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# Support the Kids Involved

All kids involved in bullying—whether they are bullied, bully others, or see bullying—can be affected. It is important to support all kids involved to make sure the bullying doesn't continue and effects can be minimized.

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## Support Kids Who are Bullied

**Listen and focus on the child.** Learn what's been going on and show you want to help.

**Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.**

**Know that kids who are bullied may struggle with talking about it.** Consider referring them to a school counselor, psychologist, or other [mental health service](#).

**Give advice about [what to do](#).** This may involve role-playing and thinking through how the child might react if the bullying occurs again.

**Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child.** The child, parents, and school or organization may all have valuable input. It may help to:

- Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging classroom or bus seating plans for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary,

such as switching classrooms or bus routes, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.

- Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between schools, organizations, and parents. Discuss the steps that are taken and the limitations around what can be done based on policies and laws. Remember, the [law does not allow school personnel](#) to discuss discipline, consequences, or services given to other children.

**Be persistent.** Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.

### **Avoid these mistakes:**

- Never tell the child to ignore the bullying.
- Do not blame the child for being bullied. Even if he or she provoked the bullying, no one deserves to be bullied.
- Do not tell the child to physically fight back against the kid who is bullying. It could get the child hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- Parents should resist the urge to contact the other parents involved. It may make matters worse. School or other officials can act as mediators between parents.

**Follow-up.** Show a commitment to making bullying stop. Because bullying is behavior that repeats or has the potential to be repeated, it takes consistent effort to ensure that it stops.

## **Address Bullying Behavior**

Parents, school staff, and organizations all have a role to play.

**Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is.** Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.

**Show kids that bullying is taken seriously.** Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.

**Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied.** For example:

- Sometimes children bully to fit in. These kids can benefit from participating in positive activities. Involvement in sports and clubs can enable them to take leadership roles and make friends without feeling the need to bully.

- Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support, such as [mental health services](#).

**Use consequences to teach.** Consequences that involve learning or building empathy can help prevent future bullying. School staff should remember to follow the [guidelines in their student code of conduct](#) and other policies in developing consequences and assigning discipline. For example, the child who bullied can:

- Lead a class discussion about how to be a good friend.
- Write a story about the effects of bullying or benefits of teamwork.
- Role-play a scenario or make a presentation about the importance of respecting others, the negative effects of gossip, or how to cooperate.
- Do a project about civil rights and bullying.
- Read a book about bullying.
- Make posters for the school about [cyberbullying](#) and being smart online.

**Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation.** The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

- Write a letter apologizing to the student who was bullied.
- Do a good deed for the person who was bullied or for others in your community.
- Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.

**Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences.**

- Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you’re out” strategies don’t work. Suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Students and teachers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or expulsion is the consequence.
- Conflict resolution and peer mediation don’t work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
- Group treatment for students who bully doesn’t work. Group members tend to reinforce bullying behavior in each other.

**Follow-up.** After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk

about what it means to be a good friend.

# Support Bystanders Who Witness Bullying

Even if kids are not bullied or bullying others they can [be affected](#) by bullying. Many times, when they see bullying, they may not know what to do to stop it. They may not feel safe stepping in in the moment, but there are many other steps they can take.

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- No

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