

Family Guide to Understanding Bullying

What's the Difference Between Conflict and Bullying?

Understanding the difference between **conflict** and **bullying** is the first step in responding appropriately.

Conflict	Bullying
A disagreement or argument where both sides have equal power.	Repeated, intentional behavior meant to hurt, intimidate, or control someone who has less power.
It happens occasionally and is part of normal social interaction.	It Happens repeatedly and can be verbal, physical, social, or cyber in nature.
Both parties are upset and want to resolve the issue.	One person is being targeted and feels helpless to stop it.
Can be resolved through communication and compromise.	Requires adult intervention to stop the harm and restore safety.

Definitions

What Is Conflict?

Conflict is a natural part of relationships and occurs when people have different needs, wants, opinions, or goals. It is not necessarily harmful and can be an opportunity to learn problem-solving and communication skills.

Examples:

- Disagreeing about a group project.
- Two friends argue over a misunderstanding.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is **intentional, repeated behavior** that causes physical, emotional, or social harm. It involves a real or perceived **imbalance of power**.

Types of Bullying:

- **Verbal:** Name-calling, teasing, threats
- **Physical:** Hitting, pushing, tripping
- **Social:** Excluding someone, spreading rumors
- **Cyberbullying:** Sending hurtful messages or images online or via devices

Tips for Parents: Talking to Your Teen About Bullying

1. Start the Conversation Early and Often

- a. Don't wait for a problem to occur.
- b. Ask open-ended questions: *"What does bullying look like at your school?"* or *"Have you ever seen someone being treated unfairly?"*

2. Listen Without Judgment

- a. Stay calm and supportive.
- b. Avoid jumping to conclusions or overreacting.

3. Teach Empathy and Respect

- a. Talk about how others might feel.
- b. Reinforce kindness and inclusion at home.

4. Talk About Online Behavior

- a. Discuss responsible use of phones, apps, and social media.
- b. Encourage them to speak up if they see hurtful behavior online.

5. Make It Clear: Bullying Is Never Okay

- a. Explain the difference between standing up for oneself and hurting others.
- b. Reinforce that it's okay to ask adults for help.

How Parents Can Support a Child Being Bullied at School

1. Stay Calm and Listen

- a. Thank your child for sharing.
- b. Let them talk through what happened without interrupting.

2. Document the Details

- a. Record dates, times, people involved, and what occurred.
- b. Save any messages, photos, or screenshots if bullying occurred online.

3. Work with the School

- a. Contact a teacher, counselor, or school administrator.
- b. Ask about the school's bullying prevention policy and next steps.

4. Support Emotional Recovery

- a. Reassure your child it's not their fault.
- b. Consider counseling or therapy if needed.

5. Build Resilience

- a. Encourage positive friendships and activities that build confidence.
- b. Help your child develop assertiveness skills.

Tips for Students Who Are Being Bullied

1. Tell a Trusted Adult

- a. This could be a teacher, school counselor, coach, or parent.
- b. Reporting is not tattling—it's a way to protect yourself and others.

2. Stay Safe

- a. Avoid places where bullying happens if possible.
- b. Stay near friends or groups of people.

3. Don't Retaliate

- a. Reacting with anger or violence can make things worse.
- b. Stay calm and walk away if you can.

4. Use Confident Body Language

- a. Stand tall, make eye contact, and use a strong voice.

5. Keep a Record

- a. Write down what happened and when.
- b. Save any texts, DMs, or online messages.

6. Practice Responses

- a. Use phrases like:
 - i. “That’s not okay.”
 - ii. “I don’t like what you said.”
 - iii. “Please stop.”

7. Find Your Support Circle

- a. Spend time with friends who make you feel good.
- b. Join clubs or activities where you can meet new people.

Final Message to Families

Bullying is serious, but **you are not alone**. Whether your child is being bullied, witnessing it, or unsure of what to do, open communication and consistent support from family and school staff can make all the difference.

 Remember: **It takes courage to speak up, and kindness to stand up for others**