



Five Ways to Help Your Child Cope With a Bully

Childhood bullying is a problem most children will face at some point of their childhood. It is normal child behavior to occasionally tease, play fight and have disagreements with their peers. However; bullying is a far more serious behavior that can be a very frightening experience and damage your child's self esteem. Our job is to prepare our kids for life in the real world and that means helping them learn how to cope with bullies.

Bullying may be defined as the activity of repeated, aggressive behavior intended to hurt another person, physically or mentally. Bullying consists of three basic types of abuse – emotional/social, verbal, and physical. (Wikipedia definitions and etymology).I would also like to add cyber bullying as it seems to be the new age form of bullying. As much as we would like to shield them from bullies, as parents, we have to be realistic. Here are some ways we can help our children cope with bullies and build their self confidence.

1. **Talk to your child:** it is important to talk to your children every day. Ask about their day and who they played with and sat next to at lunch. Try to get your child to openly talk to you by avoiding questions that can be answered with a yes or no. If your child tells you that someone is being mean to them, focus on offering comfort and support, no matter how upset you are. Kids are often reluctant to tell adults about bullying because they feel embarrassed and ashamed that it's happening, or worry that their parents will be disappointed. Don't tell your child to ignore the mean kid or to handle it themselves. If they knew how to handle themselves, they wouldn't have come to you for advice. Telling them to ignore a bully isn't helpful. Give them real help so that they learn you really are someone worth confiding in.
2. **Acknowledge your child's feelings:** Make it clear it is not their fault. Sometimes it helps if children understand why kids bully. Some bullies are looking for attention. They might think bullying is a way to be popular or to get what they want. Most bullies are trying to make themselves feel more important and sometimes bullies are struggling with issues at home themselves. When they pick on someone else, it can make them feel powerful. Listen to any concerns and reassure your child you love and care about him or her.
3. **Make a plan:** Brainstorm with your child ways to stop or avoid bullying. Help your child set up a plan to deal with the bully. If you deal with their problems for them, they will never learn how to stand up for themselves and how to deal with their own problems. Kids should be allowed to try to solve this with the support of their parents, teachers, principals and counselors. Communicate with the school and let them know what is going on. School staff is your extra set of eyes
4. **Encourage:** Have your child to walk away and do not fight back. Avoid the bully and use the buddy system. Make sure you are always with a group of friends or near a teacher. Play outside near a teacher; use a different bathroom if the bully is near. Walk home with an older sibling or group of

friends; sit behind the bus driver on the bus. Notify the school of the situation before it gets physical. It is ok to enroll your child in karate to learn how to defend themselves.

5. **Role play-Bullystoppers-** Role play with your child situations they might encounter with the bully and role play “bully-stoppers.” Bully-stoppers are comeback lines, not insults. Look the bully in the eye and say strongly but calmly, Leave me alone or you don't scare me, whatever you say, why do you say things like that? I heard you and I don't care. The key to comeback lines is to remain COOL and AVOID insults with the bully or teaser. A great comeback line is brief and to the point and leaves the bully or teaser feeling that they did not get to you. *Bullystoppers.com 101 great comeback lines.*

No matter what method you choose to help your child cope with a bully, always support your child and their feelings and make sure the bullying doesn't continue. Bullying is a very serious matter and can lead to severe emotional scarring and even suicide.

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