

BULLYING

CONVERSATION GUIDE ... for parents

Bullying is defined by unwanted or repetitive behavior that is intended to cause physical or emotional harm. Bullying may be physical (hitting, punching), verbal (teasing or name-calling) or relational (social exclusion or cyberbullying). Bullying occurs in every community, and in every school setting—religious or secular, public or private.

Bullying is hurtful and can have serious and sometime long-term mental health consequences, which can be unique to each individual.

If your child is being bullied, or if you even suspect bullying, let them know that they are not alone and that they are not at fault. If they are the bully, it's important to dig a little deeper and take some action. And even if bullying is not on the radar, talk to kids about what to do if they ever experience it or witness it in any way.

These conversations aren't always easy to have. Make sure to involve professional counselors, as needed, as well as your ministry leader.

WHAT TO SAY

STARTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT BULLYING:

- "Have you ever felt threatened by someone or teased to the point where you thought it might be bullying?"
- "Tell me what happened."
- "How did this person make you feel?"
- If not, "What would you do if you were ever bullied?"
- "What would you do if you saw someone else being teased or bullied?"
- "It's important to tell someone if you ever feel bullied or threatened by anyone."
- "Who is someone you would tell at your school?"
- "The quicker you tell someone, the quicker things will change."
- "Have you ever seen people make fun of others or say mean things online?"
- "Has anyone made mean comments to you?" If so, "What did you do?"
- "Have you ever said mean things online that you didn't know might be bullying?"
- "Let's take some steps to protect yourself online."

IF YOU FIND OUT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED:

- "Thank you for telling me. This is a safe place."
- "This isn't your fault."
- "Who else feels like a safe person to tell?"
- "Bullies count on the fact that you won't tell anyone."
- "Here are some things you can say to someone who is teasing you . . ."
 - » "I didn't appreciate that."
 - » "I'm not sure if that was meant to be a joke, but I didn't find it very funny."
 - » "Stop." (Stand tall and say it in a strong, confident voice.)
- "If you ever feel unsafe, go find an adult right away."
- "There is nothing to be ashamed of."
- "Who are some people you enjoy being around who make you feel good about yourself?"
- "I care about you and I need to tell someone who can help us so we can stop this from happening again."

- "Sometimes hurt people, hurt people. Do you think this person might be hurting in any way?"
- "Let's pray for this person. That's hard to do sometimes, but God loves this person as much as He loves you and wants to help you both."
- "A bully wants to make you feel bad about yourself to feel better about themselves. What is something kind you can say or do for them?"
- "Let's talk about some things that are great about your life."
- "Here's what I love about you . . ."

IF YOU FIND OUT YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY:

- "I need to talk to you about something important because I care about you."
- "Have you ever felt threatened by someone or felt bullied?"
- "Have you ever witnessed someone else experience bullying? How about online?"
- "Can you remember a time when someone was mean to you or when you were left out? How did that make you feel?"
- "Jesus reminds us to treat others the way we want to be treated. That's a good principle. Are you treating this person the way you would want to be treated?"
- "Adults sometimes send wrong messages without realizing it. Have I ever done anything to make you think this was okay behavior?"
- "Is there something at school or in our home life that feels stressful to you?"
- "Those behaviors are bullying behaviors. It's not who you are."
- "What can we do to make this right?"
- "We might need to bring other people into the conversation."
- "This doesn't change the way I feel about you. I love you."

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