

Playbook 3 of 3



A Bullying Resource for Parents & Caring Adults

How to Support the Development of Kindness and Empathy in Our Youth



This Playbook is the **third** in a series.

This Playbook goes beyond immediate crisis and looks to the bigger picture: the proactive steps parents and caregivers can take with their kids to build a culture of kindness, empathy, and upstanding in all the places where children gather. Here, we explain what each of those words mean—and how cultivating them can help to eliminate bullying from homes and schools.

In short, while you may not need every word, we hope this Playbook at least provides you with some food for thought. We also hope after reading through the playbook, you look at your home and ask yourself: What can we do better?

While the Playbook is targeted to **parents**, any **caring adult** (i.e., coaches, teachers, counselors, extended family members) can greatly benefit from the tools you'll find here.

In Playbooks 1 and 2, we explain bullying in a way that will help parents to address it at home and in partnership with the school. We take both parents of children who are bullying others and parents of children who are being bullied through a 4-Step Action Plan to address the problem at home and school. If you are part of one of those two groups, we hope you'll start with the Playbook most relevant to you.

If your child is being bullied, go to Playbook 1: How to Help a Child Being Bullied If your child is bullying other kids, go to Playbook 2:

How to Help a Child to Stop Bullying Other Kids For caring adults wanting to build a culture of kindness, go to Playbook 3:
How to Support the Development of Kindness and Empathy in Our Youth



This playbook is a set of generalized recommendations and are not universal strategies or facts for every child or context.

For more specialized support, reach out to your child's teacher, school, coach, or consider contacting a licensed professional such as a child psychologist or social worker.



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Proactively Building Kindness and Empathy

How Can You Build Kindness and Empathy at Home?

Now that we've defined the problem of bullying behaviors for children in our other two playbooks, it is time to think more proactively—meaning that there are steps we can take to help children avoid bullying behaviors in the future. **This entails consciously aiming to build a culture of kindness and empathy.** In the next section, we'll explore ideas like inclusion, allyship, and upstanding.

At home or at school, you've probably been trying to build this culture all along. We hope this part of the playbook will help you to refocus your efforts and stay consistent over time. Whether a child or adult, it's never too late to keep building skills in kindness, empathy, and inclusion.



Kindness Is a Skill

Kindness has the power to overcome differences and bridge divides.⁵¹ **Just like any other skill, kindness must be taught and continuously developed.** You have the power to start teaching kindness skills at home.

Below are some helpful tips on how to start the process with younger kids:





Show them that kindness is contagious:
Seeing others be kind can inspire your child to be kind, too. See this YouTube Kids playlist for examples of kids showing kindness.



Teach your child that kindness is a muscle:
Our skills to be kind grow the more that we practice them. You could start conversations about this with your child using this sing-a-long video.

Be a Role Model for Your Children

Be aware of how your own attitudes and behaviors, as they can influence the way your child acts. If you show your child that your family prioritizes caring for others, your child will catch on and develop kindness skills faster.⁴⁵



to agree than disagree with this statement: "My parents are prouder if I get good grades in my classes than if I'm a caring community member in class and school."

- Making Caring Common's "<u>The Children We</u> <u>Mean to Raise Report"</u>





See It in Real Life

Emma and her daughter, Elly, are playing a game with some friends at the park. Emma sees a child playing alone, watching the other kids play the game from a far. This is a perfect opportunity to show kindness in action!

In front of Elly and the other children, Emma approaches the child and asks, "Hi there, would you like to join in and play with us? There's plenty of room for everyone to play the game." The child gleefully agrees and joins the group. After playing a couple of rounds of the game together, Emma says to the whole group, "It is so much more fun when everyone can join in on the fun! That's why we invite all friends to join in and don't leave anyone out."

Here, Emma showed Elly and the other children the action of kindness, explained the action, and identified why it was kind.

Teach Social-Emotional Skills

Parents play a crucial role in modeling social-emotional skills for their children. Social-emotional skills are important for building and maintaining healthy relationships, regulating our emotions, and connecting with others. They are also a key ingredient for kindness and empathy. Some social-emotional skills that parents can model include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.⁴⁶

• You can learn more about social-emotional skills and how to teach them to children of all ages through resources like the <u>Grow Kinder Podcast</u>.



Parents can model these skills as well as talk through them with their child. For example, share with your child when something makes you upset and how you cope with your emotions.

"I got really frustrated when you didn't get home at your curfew. But instead of yelling at you or taking that frustration out on you in a negative way, I stepped back and took a couple of deep breaths to manage my emotions and calm down. Now I'm able to come back to our conversation about curfews feeling more balanced."



Create a Safe Place to Share

- Make your home a safe space for your child to regularly share their emotions and well-being.
 It's never too early to create a safe space for your child to come to you with their emotions.
- Consider having weekly check-ins where you can talk about how they've shown kindness to themselves and others.^{46,47}

Conversation Starters



CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR YOUNGER KIDS^{47,48}

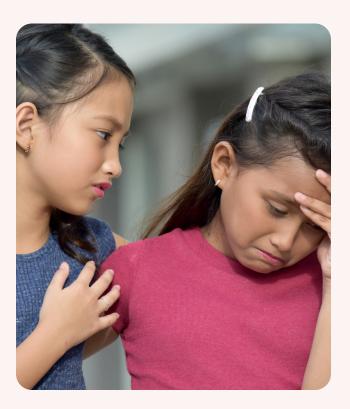
- "How are things going with your friends?"
- "What about yourself do you love/ appreciate the most?"
- "What new activities, music, or hobbies do you want to try?"
- "What is something cool you talked about or did recently to connect with your friends?"

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CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR OLDER KIDS^{47,48}

- "What do you crave/feel distracted by the most about other people's lives?"
- "What about yourself do you love/ appreciate the most?"
- "What has been taking up most of your mental energy these days?"
- "I love you and care about you. Your mental health and wellness are really important to me and I would love to talk more regularly about this."





Empathy: What Is It and Why Is It Important?

Empathy is a concerned response to another person's feelings. It involves thinking, feeling, and even a physical reaction that our bodies have to other people when we relate to how they feel. According to Making Caring Common, a key component of practicing kindness and empathy with others is **showing patience**, **generosity**, and a willingness to hear someone else's perspective.⁴⁹

Parents can model and show their child that being too quick to judge others can limit our ability to be kind and empathetic. Giving someone the benefit of the doubt and asking questions to gain a better understanding of someone else's perspective can help lead to productive conversations, instead of potentially, unwanted bullying.

They're always listening.

Its important to monitor the language you are using in front of your child. Rather than calling people hurtful or negative names when you are upset, consider asking why someone might be thinking or acting in a certain way that bothers you.

How Can You Build Empathy at Home?

Like kindness, empathy is a "muscle" that children (and adults) can exercise.

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Practical Ways to Build Empathy

According to research from Making Caring Common, family routines help support the building blocks for strong "empathy muscles." Here are some examples of routines you can incorporate into your child's and your lives:⁵⁰

- As they head out the door, give your child a compliment and remind them to give a compliment to somebody else during the day.
- Have a few homeless care kits in the car on hand for anyone you encounter who might need some food and cheer. Talk to your child about the importance of lending a hand to those in need.
- Choose a simple, fun project that establishes a kindness routine. Some examples
 include decorating a box to sponsor a food shelf that you fill throughout the month,
 creating a giving jar to teach charitable giving, and decorating kindness cards to give
 out randomly.



More Resources for Kindness and Empathy

Some examples of activities include:

- Activities from kindness.org include journal prompts that help children reflect on their feelings, bingo cards with kind acts to do, and this kindness planner that you and your child can use to make plans together to be kind.
- <u>The Channel Kindness Initiative</u> at the Born This Way Foundation encourages older children and teens to write letters or make videos to people who need some extra kindness in their lives (such as the elderly).
- Kindness.org's Learn Kind K-8 curriculum fosters kindness and empathy in the classroom.

FOR YOUNGER KIDS

NAMI's <u>Meet Little Monster</u> is a great resource for helping younger kids develop social-emotional skills.

FOR OLDER KIDS

For older adolescents, try encouraging them to look out for their friends and be an ally. Check out The Jed Foundation for more resources for you and the adolescent.

How to Cultivate Inclusion, Allyship, and Upstanding What Are Intentional Inclusion and Allyship?

- **Allyship,** or being an **ally**, is showing compassion and support for someone or communities who might be a target of bias and/or bullying.
- When you accept, value, and include someone who is different from you, that is called intentional inclusion.

How Can You Promote Intentional Inclusion and Allyship at Home?

Promote allyship and intentional inclusion at home by showing your child what it looks like in action. Below are some examples of allyship and intentional inclusion in action:

FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- Not judging others and showing empathy for them. For example, if you see someone who is eating alone at lunch, invite them to eat with you and your friends.
- You and your child can learn about the steps to inclusion by playing this <u>Inclusion</u> <u>Tiles</u> game, designed by The Special Olympics, together. When playing, you can talk about the different inclusive journeys you might take.

FOR OLDER KIDS

- Participate in larger acts of kindness, such as volunteering for local causes in your community.
- Not engaging with a mean social-media post, or standing up for someone in a comment section.
- Support people who are targets for bias and/or bullying, like standing up for someone who is being bullied on the bus or at school.



6 ways to be an ally when you witness bullying or harassment 35

- Support people who are targets for bias and/or bullying, whether you know them or not
- Don't participate (e.g., laugh or stare at targets)
- Tell the person who is showing unkind behaviors to stop

of students report seeing bullying.

Bystanders sometimes join in, ignore, or don't know what to do when the bullying is happening. Not many step in to help the person being bullied.

In the past year, 33% of teens have seen someone being bullied and stepped in.

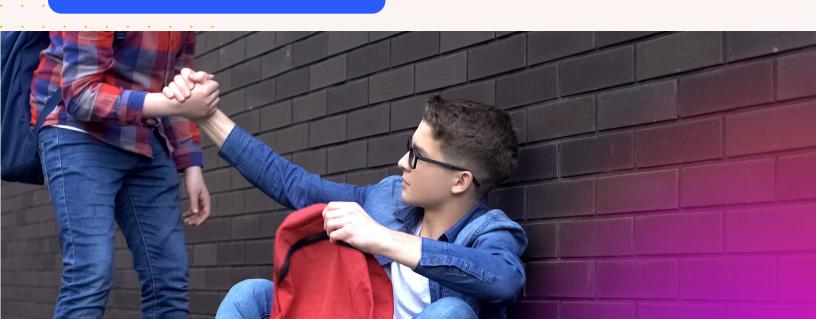
-"The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey," conducted by Ipsos

- 4 Inform a trusted adult
- Get to know people instead of judging them
- Be an ally online—all the rules above apply to being an ally in person and digitally

What Is an Upstander?

Teaching children about allyship and intentional inclusion can empower your kids to be an upstander for targets of bullying. Parents can support their child's development as an upstander by emphasizing the importance of caring and doing good for others.

 Parents can use the power of storytelling, such as using Facing History and Ourselves' resource library, to help teach their child how to be an upstander. Reading, listening, or watching stories about upstanders can encourage children and teens to think about the ways that they, too, can be upstanders in their own lives.



How Can We Promote Intentional Inclusion, Allyship, and Upstanding at School?

Bullying happens in every school. If your child is being bullied or bullying others, odds are other children at their school are also being bullied. How can your school create a safe learning environment for everyone?

With an effective anti-bullying policy and a school-wide culture of inclusion and allyship, bullying can be reduced at school. While many schools already have anti-bullying programs and policies in place, that doesn't necessarily mean they're effective. Research from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools shows that schools that create a culture of intentional inclusion, train staff about bullying and bias, and clearly share and follow protocols that reward efforts that create community have better outcomes against bullying and safety.⁵² But what can you do as a parent to ensure the safety of your child and others at school?

From "The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey," nearly half of the parents who reported their school's anti-bullying policies as ineffective say their policies do not touch on allyship or prevention.

Parents can take action and advocate for effective and inclusion-focused bullying prevention programs and policies in their child's schools. Odds are that many other parents at your child's school are experiencing the same issues. To have a school-wide impact, parents can organize and learn more about how to work with their school to offer bullying prevention programs that are effective and centered in allyship and inclusion.

Important Definitions

- <u>Allyship</u> Showing compassion and support for someone or communities that might be a target of bias and/or bullying³¹
- <u>Bias</u> A belief that some people are better than others, often based on race, religion, ability, socioeconomic status, appearance, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity³⁰
- <u>Bias-based bullying</u> Bullying that is motivated by a person's bias toward another (oftentimes called stigma- or identity-based bullying)¹⁶
- *Cyberbullying Bullying, such as threats, harassment, or humiliation, that occurs digitally²¹
- <u>Upstander</u> A child who speaks or acts in support of an individual who is being harassed or bullied¹⁶
- Intentional Inclusion When you accept, value, and include someone who is different from you³²
- Othering The act of excluding or treating someone as an 'outsider' of a group because they are considered different from yourself³³
- <u>Social-Emotional Development</u> Learning how to understand, experience, express, and manage emotions and to develop meaningful relationships with others³⁴

^{*}While the word cyberbullying is common for adults, youth rarely use it. Teens often use other language to express that cyberbullying is happening.





The Choose Kindness Project is an Alliance of the nation's leading nonprofit organizations that champion three major issue areas involving children and teens: bullying prevention, intentional inclusion, and youth mental wellness.

Guided by the 20+ members of the Alliance, The Choose Kindness Project is dedicated to inspiring a more inclusive world where all young people feel empowered to be themselves and feel safe to create the futures they imagine.

The project is activated through investments in research, collaborations, and innovations with the Alliance in order to help them expand their reach and impact. The Choose Kindness website aggregates resources for parents, teachers, and coaches to help navigate through these three major intersectional issues affecting children and teens.

The Choose Kindness Project.org





































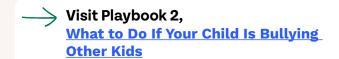














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