

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your child this month.

- ▶ Do you know what the different kinds of bullying are?
- ▶ Who have you been hanging out with at school lately?
- ▶ What are some traits you look for in a friend?
- ▶ Who are five people you would feel comfortable talking to if you or a friend needs help?



FOCUS ON: BULLYING

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, which means it's a good time to review what bullying is, and to check in with your student about how they are getting along with others at school. Talk about bullying and remind them to tell you or another adult they trust if they see or experience any of the following:

- ▶ **physical bullying** – hurting someone physically (kicking, hitting, shoving) or damaging their personal property
- ▶ **verbal bullying** – repeated and excessive teasing and name-calling, or making embarrassing comments
- ▶ **social bullying** – spreading rumors or purposely excluding someone socially
- ▶ **cyberbullying** – using technology, such as text messages and social media, to harass, intimidate, or embarrass someone

If your child ever tells you that they are being bullied, take it seriously. Find out exactly what happened, when it happened, and who was involved. If necessary, bring it to the attention of a school counselor or principal.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Ask your child if they have ever witnessed bullying at school or anywhere else. How did it make them feel? Did anyone intervene? Has anything like that ever happened to directly to your child?

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BULLYING AND TEASING

It can be difficult for middle schoolers to know the difference between bullying and teasing, or when someone is just being “mean.” Using the acronym HARP can help them decide whether a situation constitutes bullying.

- ▶ **H = harmful.** Bullying causes serious physical, emotional, and/or psychological harm to targets.
- ▶ **A = aggressive.** Bullies look for targets that they can easily manipulate, control, and overpower. Their actions become increasingly aggressive over time.
- ▶ **R = repeated.** Bullying behavior is not random and occurs repeatedly, rather than just once or twice.
- ▶ **P = purposeful.** Bullies intentionally seek out specific targets.

Explain to your child that it is normal for friends and classmates to have disagreements. These disagreements usually have a specific cause and are easily solved. The key difference between bullying and teasing is that bullying happens intentionally and repeatedly.

CHARACTER MATTERS: EMPATHY

You’ve heard The Golden Rule—treat others how you’d like to be treated. It can be helpful to take this one step further and teach your child to not only treat others in a way they would want, but to be aware of how others want to be treated.

For example, something that might not bother your child could be very upsetting to someone else. Encourage your child to pay attention to how others react to their actions, even if they think these actions are harmless.

CYBER SMARTS

Cyberbullying is effective because it often goes undetected. Make sure your home computer is in a central area, that your child does not take their phone to bed at night, and that you have a list of all passcodes, logins, and passwords.

FAMILY FUN: KINDNESS ROCKS!

The number one tool for eradicating bullying is to practice kindness. Talk with your child about what it means to be kind, and brainstorm ways that they can show kindness to others every day. Then do this fun project together:

- ▶ Purchase rocks at a craft store, or collect some from around the neighborhood.
- ▶ Use acrylic paint to color the rocks. Then paint or write positive messages on them, such as *You are smart; you are strong; or you are a good friend.*
- ▶ Place the rocks around your neighborhood, in a public park, and/or around the school grounds for people to find.

