

Bullying: How to Set Yourself Up for a Successful Conversation with Your Child

Remember, you are the expert about your own child, and you are your child's role model for how to handle difficult situations. Here are general tips and strategies to help you have a successful conversation and handle the most frequently reported problems of bullying.

Take your child seriously and listen.

If your child wants to talk to you about a bullying situation, take it seriously. Your ability to listen and understand his/her feelings and experiences will mean everything to your child. They need to know they are heard and understood.

Avoid comments like: "I told you not to be friends with (aggressor's name)" or "Come on - you're making a big deal about nothing - bullying is just a stage every kid goes through."

Find the best space to have the conversation. Find a private place to talk with your child where you both will be comfortable and your child feels safe to talk freely. Consider taking a walk or going for a snack. Give your child the physical distance they need during the conversation.

Before you talk to your child, check

in with your own feelings. Take a deep breath, recognize the strong emotions you might have about the situation, and, most important, manage your emotions before you talk with your child.

Remember, YOU are the role model. Your child is learning about the best and worst ways to respond to challenging situations like bullying from watching you. Your feelings are contagious. If you stay calm, your child will more likely be calm and learn how to deal with challenging situations effectively. If you notice you are still upset and not sure you can stay calm while talking to your child, hold off until you feel ready to have a successful conversation.

