

# What should I do if my child is being bullied?

## What to do:

- Start a conversation with your child right away.
- Find a comfortable place to talk that is free of distractions, such as the TV or cell phones.
- Take a deep breath and stay calm.
- Ask questions such as:
  - How is everything going at school? Tell me about your day.
  - You seem kind of down. What's going on?
  - What situations can you think of where you wouldn't feel safe in school?
  - Who did you eat lunch with today?
  - Who did you play with at recess? What did you do?
- Let your child know that you are on his or her side and that you are going to do everything you can to help. Reassure your child that what happened is not his or her fault.
- Give your child suggestions for who to talk to at school when he or she needs help.
- Talk about scenarios and ask your child what he or she would do in each situation. Review ways to stand up to the bully.
- Keep a record of bullying incidents. Include who was involved, what happened and where and when it happened.

## What NOT to do:

- Do not overreact to the answers your child gives you. This may not be an easy thing for your child to talk about, and you want to stay calm to gather as much information as possible.
- Do not threaten the child doing the bullying yourself.
- Do not confront the parents of the child doing the bullying.
- Do not encourage a physical altercation with the child doing the bullying.

## Warning signs that your child is being bullied:

- He or she no longer wants to ride the bus.
- Your child comes home hungry because he or she didn't eat lunch.
- He or she complains of frequent headaches, stomach aches or feeling sick.
- Your child's grades start to decline, or he or she doesn't want to go to school.
- He or she has decreased self-esteem.
- Your child loses clothing, books or personal items.
- He or she often comes home with ripped or stained clothing.
- He or she starts having nightmares or difficulty sleeping.
- Your child shows self-destructive behaviors.
- Your child wants to spend more time than usual alone in his or her room.

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If you notice any of these warning signs, do not ignore them. Now is the time to start the conversation with your child. If you suspect your child may try to harm him or herself, get help from law enforcement, family resource centers, a physician, a counselor, or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255).

If your child has been bullied, talk to his or her teacher. Ask about the social dynamics of your child's class and find out if the teacher has any ideas that have worked in similar situations. If your needs aren't sufficiently addressed by the classroom teacher, reach out to the school counselor or social worker. Ask him or her to observe your child's interactions with others to help guide you with your concerns. If you feel you need more assistance, get in touch with your school principal. If your concerns still aren't resolved, contact your school superintendent. Finally, if your needs aren't addressed at the district level, contact your state department of education.