

Bullying: Helping your child (3–6 years)

Bullying: Why it's important to help

Bullying can be devastating for children's confidence and self-esteem.

If your child is being bullied, he will need lots of guidance, love and support, both at home and wherever the bullying is happening. Your child also needs to know that you'll take action to prevent any further bullying.

Talking with your child about bullying: Tips

If your child is being bullied, one of the best ways to help him is to listen and talk about the bullying. Here's how to get started:

- **Listen.** Ask your child simple questions, then listen to the answers with your full attention. Try saying things like, 'So what happened next?' and 'What did you do then?'
- **Stay calm.** If you feel angry or anxious, wait until you feel calm before you discuss the situation with your child or with others.
- **Summarise the problem.** You could say something like, 'So you were sitting on your own eating your lunch. Then John came up and took your lunch box and threw it across the playground.'
- **Let your child know it's normal to feel upset.** For example, you could say, 'No wonder you're feeling so sad about this.'
- **Make sure your child knows it's not his fault.** For example, 'It didn't happen because you wear glasses. Paul might have been upset about something happening at home. But that's no excuse for it.'

Your child needs to know that you're working on the problem, so make sure that you tell him you'll talk to the teacher about it.

Tips for talking to your child's pre-school or school about the bullying

If your child is being bullied, you need to get help from pre-school or school staff as quickly as you can.

Your child's teachers will be trained in spotting and handling bullying and can work with you to prevent further bullying. Don't try to solve the problem by contacting the bully or the bully's parents directly. This can make things worse.

Here's how to work with your child's teacher to stop bullying:

- Make time to speak privately with the teacher.

- Calmly present your concerns as a joint issue for you both to deal with. For example, 'Faiz says Hong Yi is hitting him at school and telling the other kids not to play with him. I'd like your help to find out what's happening and what we can do about it'.
- Ask for the teacher's views.
- Be assertive, not angry or accusatory. For example, 'Yes, children do tease sometimes. But I don't agree this was just teasing. I think it's more serious'.
- End the meeting with a plan. For example, 'So it's agreed that you will talk to the other teachers about this so they can watch the children carefully around the climbing frame – and we'll talk again next week'.
- Keep in touch with the teacher.

Helping your child to cope with bullying: Tips

If your child is being bullied, you should always step in. However, your child can also learn ways to cope with the bullying when it's happening. Here are some ideas, along with ways to explain the ideas to your child:

- Tell the bully to stop: 'Stay calm and stand up to the bully. The bully will see that bullying won't work with you'.
- Ask other children for help: 'Other children can help you. If the bully sees you have other friends to help you, the bully will be less likely to continue bullying you'.
- Tell the teacher: 'Your teacher can help you. The bully might not even know that the teacher is helping you. Grown-ups are there to help'.

Singapore Children's Society runs bully-free campaigns and programmes. You can visit [Bully-Free](#) to find out more.

If the bullying doesn't stop: Tips

If your first meeting with the teacher hasn't solved the problem, here are the next steps to try:

1. Keep a record of what happens and when.
2. Write a note to the teacher saying that the bullying is still going on. Ask for your concern to be addressed in writing.
3. Speak to the pre-school or school principal or someone from the management committee.
4. Ask to make a formal complaint. Most pre-schools or schools have a procedure for handling grievances.

If the bullying continues and you think the pre-school or school isn't doing enough to stop it, you might consider looking for another pre-school or school with a better record of addressing bullying. Your child's development is best supported by a safe and healthy environment. It won't be good for him to stay in an environment where he feels really unhappy.