WHAT IS BULLYING?

Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:

- **Imbalance of Power:** people who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm
- **Repetition:** incidents of bullying happen to the same person over and over by the same person or group

TYPES OF BULLYING

Bullying can take many forms. Examples include:

- **Verbal:** name-calling, teasing
- **Social:** spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships
- **Physical:** hitting, punching, shoving
- **Cyberbullying:** using the Internet, mobile phones or other digital technologies to harm others

WHAT TO DO IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

- **Talk with your child.** Focus on your child. Express your concern and make it clear that you want to help.
- **Empathize with your child.** Say bullying is wrong, that it is not their fault, and that you are glad they had the courage to tell you about it.
- **Work together to find solutions.** Ask your child what they think can be done to help. Reassure them that the situation can be handled privately.
- **Document ongoing bullying.** Work with your child to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If it involves cyberbullying, keep a record of all messages or postings.
- **Help your child develop strategies and skills for handling bullying.** Provide suggestions for ways to respond to bullying, and help your child gain confidence by rehearsing their responses.
- **Be persistent.** Bullying may not be resolved overnight.
- **Stay vigilant to other possible problems that your child may be having.** Some of the warning signs may be signs of other serious problems. Share your concerns with a counselor at your child’s school.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- **Do not assume that your child needs you to stay calm!**
- **Never tell your child to ignore the bullying.** What the child may “hear” is that you are going to ignore it. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.

BULLY-PROOF MY CHILD

- **Help your child understand bullying.** Explain what bullying is. It is more than physical; it can be done in person or over the phone or computer.
- **Keep open lines of communication with your child.** Check in with your child and listen to any concerns about friends and other students.
- **Encourage your child to pursue their interests.** Doing what they love may help your child be more confident among their peers and make friends with other kids with similar interests.
- **Teach your child to take a stand against bullying.** Give guidance about how to stand up to those who bully if it is safe to do so.
- **Talk to your child about seeking help from a trusted adult when feeling threatened by a bully.** Talk about whom they should go to for help and role-play what they should say. Assure your child that they should not be afraid to tell an adult when someone they know is being bullied.

WORK WITH YOUR SCHOOL TO STOP BULLYING

- **Know the school policies.** Ask for a copy or check the student handbook to see whether your school has standards in place that will help resolve the situation.
- **Open the line of communication.** Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child’s teacher or school counselor and establish a partnership to stop the bullying.
- **Get help for your child.** Seek advice from your child’s guidance counselor or other school-based health professionals. They may be able to help your child cope with the stress of being bullied.
- **Commit to making the bullying stop.** Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see whether the bullying has stopped. You may need to seek an attorney’s help or contact local law enforcement officials if the bullying persists or escalates.

Be the one to break the cycle

For more information about bullying visit: stopbullying.gov

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