



BULLYING

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

BULLYING IS REPETITIVE, AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, and it's possible that your kid may one day be subject to this kind of behavior. When they open up about bullying, it's because they know you're a safe place. They could be scared, ashamed or defensive, and remember that they could be playing multiple roles—being bullied, being a bully, reinforcing a bully or a bystander of bullying. Keep this in mind when you start a conversation with your kid. Bullying is any time a stronger person acts upon a perceived weaker person. Your goal is to have a conversation as soon as possible with those who can help—your church leader, teacher or a professional. Your conversation is the first of many, so remember this when you enter into the conversation. We want to help you get the dialogue started by giving you some words to say and not to say.

WHAT TO SAY

IF THE CHILD IS BEING BULLIED.

- "I'm going to help you."
- "This isn't your fault."
- "How did it make you feel?" (i.e. scared, angry, worried, etc. The younger the child, the harder this is for them to say, but it's a great step if they can articulate how they feel.)
- "I love you and I need to tell someone who can help us so we can stop this from happening again."*

* Counselors, teachers, families and other caregivers need to be informed of bullying.

IF THEY ARE THE BULLY.

- "I need to talk to you about something important because I care about you."
- "Thank you for telling me your story."
- "This doesn't change the way I feel about you and I want to help."
- "These behaviors are bullying behaviors. They don't make you a bully. It's not who you are. You have a choice whether or not to continue these behaviors."
- "Let's talk about what we might do next. We might need to bring other people into the conversation, and I'd love to hold you accountable to being kind to others."

IF THEY HAVE WITNESSED BULLYING.

- "Thank you for telling me. That was very brave."
- "I'm going to help you. It can be hard to know how to help someone in this situation."
- "We'll need to tell someone so we can help this person."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

• Words that communicate you're freaking out.
(Try and remain calm.)

• Words that shame. (If they are being bullied, we don't want to ask them anything that makes them feel like they've done something wrong.)

• Words that condemn. (Never see the kid as the sum of their behavior or the behavior that has been done to them. Try and see them as a person who has *done* something wrong, or has had something wrong done to them—they themselves aren't the wrong thing. Help them see, "I did something bad" not, "I am bad.")

Make sure to involve professional counselors, as needed, as well as your ministry leader.
