

# STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

## STANDING UP TO BULLIES

Let's say your kids notice another child is being bullied at school. What should you tell them to do? What follows are simple, practical, easy-to-implement skills you can teach kids to help bring an end to bullying.

### MEMORIZE A SIMPLE PHRASE

Most school-based bullying prevention programs tell students to show kindness and empathy by standing up for kids who are bullied which is spot-on advice! Unfortunately, too few programs teach kids how to stand up for others! Teach your child to recognize when their peers are being bullied and then practice with your child by role-playing to help to intervene if they see another child being bullied. Let kids brainstorm their own simple phrases so that their language feels comfortable and natural to them. These phrases are meant to be developed with kids during non-stressful moments, then committed to memory so that kids can easily access them when they are needed. Adults can help kids role-play their phrases in a confident, casual voice.

### FIRST, RECOGNIZE WHEN A PEER IS BEING BULLIED

- Sudden loss of friends or other kids talking bad about the child being bullied
- Lost or destroyed clothing, like gym clothes, jackets, shoes or other personal belongings
- Changes in eating habits-avoiding lunch playtime or sitting alone and when other kids are talking to the child, they are unkind words.
- Self-destructive behaviors. Sometimes it is kids who learn first about friends engaging in self-injurious behaviors
- Listen and tell an adult if your peer talks about wanting to die, disappear, never wanting to come to school again or wants to go away forever.

### EFFECTIVE PHRASES TO USE WHEN INTERVENING

- Cut it out, dude--that's not cool
- Hey, that's over the line
- Whatever
- Stop it

### CHANGE THE SUBJECT

Some children have the confidence to take that risk, but for others, a great strategy is to teach them how effective it can be to stop an episode of bullying by changing the subject. For example, a child who wants to quickly deflect the pressure off of someone being bullied can simply ask aloud if someone knows the date of the math test or the score of the football game.

### SCATTER THE CROWD

Another quick diffuser: prepare kids to say something like, "Guys, we've gotta get to class before the bell rings." This is a quick and easy way to scatter the crowd of onlookers from whom a bully is deriving social power and to stop bullying on the spot.

### GET AN ADULT

For those moments when verbal interventions such as simple phrases and distractions won't work, encourage your child to go get an adult. One thing your child can do to show kindness and stop bullying is to be the one to bring the matter to an adult's attention. This takes the heat off of the bullied student in a big way. Encourage kids to think carefully about who they go to for help. They should be sure to choose someone who they believe is fair and will use discretion in their interventions, so as not to cause new problems for a bullied student. A trustworthy adult can work to uphold school standards of safety and dignity for all students while also addressing the situation in a way that prevents it from recurring.

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## REACH OUT AFTER THE FACT

Teach kids that the efforts they make to show kindness and empathy soon after an incident of bullying can have a significant impact. Encourage kids to make time later in the day to talk to a peer who has been on the receiving end of cruelty. Encourage your child to tell the bullied kid that he doesn't deserve to be treated badly.

## SUPPORT & RESOURCES

MCCS Family Advocacy Program or the Community Counseling Program. Program information is available on the MCCS websites. You can also receive guidance from Military One Source at **1-800-342-9647** or **[www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)** or **[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)**

