

My child is being bullied— now what?

Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for Students with Disabilities

For Parents

Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

Your child has told you that he or she is being bullied, or you strongly suspect your child may be a target of bullying behavior. Below are several ways to help your child.

Talk with your child

- Regularly talk with your child about their experiences, asking about good things that happen and asking about what is not going well, too. If your child knows you are interested in the good and the bad, they will be more likely to open up to you when something bad is happening.
- If your child shares that bullying is happening, praise them for telling you and let them know you are there to help.
- Ask about the details of what is going on and take notes. Ask how and when it started, how often it happens, who is involved, what makes it better, what makes it worse, and if anyone else has been told. This information can help you be better able to help and better able to make a detailed report to a teacher or administrator at the school.

Find Support at School

- Ensure your child is safe and feels safe going to school.
- List the adults at school who your child can go to about the situation.
- Decide whether you or your child will start communication with the school.
- Help your child think of friends or peers with whom they can spend time with when bullying is happening.
- Contact the school immediately with as much information as you have. Know that they will have to go through a process but ensure that they will keep your child safe at school even while they investigate.
- Brainstorm and practice some strategies with your child that they can try if the situation does not get better immediately. Some examples:
 - Get help - find an adult or a friend who can help prevent it from happening or can help you if it does happen.
 - Avoid the situation - if it is possible (sometimes it is not), find a way to avoid the area where it happens.
 - Be straightforward - tell the person to stop. "Please stop making fun of me," or, "Please stop this."
 - Use humor and try to take away the power of the bully to hurt your child. An example - if the bully calls your child ugly, have the child say, "Yeah, maybe I do need a haircut". This is not always appropriate and may not feel comfortable for your child, especially if the bullying has been ongoing.

What NOT to do:

- Do not encourage the child to physically fight back, which could put your child in further risk or in trouble.
- Do not contact the aggressor's parents.

Find additional handouts on our website at go.niu.edu/PPAB



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