

# Bullying Prevention 101

A quick guide for parents

## BULLYING DEFINED

Although definitions vary, most include that bullying is when:

- The behavior hurts, humiliates, or harms another person physically or emotionally
- Those targeted by the behavior have difficulty stopping the action directed at them and struggle to defend themselves
- There is also a real or perceived “imbalance of power,” which is described as when the student with the bullying behavior has more “power,” either physically, socially, or emotionally
- There is a pattern of bullying behavior, although bullying can occur in a single incident depending on its severity or the history of those involved

*Note: For a legal definition, consult your state’s law on bullying.*

## DID YOU KNOW

### ...bullying is not the same as conflict

Conflict can be a disagreement or argument that occurs when parties with equal power express their views. While people may not agree, it’s not bullying if both parties can respectfully share what they think without demeaning or intentionally hurting the other person.

### ...harassment is different from bullying

Bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably when talking about hurtful or harmful behavior. They are very similar, but bullying behavior is considered harassment when it is directed at a protected class – such as a group identified by race, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin.

### ...the Internet is changing how youth experience bullying

Cyberbullying is often defined as an aggressive, intentional, and repeated act against someone using technology, such as email, texting, social media, or instant messages.

### ... adults don’t see most bullying

Bullying often takes place outside the view of adults – in the classroom when the teacher leaves the room, on the playground, on the bus, or online. In order for youth to feel equipped to take action, it is important to empower them as advocates for themselves and others.

Advocacy

=

Helping others get what they need

Self-advocacy

=

Communicating and taking action to get what you need

Empowering  
Youth

Every child and teen can and should develop advocacy skills to address and prevent bullying.

Advocacy for yourself and others helps youth:

- Feel empowered to help prevent bullying they see or experience
- Identify what help is needed to address bullying
- Ask others to get involved
- Respectfully express disagreement
- Offer their opinions with confidence
- Make a positive difference for themselves and others

# HOW TO APPROACH SITUATIONS AT HOME

## If your child is *being* bullied...

- Be supportive
- Listen to them without judgement
- Let them know that you are there for them and want to help
- Discuss their ideas on how they want to handle the situation
- Make a plan for next steps
- Identify others who may be able to help, such as a teacher or counselor

## If your child *witnesses* bullying...

- Reassure them that telling an adult is a positive first step
- Share that they can make a positive impact on others
- Work together to make a plan that your child is comfortable with using to respond to bullying incidents in the future
- Reinforce that they should never participate in or support bullying
- Encourage them to be supportive and kind to the student being bullied
- Explain why telling an adult about bullying is a good idea and is not tattling

## If your child is *doing* the bullying...

- Know that bullying is a behavior and behavior can be changed
- Recognize that children bully for many different reasons
- Have a calm conversation to explore the reasons for their behavior
- Help your child understand how their behavior affects others
- Make your expectations of appropriate behavior clear and consistent
- Let them know bullying is not okay under any circumstances
- Provide appropriate and meaningful consequences that fit the situation
- Help them think through how they can handle situations more positively
- Give positive feedback for good choices

## Three simple steps youth can take to promote advocacy and self-advocacy

- **STEP 1: Describe the experience.**  
Youth should think about the bullying they have experienced, seen, or done. Help youth describe the situation including where it happened, who was involved, what occurred, and how it made them feel.
- **STEP 2: Reflect on ideas.**  
Ask youth to consider how the situation could be different. Include what they would like to see happen, what things could change, and what would help them feel more in control of the situation.
- **STEP 3: Develop potential solutions**  
Assist youth in thinking about the steps needed to make those changes. Consider what role they need to take, who should be involved, and what those involved would need to do.

It is important to note here that while it's not up to the child to handle the situation on their own, it's important they feel empowered to share their perspective.

Download PACER's Student Action Plan Template to get started:

[PACER.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf](https://PACER.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf)

### Many students define bullying as:

“When someone makes you feel less about who you are as a person.”