

# BULLYING PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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## BULLYING SCENARIOS AND DISCUSSION

**Instructions:** Imagine you were the parents of the child described in each of the following scenarios. What would you do? There is no right or wrong answer. We have provided some possible responses and potential consequences of each of the responses.

## SCENARIO 1

Jonathan, a fourth-grader Filipino American boy who is small for his age, has been refusing to go to school and has been complaining of a headache or stomach ache every morning. Jonathan finally tells you (parents) that he is scared of going to school because he has been pushed, kicked, and teased by a group of larger kids in his school. He starts crying as he tells his story. Jonathan says he had already told the teachers but the teasing and pushing continues.



### Parent Responses:

1. "Don't be scared! You are a big boy. Boys always fight, that is normal!"
2. "Ignore them. Walk away. Tell your teachers."
3. "I am glad that you are sharing your feelings with us. It must be hard for you to go to school and try to learn when those kids are bothering you. I will work with your teachers and school staff and try our best to keep you safe."
4. Provide your own response: \_\_\_\_\_.



# SCENARIO 1

Possible consequences and effects of each response:

If a parent says "Don't be scared! You are a big boy. Boys always fight, that is normal!"

- Jonathan may feel that he cannot share his feelings with his parents; for example, "am I not allowed to feel upset or scared?"
- Bullying may persist. Jonathan may continue to experience fear and refuse to go to school.
- Jonathan may feel like he was not being strong or tough enough, and that he should have fought back. This may negatively impact his physical health (e.g., headaches, restlessness), mental health (e.g., feelings of anxiety, doubts, worthlessness, depression and low self-esteem). He may also question his identity and value as a boy; for example, "If I do not want to or cannot fight, does it mean that I am not a boy?"
- Jonathan may try to act "normal" and fight back. But because other kids are physically bigger and stronger, and have more power over him, Jonathan is likely to get hurt.

If a parent says "Ignore them. Walk away. Tell your teachers."

- Jonathan may feel that his parents did not hear or understand his feelings.
- Bullying may persist. Jonathan may continue to experience fear and refuse to go to school.
- The other kids may tease him for walking away and not fighting back.
- Walking away may be the safest option for Jonathan in this case given that the other kids are physically bigger and stronger than him. However, the bullying could continue.

If a parent says "I am glad that you are sharing your feelings with us. It must be hard for you to go to school and try to learn when those kids are bothering you. We will work with your teachers and school staff and try our best to keep you safe"

- Jonathan is likely to feel heard and understood by his parents.
- This response helps Jonathan see that his family takes the situation seriously and does not condone bullying or any forms of peer-related victimization.
- This response is age appropriate. It underscores that the family is here to support Jonathan and will take actions to work with his school to address the problem.

## SCENARIO 2

Ahmad is one of only a few Muslim and Indonesian students in his high school. After the recent presidential election, Ahmad feels that the school environment has become particularly hostile and unsafe. On several occasions when the morning news reported a terrorist attack in another country, a group of students surrounded him, questioning his and his family's loyalty to the U.S. At the suggestion of his friend, Ahmad told the school principal about the harassment. While the in-person harassment stopped, the group created a fake profile with Ahmad's photo that pledges allegiance to Allah, and spread it around social media sites using an anonymous account. Ahmad confided this incident in his teacher, and the school principal contacted you, the parents.



### Parent Responses:

1. Ahmad. We know this is hurtful. However, this is the new reality in America. This is the best school in the area. We do not want to 'rock the boat'."
2. "Can you get onto the internet and tell everyone the rumors are not true?"
3. "I am so glad that you are sharing this with us. I am also glad that you shared your concerns with your school principal about the harassment. It is really brave of you to tell adults about the bullying. Adults are here to keep you safe. I know it has been a difficult time for you, for me, and for our community. Let's sit down together and brainstorm some solutions."
4. Provide your own response: \_\_\_\_\_.

## SCENARIO 2

Possible consequences and effects of each response:

If a parent says “Ahmad, we know this is hurtful but this is the new reality in America. This is the best school in the area and we don’t want to rock the boat.”

- Ahmad may continue to experience harassment, whether online or in person, from his peers who have made serious allegations about him, such as calling him “a terrorist.”
- Ahmad may feel validated by his parents but continues to feel unwelcome and unsafe at school. The pervasive harassment and fear could affect Ahmad’s physical and psychological well-being, as well as his academic performance and progress.

If a parent says “Can you go on the internet and tell everyone that the rumors are not true?”

- Teens who engage in cyberbullying, and other teens who see the rumors, may not care whether the rumors are true or not. The cyberbullying may continue or escalate.
- This response places the burden on Ahmad to clear his own name and to correct a problem that he did not start. He may feel like no one can help.

If a parent says "I am glad that you are sharing this with us. I am also glad that you shared your concerns about cyberbullying with your school principal. It’s really brave of you to tell adults about bullying. Adults are here to keep you safe. I know it’s been a difficult time for you, for us, and for our community. Let’s sit down together and brainstorm some solutions.”

- Ahmad is likely to feel heard and understood by his family.
- This response also highlights that students from culturally diverse backgrounds may be targeted not because of their individual characteristics but because of the larger societal and political climate.
- This response emphasizes that students who are being harassed or bullied are not to be blamed or shamed. Instead, they should report the incident to school authorities and/or other trusting adults who can take action to address the problem.

## SCENARIO 3

Xiao Ling, a first grade student, recently immigrated from China and started attending an elementary school in a suburban neighborhood . Several students



in her class have made fun of her name, her accent, her slanty eyes and her clothing. One day, a kid made up a nickname for her that everyone thinks is funny, “Xiao Long Bao! Round and small! Made in China, eaten by all.” Xiao Ling came home crying and said she had been feeling very isolated, sad, and wanted to “go home.”

### Parent Responses:

1. “Why do you care? You are here to study and do well in school. Who care about these people who make up these silly jokes? Just because they call you “Xiao Long Bao” does it really make you a “Xiao Long Bao?” You should be proud of your cultural heritage!”
2. “Little kids like to make nicknames for everyone. Maybe you are overreacting? Starting in a new place is always hard for everybody. I am sad and I miss our old home and friends in China too. It is just a normal phase that we go through.”
3. "I am glad that you are sharing your feelings with us. I know it is hard to adjust to a new environment in the U.S. Sometimes I am sad and I miss our old home and friends in China too. I am sorry that you classmates are making fun of your looks and your name. Your name Xiao-Ling means knowing and intelligent in Chinese. You can tell your classmates what your name means and ask them if their names have any special meanings. Remember we are here for you. I will work with your teachers and let them know that this is happening in your class and in your school.”
4. Provide your own response: \_\_\_\_\_.



## SCENARIO 3

### Possible consequences and effects of each response:

If a parent says “Why do you care? You’re here to study and to do well in school. Who cares about these people who make up these silly jokes? Just because they call you ‘Xiao Long Bao,’ does it really make you one? You should be proud of your cultural heritage.”

- Although Xiao Ling may try to ignore the harassment from other students, the verbal bullying may persist, and she may continue to feel isolated and sad.
- Xiao Ling may think that her parents did not take her situation seriously when they told her to simply ignore the jokes. Xiao Ling did not think that the jokes were silly or funny. The jokes can be a form of microaggression.
- Xiao Ling may feel misunderstood by her parents when they told her to feel proud of her cultural heritage. The problem is not that Xiao Ling doesn’t feel proud of her culture; Xiao Ling indeed misses her home country and wants to go back. Her feeling of cultural pride does not stop the harassment, nor does it necessarily prevent her from feeling sad and isolated.

If a parent says “Little kids like to make nicknames for everyone. Maybe you’re overreacting? Starting in a new place is always hard for everybody. I’m sad and I miss our old home and friends in China too. It’s just a normal phase that we all go through.”

- Xiao Ling may not think that she was overreacting. She was being teased on a daily basis. This response may invalidate Xiao Ling’s feelings and experience.
- Adjusting to a new school and a new culture is hard for most people, but it does not mean that what is happening to Xiao Ling is a “normal” phase of cultural adjustment. Verbal teasing and/or repeated verbal bullying should not be tolerated.
- The teasing, verbal bullying, and parents’ lack of understanding could exacerbate Xiao Ling’s feelings of

If a parent says “I am glad that you are sharing this with us. I know it’s hard to adjust to a new environment. Sometimes I’m sad and miss our old home and friends in China too. I’m sorry that your classmates are making fun of your looks and your name. Your name, Xiao Ling, means “knowing” and “intelligent” in Chinese. You can tell your classmates what your name means and ask them if their names have any special meanings. Remember we are here for you. I will work with your teachers and let them know that this is happening in your class at school.

- Xiao Ling is likely to feel heard and understood by her parents.
- This response also highlights that students who are being teased or bullied are not to be blamed or shamed; instead they should report the incident to school authorities and/or other trusted adults who can take action to address the problem.
- This response is age appropriate. It underscores that the family is here to support Xiao Ling and will work with her school to address the problem.

## SCENARIO 4

Your daughter, Karina, is a sixth grader in a public school. She told you one day that a group of classmates had been spreading hurtful rumors about her via Facebook posts and text messages. In addition, they made fun of her darker complexion, the food she eats, and her academic excellence almost on a daily basis. Sometimes they would demand Katrina to help them with homework, or give them things. The teacher had not been responsive to the incidents or to your request for help.



### Parent Responses:

1. "We should consider switching Karina to a different school."
2. "We will tell Karina to deactivate her Facebook and change her phone number."
3. "I am so glad that you told me about this. I am sorry that your classmates are bullying you. In order to keep you safe and prevent them from hurting you (e.g., taking your things), do you think it might be a good idea to walk home or eat lunch with a friend? Would you like me to talk to your teacher, principal, or the school counselor about what is happening?"
4. Provide your own response: \_\_\_\_\_.

## SCENARIO 4

### Possible consequences and effects of each response:

If a parent says “We should consider switching Karina to a different school.”

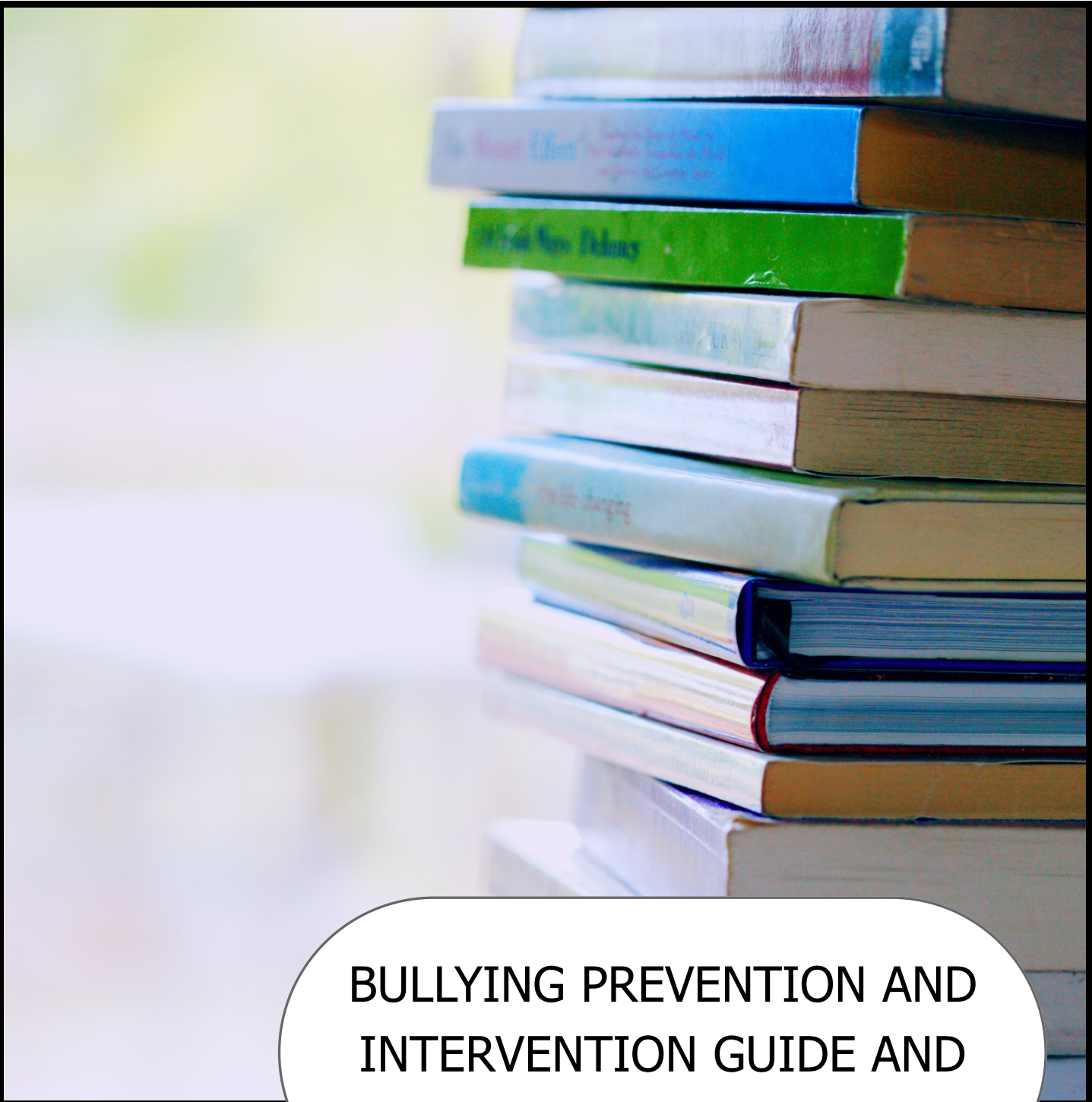
- Karina may not want to go to a different school, and she may feel that she is being punished for other students’ actions.
- The harassment may continue through text messages and other social media, even if Karina goes to a different school.

If a parent says “We will tell Karina to deactivate her Instagram and Twitter account and change her phone number.”

- Karina may feel that she’s being punished for other students’ actions. Having access to Facebook and staying connected with friends is important to adolescents. Karina may think it’s unfair that she has to change her behavior (i.e., deactivate her account) while her peers can continue to enjoy social media.
- This response does not address the issue that other students at school are “demanding” that Karina help them with their math homework or give her personal belongings to them. The bullying may continue online or in person.

If a parent says “I am so glad that you told me about this. I am sorry that your classmates are bullying you. In order to keep you safe and prevent them from hurting you or taking your things, do you think it might be a good idea to walk home from school with a friend and to make sure you have a friend to eat lunch with everyday? Would you like me to talk to your teacher, principal, or the school counselor about what is happening?”

- Karina is likely to feel heard and understood by her parent.
- This response accurately identifies that what has been happening to Karina is a form of relational and cyberbullying.
- This response helps Karina see that her family is there to support her and that they will take action to work with her school to address the problem instead of placing the burden on Karina to change her behavior.



## BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION GUIDE AND RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

In this section, we discuss how Asian American and Pacific Islander parents can help prevent and intervene with bullying. We also include links to helpful resources about bullying prevention and intervention at the end of the document.

## **This Guide Contains Information About:**

1. Signs of bullying
2. How to intervene if your child is being bullied
3. How to prevent bullying
4. Resources

Bullying affects many students in the United States, including Asian American students, and can make students feel afraid, ashamed, anxious, sad, and alone. It is important for all parents and caregivers to understand what bullying is and how to help their children if bullying happens to them.

## **What is Bullying?**

- Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior by people who are more powerful. Bullying happens again and again, or people become afraid that it might again.

## **Examples of Bullying Include:**

- Physical actions such as hitting, pushing, spitting, taking or breaking someone's things
- Verbal actions such as, name calling, taunting, teasing, threats
- Social/relational actions such as spreading rumors, rejecting and excluding people

Sometimes it may be hard to tell the difference between playful teasing and bullying. Playful or good-humored teasing occurs when it causes everyone to smile or laugh, including the person who is being teased. Teasing becomes bullying when it is hurtful, mean, aggressive, when it is repeated or prolonged, and when there is a power difference between the teaser and the person being teased.

Bullying can also happen through internet and phones. This is called Cyberbullying. For example:

- Sending unwanted emails and text messages
- Spreading rumors through social media or by email
- Posting embarrassing videos, photos, or fake profiles on websites

Cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying in that messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a wide audience via the Internet.

Many parents want to help but may not always know what to do or how best to help their child. This practical guide will help parents learn more about bullying.



# How to prevent bullying:

## 1. Know your children's school life and become their ally:

- ⇒ Have a conversation with your children on a daily basis to establish a sense of connection and support. Instead of asking closed-ended questions that can be answered by a “yes” or “no,” or asking questions that are focused only on the academics, try asking open-ended questions and express genuine interest about their school life such as:



- Who do you spend time with at school?
- What do you do between classes and at recess?
- What do you enjoy most at school and why?
- What do they not enjoy at school and why?
- What happens on the way to and from school?

## 2. Encourage friendships but supervise their social activities in person and online:

- ⇒ Children who are socially isolated and lonely tend to be vulnerable to getting bullied, or using aggression to seek attention. Help your children develop social skills and establish a friendship network. For example, encourage and arrange opportunities for your child to play with other children—such as classmates and friends from after-school programs, extracurricular activities, churches or other communities—outside of school time.
- ⇒ Keep an eye out on whom your children are spending time with and set reasonable rules and boundaries.
- ⇒ To prevent cyberbullying, maintain supervision of your children's internet usage, and keep computers or tablets in a shared space in your home. Learn everything you can about what your children do online. For example, become familiar with their profiles (e.g., Instagram), web pages, or electronic journals (blogs), and communicate with your children's teachers about the types and frequency of online homework assigned each week.
- ⇒ For older children and adolescents who have cell phones with Wi-Fi access, express interest in their online profiles and activities and maintain supervision when you can. For example, you can have conversations about what they share on their social media platforms and who their online friends are. These communications help build an understanding of your children and may strengthen your relationship with them, such that they would feel comfortable disclosing to you and seeking help when they are being cyberbullied.



## How to prevent bullying:

### 3. Talk openly with your children about bullying:

- ⇒ Read books and watch television that might involve peer conflicts with your children and discuss how the characters handle and resolve conflicts and bullying. You can ask your children these questions:
  - What problem do you think the main character experienced?
  - What strategies did the main character use to solve the problem?
  - What strategies worked for the main character? What did not work?
  - Have you ever had a similar problem? How did it make you feel? What strategies did you use to solve the problem?
- ⇒ Make it clear to your children that aggressive behavior and bullying others will not be tolerated, and follow through with clear consequences.



### 4. Model and teach positive and appropriate conflict resolution and problem-solving behavior:

- ⇒ Children who witness physical, verbal and relational violence in their family, community and/or school may view violence as an appropriate way to solve problems or to gain control and power, and are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior in the future.
- ⇒ Help children develop social skills from a young age, such as negotiating, settling disputes, solving problems, and regulating their negative emotions.
- ⇒ Praise children when they use nonviolent and positive approaches to interact with their peers and solve problems.

## How to prevent bullying:

### 5. Stay tuned with your children's school life:

- ⇒ Communicate regularly with teachers and administrators and ask for resources that will help you become more involved in school (e.g., translated flyers and materials, on-site childcare and interpreters, meetings scheduled at varied times).
- ⇒ Attend parent-teacher conferences when you can. If you are not able to be physically present, try to communicate with your children's teachers through email or phone.
- ⇒ Read the flyers and notices that your children bring home to find out what is happening at school such as school events, workshop opportunities for parents, etc.
- ⇒ Help out in your children's classroom and observe how your children socialize with other peers in school. Children love to see their parents getting involved!
- ⇒ One of the best ways to stay attuned to your children's school life is to join a parent network. Connect with parents who live in your neighborhood in person or via social media, such as Facebook and messenger apps (e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat, LINE). These platforms often provide opportunities for disseminating school-related information, sharing resources, and arranging social gatherings among parents and children.





# How to intervene if your child is being bullied:

## 1. Learn the warning signs:

⇒ Your children may be being bullied if they show the following signs:

- Physical and psychological distress (e.g., complaint of headaches, stomach ache; become unusually quiet or extremely irritable)
- Fear or reluctance to go to school
- Decline in their academic performance
- Disengagement from school activities

⇒ Your children may be engaging in chronic aggression or bullying others if they show the following signs:

- Frequently start or engage in physical or verbal fights
- Frequently get sent to the Principal's office or detention
- Have extra possessions or money that cannot be explained
- Are quick to blame others or use negative words to describe them
- Are easily frustrated or argumentative
- Have a need to win or to dominate social situations



## How to intervene if your child is being bullied:

### 2. Acknowledge, empathize your children's feelings and experience, and develop solutions:

- ⇒ Do not minimize the bullying incident or your children's feelings. For example, in Scenario 1, parents could tell Jonathan that they are glad that he is sharing his feelings and his fear is not a sign of weakness. Parents should reassure Jonathan that they will work with teachers and staff and try their best to keep Jonathan safe. In Scenario 3, parents could empathize and validate Xiao Ling's feelings of isolation and sadness related to cultural adjustment and bullying by saying "I know it is hard to adjust to a new environment. Sometimes I am sad and I miss our old home and friends in China too. But we are here for you."
- ⇒ Foster self-respect and tell your children that it is not their fault if they are being bullied.
- ⇒ Do not blame your children or place the burden on them to correct the bullying situation. Take steps to become your children's allies. For example, in Scenario 2, instead of asking Ahmad to clear his own name, parents could take the initiative to contact his teacher and the school principal to discuss the fake online profile, and to ensure the harassment stops. Parents could also work with Ahmad to contact the social media site to request the removal of the profile.
- ⇒ Teach practical tactics to help your children protect themselves. For example, parents can equip their children with tactics, such as **WITS**, to deal with a bullying situation:
  - Walk away**
  - Ignore**
  - Talk it out (be assertive, but not aggressive)**
  - Seek help (know the difference between seeking help and tattling)**
- ⇒ Discuss with your child and brainstorm other strategies.





# How to intervene if your child is being bullied:

## 3. Work collaboratively with your children's teachers and schools:

- ⇒ Know that your child has a right to safe school environment. If your children's teacher fails to address your concerns about bullying, contact other support staff who know your child or the school administrators or staff, such as school counselors, school psychologists, ESL/ELL coordinators, and principals. If your child's school fails to respond to or handle the bullying episodes inappropriately, parents can file complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice and/or U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. For example, in Scenario 2 Ahmad's case, parents could first ask the school principal how they are working to prevent school bullying and to promote positive school climate. Parents can also become aware of community resources that could help school promote multicultural awareness and decrease xenophobia. Parents can download brochures and pamphlets from websites suggested in this guide and share those with the school administrators, staff, and teachers to help promote awareness of specific cultures and/or religions (e.g., Muslims, Sikhs).
- ⇒ Share your observations and concerns about your children's signs of distress with teachers and/or school counselors, school psychologists, and school administrators, and express your willingness and desire to work with school staff to help your children.

- ⇒ Refrain from blaming the perpetrators or teachers (for not taking any action). Instead, parents could express willingness to work with the teachers and school staff to identify and develop solutions.

- ⇒ Stay connected with other parents in person, or via social media apps, to seek or provide social support.

- ⇒ Seek professional help and consultation, including special education services and school-based or community-based mental health services. Most schools are able to provide school-based services or referral information for psychological assessment and counseling/mental health support. Sometimes children involved in bullying have underlying mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, or attention deficit disorder that affect their behavior. Environmental stress could also trigger maladaptive behavior. For example, in Scenarios 3 and 4, parents could encourage Xiao Ling and Karina to talk to a school counselor or a school psychologist to learn about different coping strategies. School psychologists and counselors could also help Xiao Ling and Karina explore culturally appropriate assertiveness and communication skills that may help facilitate the development of new and prosocial friendships.



## Helpful Websites About Bullying and Related Issues:

- The White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) has a webpage that lists resources (some of which are included below) but also links to Asian language resources in Korean, Tagalog, Chinese, and Vietnamese and to PDFs of factsheets by the US DoJ and DoE in various Asian languages about civil rights protections in the US and on “harassment and bullying.”
  - <http://sites.ed.gov/aapi/aapi-bullying/>
- Born This Way Foundation: [www.bornthiswayfoundation.org](http://www.bornthiswayfoundation.org)
- Creating Compassionate, Safe & Respectful Environment: [www.operationrespect.org](http://www.operationrespect.org)
- Education.com/topic/school-bullying/
- H.E.A.R. <http://project-hear.us/overview>
- PACER: <http://www.pacer.org>
- Stop Bullying: <http://www.stopbullying.gov>
- WITS program: [www.witsprogram.ca](http://www.witsprogram.ca)
- Video-resources with discussion questions: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/upstander/video-resources>
- Anti-Cyberbullying Toolkit: <https://www.common sense media.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit>
- <https://acttochange.org>
- Talking to kids about discrimination and microaggression: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/kids-discrimination.aspx>
- <https://psychologybenefits.org/2014/09/18/redefining-race-relations-it-begins-at-home/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-race-good-health/201708/race-in-america-tips-talking-children-about-racism>
- [https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO20A\\_Guide\\_to\\_Responding\\_to\\_Microaggressions.pdf](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO20A_Guide_to_Responding_to_Microaggressions.pdf)

