

## *How to Help*

# WHEN YOUR STUDENT IS A **TARGET...** SO THEY DON'T BECOME A **VICTIM**

*Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:*

- **Imbalance of power:** People who bully use their power to control or harm. The people being bullied (the targets) may have a hard time defending themselves.
- **Intent to cause harm:** Accidental actions are not bullying. The person bullying has a goal to cause harm.
- **Repetition:** Bullying happens to the same the target over and over by the same person or group.

*If you suspect your student is being bullied, consider these steps:*

- ✓ **Be a good listener.** Give your student your undivided attention. Express your concern, make it clear that you want to help, and that they are not alone.
- ✓ **Empathize with your student.** Say bullying is wrong and is not their fault.
- ✓ **Empower your student.** Compliment them on their courage to tell you about it.
- ✓ **Work together to find solutions.** Ask your student what they think can be done to help. Be careful that you don't take over and try to "solve" the problem. This sends the message that your student is not strong enough to handle the situation on their own.
- ✓ **Encourage assertiveness.** Provide specific suggestions for ways to respond to bullying and help your student gain confidence by rehearsing their responses.
- ✓ **Document ongoing bullying.** Work with your student to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If cyber bullying is involved, keep a record of all messages or postings.
- ✓ **Communicate with the school.** Starting with your student's teacher or counselor, share your concerns. Be sure to let your student know you are doing this.

*What not to do:*

- × **Do not tell your student to ignore the bullying.** Ignoring bullying allows it to become more serious.
- × **Do not blame your student.** Do not assume that your student did something to provoke the bullying.
- × **Do not encourage your student to harm the person who is bullying them.** Your student could get hurt, suspended, or expelled.
- × **Do not contact the other student's parents.** This may make things worse. School officials should contact the parents of the students involved.
- × **Do not demand or expect a solution on the spot.** Communicate that you expect the school to investigate. Effective bullying interventions take time to work. Keep the lines of communication open with the school until the bullying stops.

*We can all be a "target" of bullying at times,  
but if we choose not to let the bullying hurt us,  
then we do not become a "victim."*

Senn, D. (2008). *Bullying in the girl's world: A school-wide approach to girl bullying*. Chapin, SC: YouthLight, Inc.  
& [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)