

PARENT GUIDE TO BULLYING



How do I know if my child is being bullied?

- Bullying is intentional and tries to cause harm or distress to the victim.
- Bullying occurs between two students who have different degrees of power.
- Bullying happens repeatedly over a period of time.
- There are three main types of bullying that occur:
- Physical: Hitting, kicking, spitting, tripping, pushing, breaking someone's things, rude gestures
- Verbal: Teasing, name-calling, threats, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting
- Social: Leaving someone out of a group on purpose, telling others not to be friends with them, publicly embarrassing them, spreading gossip or rumors about someone, etc.
- With the increased use of computers and cell phones, especially among teens, there is also a special type of bullying called cyberbullying, in which the harassment is done with electronic means like texting, email, social media, etc.

If my daughter tells me she is being bullied, what do I do?

Options for Responding

- Listen in a non-judgmental way.
- Let your daughter do the talking.
- Do not try to solve the problem.
- Do not ruminate with your daughter.
- Employ coaching questions:
 - What is going on? How long has this been going on?
 - How is this impacting you?
 - If nothing changes, what are the implications? What is likely to happen?
 - How have you contributed to the issue?
 - If the issue is resolved, what difference will that make?
 - What is the first step you can take to move this towards resolution?
- It is important for your daughter to try and come up with a solution on her own, in the beginning. For a parent to be explosive about the situation will cause a child to recoil. If you confront the bully your daughter is not going to feel safe telling you anything about this again. Help your child see what the outcome might be using their words and actions not your own.
 - Identify the Issue
 - Clarify the Issue
 - Determine the Current Impact
 - Determine Future Implications
 - *What's going to make you feel better about this situation?*
 - Describe Your Personal Contribution to the Issue
 - Describe Ideal Outcome
 - Commit to Action
- When you talk to your daughter about bullies, remind them of this truth: Bullies are cowards. Most bullies will not tease two kids together, and almost never will they pick on three kids at once. Even in a group, bullies single out one or two kids.

Remind your daughter of her identity in Christ

- Meditate on passages like Psalm 139:13-18, which tells us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made and that God's thoughts toward us are too numerous to count. Your daughter needs to know that she is special to God and created in His image with immeasurable worth and value. Do not let the lies that bullies tell influence what your daughter thinks about herself, because what God says about them is the truth. He loves them and cherishes them because everyone was made in His image.

Even if your daughter is wronged, encourage her to respond in a Christ-like manner.

- When we are in the midst of a painful situation, it can be very easy to forget who we are in Christ and how he has called us to act. Thus, if your daughter is ever being bullied, there are a couple of principles that you need to keep in mind.
 - First, we should never try and get back at a bully or seek revenge (Rom. 12:17). As Christians, we know that this world is not perfect, but we are not the judge of the earth. God is the one who can judge the world in righteousness. (Rom. 12:19). Instead, respond to the bully with kindness and love. I know this is easier said than done. It's easy to feel angry, upset, or defeated about the situation, bringing with those feelings a temptation to want to get back at them. But what Scripture calls us to do is to love our enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:44). Do not try and overcome the evil being done to you by doing evil in return. Rather, overwhelm the bully with the goodness and love of God (Rom. 12:21). You never know how your kindness may change their heart.
 - Second, it is okay your daughter to stick up for herself. Christians can often be confused by passages such as Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29 which call us to "turn the other cheek." Most commentators agree that these passages are probably not referring to severe physical or emotional abuse, but rather a slap that is meant as an insult. When we look at the context, Jesus is teaching his disciples about the suffering they are going to endure for being a Christian (Luke 6:22). His primary concern is speaking against the "eye for an eye" mentality of revenge (Matt. 5:38) that was prevalent in the culture. He is not speaking against all forms of self-defense. Jesus himself, when he was slapped unjustly, did not turn the other cheek but questioned his accusers (John 18:22-23).
 - Sticking up for herself may be difficult to do, but if she is able to stay calm and respond in a loving manner, then she has every right as an image-bearer of God to defend herself and speak the truth.

When do I intervene? When do I call parents? The school?

- If you believe your daughter is being bullied, contact the parents of the other student first. In many cases, things can be resolved once both families are involved and speaking to their children.
- If this does not fix the problem, talk to your daughter's personal counselor, advisor, or an adult that knows your child well. Ask them about his or her observations.
 - Has he or she noticed or suspected bullying?
 - How is your daughter getting along with others in class?
 - Has he or she noticed that your daughter is being isolated or excluded?
 - How is your daughter's behavior at school? Does she seem happy? Nervous? Sad?
 - Has there been a change in your daughter's behavior?
- Once your daughter's counselor is involved, if anything continues to happen, other administrators will step in and address the situation appropriately. The school will use the policies set forth in our Handbook to try and fairly assess the situation and make the proper decisions.