

STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY

No parent wants to hear that child is a bully. It's painful to think of your child inflicting harm on other kids, but bullying is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. By talking with your child about their behavior, understanding from their point of view what's going on, and guiding them through appropriate friendship behaviors, you can curb bullying and address the issues that might have caused it to happen in the first place. Here are some tips to help your kids have healthy interactions with their peers.

DETERMINE THE CAUSE

The first thing you should do is figure out why this is going on. Talk to your child about the situation. Be direct about the issue, but make it clear that you are open to hearing your child's side of the story. A way to start the conversation might be, "I got a call from the school today, and the teacher said that you were bullying other kids. I'm really concerned about this, and we need to talk about it. Please tell me what happened." Understand that children bully for many reasons including concerns over being popular to feeling left out. Understanding why your child is bullying will help you make decisions on how to help.

LOOK INWARD

Children who are exposed to aggressive or unkind interactions at home may repeat similar behaviors at school. Is it possible that bullying takes place in your home? Do members of your family engage in yelling, name-calling, or put-downs? Do your children pick on one another, or hit each other? It is important to model healthy relationships for children and establish rules for treating family members with kindness and respect.

PROVIDE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Logical consequences are consequences that are: related to the behavior, reasonable, and respectful. For example, you find out that your teenager is engaging in cyberbullying. A logical consequence would be the immediate loss of Internet or phone privileges. The loss of privileges should be for a specific length of time. Telling your child that they are never allowed on the computer again is not reasonable or realistic.

EMPATHY

Instilling empathy in your child is a way to try to avoid future episodes of bullying behavior. Ask your child how they would feel if they were bullied and try to get them to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Trying to get your child to take a different perspective may help them understand the impact of their actions.

ACCOUNTABILITY

If your child has harmed someone, encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. That might be through an apology, replacing something that was broken, or a kind action. Talk to your child about how it may take time before they are forgiven for their actions. Be sure to praise your child for wanting to correct their mistakes and taking steps to change their behavior.

SEEK HELP

If you are continually working on building friendship skills with your child and the bullying does not stop, seek supportive services. Counseling services are available to help your child address the root cause of the bullying behavior. Services are also available to help you fine tune your parenting skills to best support your child.

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** or **www.stopbullying.gov**

