

# Navigating Peer Relationships and Conflicts

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# Discussion Topics

- ❑ **Problems versus Conflict versus Bullying**
  - ❑ **School Considerations**
  - ❑ **Strategies for Parents**
  - ❑ **Panel Discussion**
  - ❑ **Breakout Session**
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# What is the difference between a problem and a conflict? How can I best explain this to my child?

## What is a problem?

A problem is a matter or situation that is considered as harmful or unpleasant. A conflict can be described as a problem if the situation/disagreement escalates.

## What is a conflict?

Conflict is a disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views. Conflict is a natural part of human relationships. Conflict is not bullying. Conflict happens between two people have two different points of view about what's going on. Sometimes this escalates into a disagreement that can lead people to become emotional.

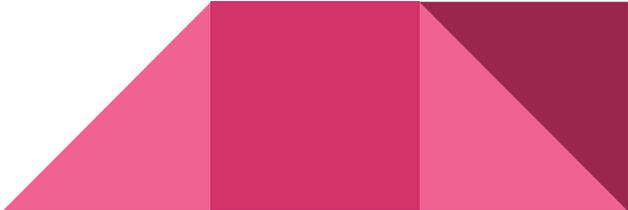
# What about Bullying?

Some people think that bullying and conflict are the same thing, but they aren't. Conflict can be a part of everyday experiences. Usually, conflicts don't make someone feel unsafe or threatened.

Bullying, on the other hand, is meant to **hurt or humiliate a targeted person and the target is not able to make the bullying stop. It is repeated and over a period of time.**

It can be easy to minimize a bullying situation because a person doesn't want to deal with the reality of what is happening. A person can get into a pattern of qualifying bullying as conflict to avoid facing the actual problem, when really it is something that a person does not deserve and something that requires outside intervention.

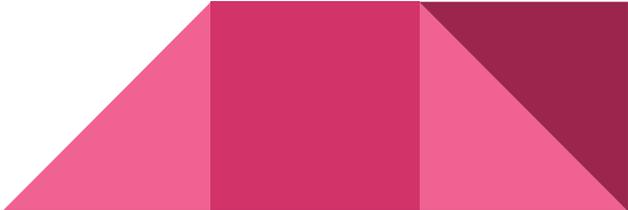
<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/info/questions-answered/conflict-vs-bullying.asp>



# What Bullying is not.....

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

\*\*These actions can cause great distress. However, they do not fit the definition of bullying and they're not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them.



# School Considerations:

- What is the history between the students involved? Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance? Power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. If the targeted student feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
- Each bullying or alleged bullying situation will be handled differently, therefore it is important to ask these questions to find the best approach.
- Schools are committed to making students feel safe and seek support from adults if bullying is suspected.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/on-the-spot>



# Strategies for Parents

It is important to let our kids follow their instincts on which friendships to pursue. When our kids learn how to seek out and maintain healthy friendships they will continue this practice into their adult life.

When your child is in friendship 'drama,' it can be best to offer support but allow them to try to navigate it independently, while offering support, being ready to listen and trying not to take sides.

The teen years are practice for adulthood. One of the most important skills we have are our 'people skills.' In the same way that we need to allow our kids to swing and miss, strike out, and experience failure in sports, music or other activities; we need to allow them the same opportunities in relationships.

# Strategies for Parents

Most tweens and teens are wired for peer approval and social connections. It can be hard for them to see the warning signs of an unhealthy friendship. You may find your child to be defensive and unwilling to hear any negative comments about friends.

When and how do I talk to my child about my concerns?

When is it time to intervene beyond talking?



# Conversation Starters

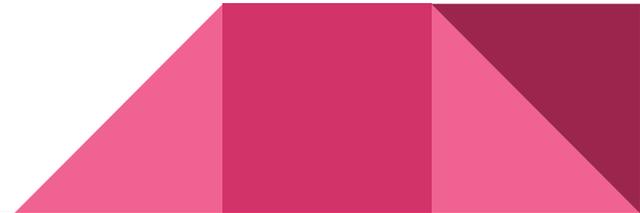
- Talk in a relaxed environment (in the car, while you are cooking, folding laundry)
- “Tell me about ....(Susie, your lunch friends, what it’s like in the halls at school)”
- “I noticed that you seem upset when...(Susie texts you, after a sleepover, etc.)”
- What makes a good/bad friend?
- Use a friendship or relationship portrayed in a movie or tv show as a way to discuss what you value.
- Take opportunities to share about your own friendships now or from your school years.
- Sports commentator versus referee (“It sounds like you and your friend are having an argument. I wonder if there’s a way for both of you to get what you want...”)



# Strategies for Parents: How do I teach my child to resolve a conflict?

## Resolving conflict

- Identify the problem (What do I want? What does the other person want?)
- Identify solutions (What will meet my needs? What will meet the other person's needs? What is the most respectful solution? What is the safest solution?)
- Identify what is within your control and what is outside your control



# Strategies for Parents: How can I teach my child to advocate for him or herself?

## Advocating for Self

- Identify feelings
- Communicate needs, not just desires
- Practice makes perfect
  - Identify adults you can talk to
  - Identify language to use and practice saying it
  - Role play



# Strategies for Parents: How do I help my child respond to online conflict or bullying?

- Talk to a trusted adult
  - For isolated events, trying ignoring it or laugh it off
  - Set boundaries
  - Keep records
  - Report it to content providers/online platform
  - Block accounts or phone numbers
  - Don't pass along hurtful or embarrassing messages/photos of others
  - Don't respond or retaliate
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# Panel Discussion

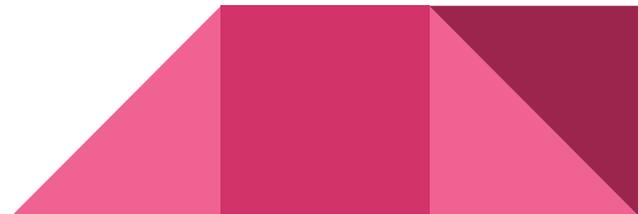
## Question #1:

How do I support my middle school child when their friend group does not include him/her in an activity (party, hanging out at someone's house, etc.) outside of school? How do I help my child when he/she sees it posted on social media?



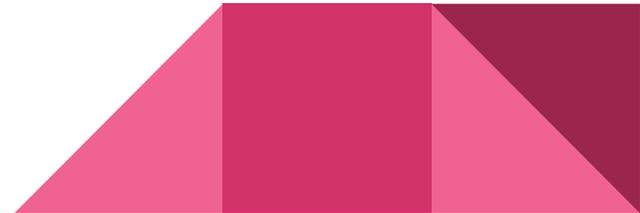
## Question #2:

How do I help my child create a diverse friend group so he/she does not get stuck in the “best friend” mentality?



## Question #3:

My child is often quiet at school and has difficulty making friends. As a result, he/she feels anxiety about going to school. As a parent, how can I help? What resources do the schools offer to assist with helping students build friendships?



## Question #4:

How do I support my child with peer relationships without “taking over”?  
How do I know if I need to take a step back?



# Breakout Sessions

What has been successful for you and your child in navigating conflict?

What are some ways you start conversations with your child about their peer relationships?

Any additional questions you would like to ask.





**Questions?**