

How to talk about cyberbullying with pre-teens

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Cyberbullying is a sensitive topic and can be difficult to talk about with your pre-teen.

Learn how to have these conversations in a relaxed and open way with these tips.



Tips for having a conversation

Before the conversation

- Plan what to say
- Learn about the platforms they use
- Create a casual atmosphere
- Do it in a natural place for conversation, such as the car or the dinner table
- Know what steps to take if they share something concerning

During the conversation

- Ask open-ended questions
- Reassure them and show support
- Stay calm
- Refrain from showing judgement
- Use relevant examples that relate to the platforms they use

After the conversation

- Keep having regular conversations
- Watch out for behavioural changes
- Review safety settings on their platforms
- Explore reporting and blocking tools with your child
- Agree on next steps alongside your child

Conversation starters to tackle cyberbullying

Children approaching their teens are beginning to value their independence more and may not be willing to share if they feel you are being intrusive. These questions respect their privacy and prompt them to share their online experiences without demanding answers.



Conversations to prevent cyberbullying

“What advice would you give to a friend being bullied online?” This encourages children to think about what they could do if they were being cyberbullied, without making it about them.

“What could you do if someone was being unkind on a game or on social media?”

Consider naming games or platforms you know your child uses with this starter. The question can help children think about the positive actions they could take within these platforms.

Conversations to prevent cyberbullying (continued)

"Who could you talk to if something online made you sad?"

This lets children know that they can look for support from others if something online upsets them. It gives you the opportunity to discuss adults they can talk to, such as yourself or teachers. You can also signpost other resources like Childline.

"What are some positive ways you could respond to someone sending you unwanted messages?"

This lets children consider ways they can disengage with someone they dislike, without retaliation. This is a good opportunity to teach your child to use the block feature.

Conversations to deal with cyberbullying

If your child has experienced cyberbullying, whether as a victim or as a perpetrator, remain calm and refrain from showing judgement. These starters can help encourage open conversation.

If your child is a target of cyberbullying

"How can I help you with this issue?"

This shows that you are ready to support your child, without taking control away from them. Suggest steps that your child might like to take, such as blocking, reporting or contacting school.

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If your child shows bullying behaviours

"What made you feel like you wanted to do that?"

Asking for your child's perspective can help them reflect on their actions. Wording it in a way that recognises outside influences, such as peer pressure, can also help them feel supported.

"How might you behave differently in the future?"

This gives children the chance to recognise the mistakes in their actions. From there, you can help them think of more positive ways to behave in the future, rather than just punishing them.

"I appreciate you telling me. Can you tell me more?"

Showing appreciation for your child opening up about cyberbullying can help them feel supported. Feeling reassured rather than in trouble means they'll be more likely to share and continue sharing.



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