

How do I talk to my teen about bullying?

You may not know where to begin, but it's important to talk to your teen about bullying even before it occurs. You can start by having a general discussion about bullying. Teens will often share instances of bullying they've experienced once the discussion comes up.

This is not a conversation that you should have just once with your teen. Make it an ongoing conversation and touch base regularly about how things are going. Report any bullying incidents that your teen tells you about to the school.

- Start the conversation by finding a comfortable place to talk and turning off any distractions such as the TV and cell phones. You can ask your teen questions such as:
 - How's it going at school?
 - Who do you eat with at lunch?
 - What situations can you think of where you wouldn't feel safe at school?
- Give examples of bullying such as name-calling, destroying others' property, excluding others or intimidating other classmates. Ask your teen if he or she has seen similar things happening at school. You can use this time to talk about feelings and treating people the way you want to be treated.
- Help prepare your teen in case of a bullying situation. Explain how to stand up to a bully safely by saying "STOP" in an assertive voice, enlisting the help of a friend or teacher, or ignoring the bully and walking away.
- Teach your teen to stand up for others who are being bullied. This may mean looking out for others who are alone and making them feel welcome to join in activities. If your teen feels unsafe or uncomfortable at any time, he or she should get an adult to help.
- Boost your teen's self-confidence by enrolling your teen in activities he or she enjoys with friends or siblings. The more self-confident teens are, the more likely they will be to stand up for themselves and others.
- Serve as a role model for your teen. He or she is watching and learning from you at all times!