

Ten tips if your child is the bully

Discovering your child is bullying others can be frustrating – and devastating. Here are some ways to respond.

1 Acknowledge it

Accept the harsh reality that your child is hurting others. Rather than make light of or ignore the problem, realise that anyone (sadly, including your own kids) can be cruel to others in certain circumstances and action needs to be taken.

2 Stay calm

When addressing cyber bullying, discuss it calmly, without demonising, disrespecting or judging your child. Keep in mind that your child isn't the problem; their behaviour is. When talking about it, be sure to treat them with dignity, otherwise they're likely to react if they feel attacked, and you won't make any progress.

3 Open lines of communication

Many young people use cyber bullying to get revenge for something. Make sure your kids know you're there to talk about any issues with peers (off or online). Give kids the opportunity and skillset to solve interpersonal problems in suitable ways, instead of resorting to revenge.

4 Stop the bullying

The #1 goal is for the bullying to end and not happen again. Make sure that all instances of bullying are stopped immediately, no matter who started it. No one deserves to be mistreated, for any reason, ever.

5 Understand the root of the problem

'Hurt people hurt people'. It's so important to identify the reason(s) your child is bullying another. Is it a way of coping with stress? Is it because they are victimised? Or are there are no rules in place, and nothing to deter them? Try to get to the bottom of the issue and tell them what to do if they run into trouble. They value your opinion more than you might think!

6 Investigate

Find out the extent of your child's bullying as it could cross websites, apps and devices. It may be direct and obvious, or it could be indirect and subtle. Work to fully understand what's happening – and where.

7 Make your child understand how it feels

Explain how cruel cyber bullying is. Have your child imagine how it feels to be the subject of hate or harassment by using an example specific to your child and what would hurt the most. Encourage understanding and kindness in creative and interesting ways, so they really understand that everyone has sore spots, hot buttons and vulnerabilities.

8 Set up parental controls

Monitor your child's online activities, both formally and informally. Install software or apps on their laptop, tablet or phone and routinely and randomly check their devices to see what they are doing – at least until you're sure they can be trusted.

9 Share your concerns

You're not the only parent to face this problem. Connect with others so your community can rally around the issue and take a stand – a united front helps create and promote a culture where bullying is always wrong and never justifiable.

10 Stay educated

Even though everyone's extremely busy, it's important to take the time to continually learn about new technologies, sites and apps that your kids (and their peers) are using. You should also know where to get help (such as the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, NCAB or Kids Helpline) and connect with others (especially school staff) who have relevant experiences and strategies to share.