

Bullying Advice for Kids

The key to helping kids is providing strategies that deal with bullying on an everyday basis and also help restore their self-esteem and regain a sense of dignity.

It may be tempting to tell a kid to fight back. After all, you're angry that your child is suffering and maybe you were told to "stand up for yourself" when you were young.

And you may worry that your child will continue to suffer at the hands of the bully.

But it's important to advise kids not to respond to bullying by fighting or bullying back. It can quickly escalate into violence, trouble, and someone getting injured. Instead, it's best to walk away from the situation, hang out with others, and tell an adult.

Here are some other strategies to discuss with kids that can help improve the situation and make them feel better:

- **Avoid the bully and use the buddy system.** Use a different bathroom if a bully is nearby and don't go to your locker when there is nobody around. Make sure you have someone with you so that you're not alone with the bully. Buddy up with a friend on the bus, in the hallways, or at recess — wherever the bully is. Offer to do the same for a friend.
- **Hold the anger.** It's natural to get upset by the bully, but that's what bullies thrive on. It makes them feel more powerful. Practice not reacting by crying or looking red or upset.

It takes a lot of practice, but it's a useful skill for keeping off of a bully's radar.

Sometimes kids find it useful to practice "cool down" strategies such as counting to 10, writing down their angry words, taking deep breaths or walking away. Sometimes the best thing to do is to teach kids to wear a "poker face" until they are clear of any danger (smiling or laughing may provoke the bully).

- **Act brave, walk away, and ignore the bully.** Firmly and clearly tell the bully to stop, then walk away. Practice ways to ignore the hurtful remarks, like acting uninterested or texting someone on your cell phone. By ignoring the bully, you're showing that you don't care. Eventually, the bully will probably get bored with trying to bother you.
- **Tell an adult.** Teachers, principals, parents, and lunchroom personnel at school can all help stop bullying.
- **Talk about it.** Talk to someone you trust, such as a guidance counselor, teacher, sibling, or friend. They may offer some helpful suggestions, and even if they can't fix the situation, it may help you feel a little less alone.
- **Remove the incentives.** If the bully is demanding your lunch money, start bringing your lunch. If he's trying to get your music player, don't bring it to school.