

Top Tips from Parent Zone about Bullying.

Bobbie Brown

Safeguarding Lead

How to help your child if they're being bullied



Image: Jedidja

Kidscape, a national children's charity, runs free workshops for young people aged 9-16 who have experienced bullying, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Here, Kidscape's Anna Ceesay offers parents tips on how to help their children stand up to bullies

Kidscape's ZAP workshops have been running for 16 years, and have helped thousands of young people and their parents to combat bullying. Through them, we have learned some invaluable tips on how to help children develop assertiveness skills and raise their confidence so they are able to deal with bullying situations effectively. Parents also attend a separate workshop on the day where they are given expert knowledge of how to effectively support their child.

We know that our workshops provide a safe space where young people and parents are supported by professionals and meet others in similar situations. But we also know there are also some things parents can do to help their children at home.

Kidscape's top tips for tackling bullying

For parents

1. **Find a quiet time when you won't be interrupted to talk to your child about bullying.** Be patient, calm and understanding, and do not make assumptions or interrupt. Put your feelings aside and really listen to what your child is telling you so you can fully understand the situation.
2. **Give reassurance.** Make it clear that the bullying is not their fault and praise them for being brave enough to confide in you. Assure them that now you know what is happening, the issues can be resolved.
3. **Report to the school.** Schedule a meeting with the school immediately. For primary schools this is likely to be with your child's classroom teacher, and for secondary schools, the head of year. Give specific examples of bullying incidents and how your child has been affected. Keep a log of incidents to facilitate this. Ensure a course of action is agreed upon regarding how the school will work to resolve the situation.
4. **Stay informed.** Continue having open conversations with your child about their experiences with bullying, and report each incident to the school. If you are unhappy with how your child's bullying is being dealt with, schedule a meeting with the school's head teacher. If appropriate action is still not taken, it is within your rights to make a complaint to the school governors.
5. **Build confidence.** Bullies often 'test' potential targets to see how they respond, and while the target is never to blame, those who appear the most vulnerable usually continue to be bullied. It is for this reason that alongside reporting incidents to the school, building your child's confidence and self-esteem can be one of the most effective ways to help them.

For more information about bullying, supporting your child and working effectively with the school, please visit the parental advice section on the Kidscape website: www.kidscape.org.uk/advice.

When it's your child

Two parents explain how it felt to find their child was being bullied

Zayam, 12, from Birmingham

Zayam was a victim of cyberbullying. Initially, he was picked on for not being online. Then he started gaming, and was consequently bullied by other children who told him he was 'rubbish' at the game.

His mum told us:

'He downloaded this game, but I didn't realise it had a chat as well. Whenever he put up a post there was a load of negative comments. People would make fun of him, they bullied him about how rubbish he was at the game and were nasty to him. It got to the point where I had to join the game to find out exactly how someone could be bullied on an app – it wasn't an Xbox or anything like that, it was just an iPad game.

'I even spoke to the makers of the game to ask if Zayam's username could be changed as he'd spent all his pocket money building his profile. It seemed unfair to delete his account, but they refused to do anything about it.

‘At Kidscape’s young people’s workshop they talked about how they can stand up to cyberbullying: changing privacy settings, reporting or blocking the bullies, saying “stop” in response to the comments, or removing themselves from the source of the bullying.

‘Zayam decided to stop playing the game - he was never really interested in it but was just trying to fit in with the other children.

‘He’s more assertive now. He’s moved schools and when there’s a problem he’s able to go to the teachers, he wasn’t able to do that [before]. He was always miserable because he never spoke out.

‘It’s been so draining emotionally. So it was really good for me to see other parents and be reassured; to know it’s normal to feel a little bit angry and a bit fed up. Other parents saying exactly the same thing gave me confidence – I didn’t feel like I was a bad parent or that I’d done something wrong.’

Ben, 9, from London

When Ben started school in reception he was tied up in the playground and bullied for an hour, when he was just five years old.

‘He never recovered from that,’ his mum told us. ‘I felt so wretched.

‘Ben was really confident, you would never believe it – to meet him, he’s sociable and charming and funny. But in the playground, he spent the first four years of his school life on his own, in a corner. Terrified.

‘The Kidscape workshop leaders took the children through different techniques – how to be assertive with their voice and body language, how to create an imaginary “fog” or cloud around them to protect them from future bullying, and they all acted out different scenarios with each other, which was great practice.’

‘Now, Ben runs around and plays, and has a wonderful time in the playground. Now he knows what bullying is, he knows it’s wrong and he knows what should and shouldn’t be accepted and tolerated. Now he’s such a happy little boy.’

**All names have been changed*

Is your child being bullied? Kidscape runs free ZAP workshops for 9-16 year olds and their parents in London, the Midlands and the North East. Find out more [here](#)(link is external). If your child is aged under 9, you can also contact Kidscape’s Parent Advice Line [here](#)(link is external).