



Bullying: How to Help Your Child

Bullying is aggressive behaviour meant to cause harm, fear, or distress. It's often about social power, where one person has real or perceived power over another. It can take many forms, including *cyberbullying* – using technology to bully, like by spreading rumours or sharing hurtful messages or pictures.

Kids who are seen as different—in any way—are at higher risk of being bullied. Bullying can have negative mental health impacts for both children who bully and those who are targets of bullying. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's especially important that we work together to prevent and address bullying among people exposed to the virus, those who must stay home, and those experiencing heightened

discrimination.

Bullying is never okay. It's not a normal part of growing up. As a parent or caregiver, here are some important ways to prevent and address bullying.

Talk about it:

- Ask your child about bullying at school, including on the bus, playground, and other common areas. If you think your child might be a target of bullying, ask them – “are you ever bullied?”
- Check in with your child often and try to keep lines of communication open. Encourage them to share their thoughts,

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feelings, and experiences. Tell your child you're here to support and help them.

Show them you care:

- Set guidelines, limits and consequences for unacceptable behaviour.
- Encourage [positive behaviour and empathy](#).
- Role model healthy relationships. Reflect on how you treat others, and how they treat you.
- When your child has problems, help them come up with solutions—try not to step in and solve things for them.
- Take reports of bullying seriously and recognize the courage that it takes for kids to report or talk about bullying.

Watch for warning signs:

Signs your child may be a target of bullying:

- Fear of going to school, skipping or making excuses to avoid school
- Changes in school performance
- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or damaged personal belongings
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Becoming withdrawn, unhappy or irritable
- Making negative comments
- Talking about suicide

Signs your child may be bullying others:

- Having extra money or new things
- Talking about taunting or teasing others
- Laughing or not caring if others are hurt
- Aggression with others
- Leaving others out

Offer help:

- Teach your child not to fight back if they experience bullying. Instead, practice communicating in assertive ways without anger.
- Help your child identify safe and trusted adults at school that they can go to.
- Document concerns you have about bullying and save evidence. Report issues to social media sites and block users who bully.

Connect with others for support:

- Work with your child's school. Let them know right away about bullying situations. Ask your child who they trust at the school and get those adults involved in addressing concerns.
- Ask your school about their policies and plans to prevent and address bullying, and get involved where you can.
- Build connections with the parents and guardians of your child's friends so that you can watch for healthy interactions.

As a parent, you aren't expected to always have the answer! Here are some places to reach out for support:

- Bullying Helpline: 1-888-456-2323
- Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
- Kids Help Phone Text: text CONNECT to 686868
- <https://www.alberta.ca/bullying-find-supports.aspx>

For more information about bullying:

- <https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents>
- [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](https://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca) (Bullying)