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Bullying Prevention Tips for Families

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, but it's important for students, families and school staff to work to prevent bullying year-round. There are many things that parents can do to help address bullying with their children, whether it is at school or at home between siblings and friends.

Hitting, punching, teasing, name-calling or intimidation through gestures or social exclusion may be considered bullying. Now that our children are becoming even more tech-savvy than many adults, harassing emails, text messages and social networking posts are now considered a form of "cyber bullying."

Unfortunately, bullying is common during the elementary and middle school years. In high school, it is often more difficult for parents and teachers to determine if a teen is being bullied. Each child is affected differently when faced with the stress of bullying. Take a look at the following tips for parents to learn how to best address the situation and work to make it better.

What can you do?

No matter what the child's age, you can help prevent bullying. If you see it - stop it, name it and claim it.

- Stop it: *"That's not ok."*
- Name it: *"That is bullying and we don't do that."*
- Claim it: *"You will face consequences for bullying. We will talk about this to make sure that it doesn't happen again."*

What can I tell my children to do about bullying?

Teach your children to talk, walk and ask.

- Talk: *Tell the bully to "stop" in an assertive tone of voice.*
- Walk: *Once the victim tells the bully to stop, they should walk away. The victim should find a safe place with safe people for support.*
- Ask: *The victim should ask an adult for help and let them know what happened.*

In elementary school:

Teach your children basic social skills and reinforce positive behavior. Explain the difference between tattling and telling to your child:

- *Tattling* is when you tell on someone to get him or her in trouble.
- *Telling* is when you tell on someone to help a victim. Telling is an important, responsible way to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable.

In middle school:

Don't be afraid to talk to your children about bullying. Communication is important to middle school students. Bring up social issues often and listen to what your child has to say about them. A strong relationship with your child is the best thing you can offer him or her.

In high school:

Teens who are victims of bullying are less likely to ask an adult for help. Parents, guardians and family members should watch for non-verbal clues when your teen comes home from school. Common clues that may mean your child is being bullied at school include ripped or torn clothing, a change of interest in spending time with friends or at school, and an increase in physical signs of anxiety (headaches or stomach aches).

At home, parents and families can:

- Be aware of their behavior and aggression habits.
Practice calming techniques like meditation or yoga.
- Provide good examples of conflict resolution.
Write or talk about problems and brainstorm positive methods to fix the problem.
- Show concern and respond quickly if their child talks about a bullying issue.
Involve your child's school if the abuse continues.

Visit the following parent websites for more in-depth information about bullying and how to deal with it:

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/default.aspx>

<http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullying.asp>

<http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/hot-topics/bully/parents1/>

<http://www.parentfurther.com/high-risk-behaviors/bullying>