments, pictures, or rumors.
- Supporting someone privately afterward still counts as standing up for them.
- Never fight, threaten, or put yourself in danger to intervene.
- If someone may be unsafe, always involve a trusted adult.