



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

Toolkit for Families of Young Children

Tip Sheet #8: Dealing with Bullying

Bullying is a serious problem many children will face at some point in time throughout their life. Victims of bullying can experience fear that keeps them from being able to function at school and at home. As a caregiver, it is important to have conversations about bullying with your child throughout their childhood to catch potential problems early on. Consider the following strategies to help you guide you.

1. **Ask more than once.** Unfortunately, bullying is a problem that can arise at any point in time in a child's life. Therefore, you should bring up the topic of bullying as many times possible. Talking about bullying in an open manner creates opportunities for your child to open up and talk with you when problems do arise. You can use simple, casual statements like, "Has there been anyone who has been giving you or any of your friends a really hard time lately?" or "Has anyone been bullying you?"
2. **Be loving and positive.** As conversations about bullying arise, talk to your child in an accepting and positive way and encourage them to be open and honest about their concerns and experiences. Many times you may find that if your child is not being bullied, someone they know is. Talk with your child about how you both might be able to help.
3. **It's not their fault.** If your child suspects or reports being a victim of bullying, reassure them they made the right choice in reporting it to you. They need to know that reporting bullying and the situation itself is not their fault. Try to have a clear understanding of what's going on and clear up any questions your child might have about the situation.
4. **Get others involved.** It is very important to get school administration involved as soon as possible. Have open communication your child's school principal, teachers, and school counselor. You may also need to talk with your child's pediatrician and/or a family counselor if you see a decline in your child's normal behavior and school performance.
5. **Develop a plan.** Work closely with school administration to develop a proactive plan to address the bullying. Become familiar with bullying policies and procedures at your child's school and make sure protocol is being followed. Encourage your child to report any new instances of bullying as soon as they occur and request increased adult supervision in common bullying areas. You know your child's needs the best, be willing to advocate for their needs as necessary.

If you believe that your child may be a bully, it is important to seek help for them as well. Furthermore, reporting their behavior to school administration may be a necessary step in order for their victims to get the help they may need as a result. Although it may be upsetting to admit your child is a bully, failing to act upon this information can lead to serious consequences for them and for others.