**10 Steps to Stop and Prevent Bullying**

Whether you are a parent, an educator, or a concerned friend of the family, there are ten steps you can take to stop and prevent bullying:

1. **Pay attention.** There are many warning signs that may point to a bullying problem, such as unexplained injuries, lost or destroyed personal items, changes in eating habits, and avoidance of school or other social situations. However, every student may not exhibit warning signs, or may go to great lengths to hide it. This is where paying attention is most valuable. Engage students on a daily basis and ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.
2. **Don’t ignore it.** Never assume that a situation is harmless teasing. Different students have different levels of coping; what may be considered teasing to one may be humiliating and devastating to another. Whenever a student feels threatened in any way, take it seriously, and assure the student that you are there for them and will help.
3. **When you see something – do something.** Intervene as soon as you even think there may be a problem between students. Don’t brush it off as “kids are just being kids. They’ll get over it.” Some never do, and it affects them for a lifetime. All questionable behavior should be addressed immediately to keep a situation from escalating. Summon other adults if you deem the situation may get out of hand. Be sure to always refer to your school’s anti-bullying policy.
4. **Remain calm.** When you intervene, refuse to argue with either student. Model the respectful behavior you expect from the students. First make sure everyone is safe and that no one needs immediate medical attention. Reassure the students involved, as well as the bystanders. Explain to them what needs to happen next – bystanders go on to their expected destination while the students involved should be taken separately to a safe place.
5. **Deal with students individually.** Don’t attempt to sort out the facts while everyone is present, don’t allow the students involved to talk with one another, and don’t ask bystanders to tell what they saw in front of others. Instead, talk with the individuals involved – including bystanders – on a one-on-one basis. This way, everyone will be able to tell their side of the story without worrying about what others may think or say.
6. **Don’t make the students involved apologize and/or shake hands on the spot.** Label the behavior as bullying. Explain that you take this type of behavior very seriously and that you plan to get to the bottom of it before you determine what should be done next and any resulting consequences based on your school’s anti-bullying policy. This empowers the bullied child – and the bystanders – to feel that someone will finally listen to their concerns and be fair about outcomes.
7. **Hold bystanders accountable.** Bystanders provide bullies an audience, and often actually encourage bullying. Explain that this type of behavior is wrong, will not be tolerated, and that they also have a right and a responsibility to stop bullying. Identify yourself as a caring adult that they can always approach if they are being bullied and/or see or suspect bullying.
8. **Listen and don’t pre-judge.** It is very possible that the person you suspect to be the bully may actually be a bullied student retaliating or a “bully’s” cry for help. It may also be the result of an undiagnosed medical, emotional or psychological issue. Rather than make any assumptions, listen to each child with an open mind.
9. **Get appropriate professional help.** Be careful not to give any advice beyond your level of expertise. Rather than make any assumptions, if you deem there are any underlying and/or unsolved issues, refer the student to a nurse, counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or other appropriate professional.
10. **Become trained to handle bullying situations.** If you work with students in any capacity, it is important to learn the proper ways to address bullying. Visit [www.nea.org/bullyfree](http://www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html) for information and resources. You can also take the pledge to stop bullying, as well as learn how to create a Bully Free program in your school and/or community.