
Talking to Your 5-Year-Old About Bullying

Talking to a 5-year-old about bullying requires a gentle, age-appropriate approach. At this age, children might not fully understand the concept of "bullying" but can grasp ideas of kindness, fairness, and being hurt. The goal is to open a safe space for them to share, using simple language and focusing on their feelings and experiences.

Here are some questions and tips for parents:

General Check-ins and Open-Ended Questions

Start with broad questions that encourage them to talk about their day without directly mentioning bullying.

- "What was the best part of your day today at school/daycare?"
- "What was the trickiest part of your day?"
- "Who did you play with today? What games did you play?"
- "Was there anything that made you feel sad, mad, or worried today?"
- "Did anything happen that made you feel uncomfortable?"

Questions About Friends and Play

Focus on their social interactions and how they feel during playtime.

- "Are there any kids who don't play nicely?"
- "Does anyone ever try to stop you or your friends from playing?"
- "Has anyone been mean with their words or their hands today?"
- "Do you ever feel left out when you're with your friends?"
- "If someone was being unkind, what did you do?" (This helps gauge their coping mechanisms.)

Scenario-Based Questions

Present hypothetical situations to see how they might react or if they recognize similar behaviors.

- "What would you do if someone took your toy without asking?"
- "How would you feel if someone called you a name you didn't like?"
- "What should you do if you see someone being mean to another kid?"
- "If someone tells you to do something you don't want to do, what can you say?"

Reinforce Trust and Safety

Make sure they know it's safe to talk to you about anything.

- "Remember, you can always tell me anything, even if it feels like a secret or if you're worried about telling."
- "My most important job is to keep you safe and happy. If anything or anyone makes you feel unsafe, you need to tell me."
- "Who are the adults at school you can talk to if you need help?" (Teachers, principal, school counselor.)

What to Look For (Non-Verbal Cues)

Pay attention to changes in behavior, even if they don't explicitly say they're being bullied.

- **Changes in mood:** Increased sadness, anxiety, irritability, or withdrawal.
- **Physical complaints:** Frequent headaches, stomachaches, or feigned illness to avoid school.
- **Sleep issues:** Nightmares, difficulty falling asleep, or changes in sleep patterns.
- **Loss of interest:** No longer enjoying school or activities they once loved.
- **Damaged belongings:** Unexplained rips in clothes, missing items, or damaged school supplies.
- **Reluctance to go to school:** Expressing fear or anxiety about going to school or engaging in social activities.

Important Tips for Parents:

- **Listen actively:** Give them your full attention. Avoid interrupting or dismissing their feelings.
- **Stay calm:** Your reaction influences how much they will share.
- **Validate their feelings:** "It sounds like that made you feel sad/mad/scared."
- **Reassure them:** Let them know it's not their fault and you will help them.
- **Avoid leading questions:** Don't put words in their mouth or suggest specific incidents.
- **Role-play:** Practice what to say or do in different situations.
- **Teach coping skills:** Encourage them to tell an adult, use a strong voice to say "stop," or walk away.
- **Follow up:** If you suspect something, communicate with their teacher or school administration.

Opening these lines of communication early on helps build a foundation of trust, making it easier for children to confide in you as they grow.

Do you have any specific concerns about your child's behavior or experiences that I can help you with?

American Organizations Fighting Childhood Bullying

Numerous organizations across the United States are dedicated to preventing and addressing childhood bullying. They offer a range of resources, programs, and support for children, parents, educators, and communities. Here are some of the most prominent ones:

1. PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center

- **Mission:** PACER, founded by parents of children with disabilities, leads social change to improve the lives of children and young adults with disabilities and their families. Their National Bullying Prevention Center focuses on raising awareness about bullying and offering resources to address it.
- **Programs & Resources:**
 - **National Bullying Prevention Month:** An annual campaign in October.
 - **Unity Day:** Held during National Bullying Prevention Month, encouraging people to wear orange to show solidarity against bullying.
 - **KidsAgainstBullying.org & TeensAgainstBullying.org:** Age-appropriate websites with activities, videos, and information for students.
 - **Educator/Parent Resources:** Toolkits, guides, videos, and lesson plans for schools and families.
 - **"The Bullycide Project" & "Students with Disabilities and Bullying":** Specific initiatives addressing critical aspects of bullying.
- **Target Audience:** Students (elementary through high school), parents, educators, and community members.
- **Impact:** A national leader in bullying prevention for over a decade. In 2023, their websites received **over 1.5 million visits**, and their programs reached **thousands of educators and students** through training and materials. Their resources are widely cited and used by schools nationwide.
- **Partnerships:** Extensive, including the White House, Ellen DeGeneres Show, Facebook, Disney, Cartoon Network, FBI, and various corporations like CustomInk and Planet Fitness.
- **Funding:** A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Relies on individual donations, grants (including government grants), and corporate sponsorships. Over 85% of their budget goes directly to programs.

2. STOMP Out Bullying

- **Mission:** A leading national anti-bullying and cyberbullying organization for kids and teens. They work to reduce and prevent bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, and other digital abuse, educating against homophobia, LGBTQ+ discrimination, racism, and hatred, and ensuring schools are safe for all students.
- **Programs & Resources:**
 - **STOMP Out Bullying HelpChat Line:** A free, confidential online chat for students experiencing bullying or cyberbullying.
 - **Blue Shirt Day™ World Day of Bullying Prevention:** Annual campaign promoting kindness and inclusion globally.
 - **Online Education:** Comprehensive resources for students, parents, and educators on recognizing, preventing, and responding to bullying and cyberbullying.
 - **Anti-bullying Toolkits:** Resources for schools to implement anti-bullying policies and programs.
- **Target Audience:** Children and teens (ages 6-18), parents, educators, and school administrators.
- **Impact:** Reports helping over **5.5 million students** directly and indirectly. Their HelpChat line has assisted over **150,000 students**, and they claim to have saved over **6,000 lives** from suicide. They partner with approximately **90,000 schools** nationwide.
- **Partnerships:** Engages with various school partners and corporate entities for awareness campaigns and support.
- **Funding:** A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Funded through individual donations, corporate partnerships, and grants.

3. GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network)

- **Mission:** Works to ensure that every member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Their focus is on creating safe, affirming, and inclusive K-12 schools for LGBTQ+ students.
- **Programs & Resources:**
 - **Student-led Clubs (GSAs):** Supports and empowers Gay-Straight Alliances and similar student groups.
 - **Day of Silence:** A national student-led demonstration where LGBTQ+ students and allies take a vow of silence to protest the harmful effects of harassment and discrimination.
 - **Changing the Game:** A program focused on making K-12 sports safe and inclusive for all students, including LGBTQ+ athletes.
 - **Professional Development:** Training for educators on creating LGBTQ+-inclusive learning environments.
 - **Rainbow Library:** Provides LGBTQ+ affirming books to schools nationwide.
 - **National School Climate Survey:** A biennial survey documenting the

experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in schools.

- **Target Audience:** LGBTQ+ students, their allies, educators, school administrators, and policymakers.
- **Impact:** Their research (e.g., National School Climate Survey) provides critical data on the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students, influencing policy and practice. Over **500,000 GLSEN resources** are downloaded by students and educators annually, and they support **thousands of registered GSAs** nationwide.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborates with various corporate partners, foundations, and educational organizations.
- **Funding:** A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Supported by individual donations, corporate contributions, and grants from philanthropic foundations. Annual revenues typically range from \$6 million to \$10 million.

4. StopBullying.gov

- **Mission:** This is a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to provide information and resources to prevent and respond to bullying, including cyberbullying, by offering accessible, research-based guidance.
- **Programs & Resources:**
 - **Comprehensive Information Hub:** Sections on what bullying is, cyberbullying, prevention strategies, and how to get help.
 - **Training Center:** Provides interactive training modules for adults working with youth.
 - **"Kids" & "Teens" Sections:** Tailored advice and resources for young people.
 - **Media Guidelines:** Recommendations for reporters and media on covering bullying safely and responsibly.
- **Target Audience:** General public, including children, teens, parents, educators, and community leaders.
- **Impact:** Serves as a central, authoritative source of information and resources for bullying prevention nationwide. Its impact is primarily through information dissemination, policy guidance, and collaboration among federal agencies.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborates with various U.S. government agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Justice, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Funding:** Federally funded.

Are there any other specific types of anti-bullying organizations or resources you'd like to know more about?