



# Dealing With Bullying



## How do I deal with bullying?

According to [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov), bullying is **ongoing** aggressive behavior intended to cause harm or distress in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power, physical or otherwise.

Below are four types of bullying.

- **Verbal:** Insults, name-calling, racial slurs. These are experienced equally by boys and girls and represent the most common form of bullying.
- **Physical:** Hitting, kicking, shoving or other direct bodily injury.
- **Social:** Spreading gossip and rumors (often sexually related), exclusion or outright isolation - more common forms of bullying among girls.
- **Electronic:** "Cyber bullying" on the Internet or through other electronic devices such as text messaging on cell phones (from [focusonthefamily.com](http://focusonthefamily.com)).

Focus on the Family offers the following advice:

- **Listen and don't overreact.** Some kids may not want to tell their parents because they are afraid of how parents may react.
- **Be a good role model.**
- **Don't give children unmonitored access** to computers, phones, and other handheld devices. Regularly check their online activity.
- **Talk through different responses** before the next time bullying might take place.
- **Role-play** (in a way that fits their personality) what they could say or do.

One mom tells about an incident her son had on the bus:

*"Why are you reading that sissy book?" the bully on the bus asked my 11-year old son, who told me about the incident later that day. We talked through what had happened, and as we talked, he decided that the next time it occurred, using humor would*



*be the best way for him to respond. We had fun role-playing this before his bus ride the next day.*

*Sure enough, the bully was at it again: "Are you still reading that sissy book?" "Yep," my son said without skipping a beat, "Thanks for letting me borrow it!" That got laughs from the kids on the bus. Even the bully cracked an appreciative smile.*

**Role-play difficult situations:** someone calls you a name; someone threatens you every day if you don't give them what they want; someone makes fun of someone else's clothes; someone spreads lies to others about you; someone mocks you and calls you a chicken; someone pushes a little kid out of his bus seat every afternoon.

There are no set rules in dealing with bullies. What works with one child may not work with another. Equipping your kids with self-confidence and coping skills can go a long way in helping them get along with others.

Share Matthew 18:15-17 gives steps to dealing with difficult people.

- Step 1:** Speak up. Look them in the eye. Tell them to stop. Tell them how you feel.
- Step 2:** If they won't listen, bring a friend to stand with you.
- Step 3:** If they still won't listen, go to an authority - a parent, teacher, principal, coach, etc.
- Step 4:** If they don't change, avoid them.