



HOW TO TALK TO YOUR STUDENT ABOUT BULLYING

BULLYING IS REPETITIVE, AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, and it's possible that your student may one day be subject to this kind of behavior. When they open up about bullying, it's because they know you're a safe place. They could be scared, ashamed or defensive, and remember that they could be playing multiple roles—being bullied, being a bully, reinforcing a bully or a bystander of bullying.

Students can experience bullying not just in person but also through the devices in their pockets and book bags. **CYBERBULLYING** is repeated harm or embarrassment through technology and social media platforms. It might be spreading rumors or gossip, repeated harmful words over text or messaging, or threatening comments on a gaming system. Many times, the bully remains anonymous.

Bullying is any time a stronger person acts upon a perceived weaker person. Your goal is to have a conversation as soon as possible with those who can help—youth leaders, teachers or a professional counselor. Your conversation is the first of many, so remember this when you enter into the conversation.

WHAT TO SAY IF THE CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

- ***Ephesians 2:10-***“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” No matter what others say about us, what matters most is that God made us, calls us “the best” and wants to use us for great things.
- “I’m going to help you.”
- “This isn’t your fault.”

- “How did it make you feel?” (i.e. scared, angry, worried, etc. The younger the child, the harder this is for them to say, but it’s a great step if they can articulate how they feel.)
- “I love you and I need to tell someone who can help us so we can stop this from happening again.”

Counselors, teachers, families and other caregivers need to be informed of bullying.

WHAT TO SAY IF THEY ARE THE BULLY

- ***John 13:35 – “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”*** Our role is to lead others to Jesus, not push them away. If we want to be a disciple of Jesus, the way it will show itself is if we love people well.
- “I need to talk to you about something important because I care about you.”
- “Thank you for telling me your story.”
- “This doesn’t change the way I feel about you and I want to help.”
- “These behaviors are bullying behaviors. They don’t make you a bully. It’s not who you are. You have a choice whether or not to continue these behaviors.”
- “Let’s talk about what we might do next. We might need to bring other people into the conversation, and I’d love to hold you accountable to being kind to others.”

IF THEY HAVE WITNESSED BULLYING.

- ***Proverbs 31:8 - “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.”*** As a disciple of Jesus, we are His representatives here on earth. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. When we see someone being bullied, as a disciple of Jesus, it’s our role to stand up and speak up for that person. We do that by telling the person hurting the other to stop and finding an adult and telling him/her what is going on.

- “Thank you for telling me. That was very brave.”
- “I’m going to help you. It can be hard to know how to help someone in this situation.”
- “We’ll need to tell someone so we can help this person.”

STAY AWAY FROM...

- Words that communicate you’re anxious and scared. Try and remain calm; remember your student sees you as a safe place.
- Words that shame. If they are being bullied, we don’t want to ask them anything that makes them feel like they’ve done something wrong.
- Words that condemn. Never see the student as the sum of their behavior or the behavior that has been done to them. Try and see them as a person who has done something wrong, or has had something wrong done to them.

UP IN THE BASEMENT

As a student ministry, we seek to create a place and a space where students know they are accepted. That they are a part of a community, a family. That everyone belongs. That everyone is treated with love, care, and respect. The Basement is a safe place that centers around building up community. It’s the one place we want students to come and know that everyone is for them.