

When is the best time to raise the topic of bullying with my child?

As a parent or carer, it is essential to have open and honest conversations with your child about bullying. However, choosing the right time and place to talk can make a big difference in how receptive your child is to the conversation.

It is essential to create a safe space for your child to talk, and make sure you have the time to listen carefully. These three scenarios are a great place to start.

1 – In the car. Car rides can provide an ideal time to talk to your child about bullying as they have your full attention, and they don't feel the pressure of being face to face. Use the car rides as an opportunity to start the conversation and get a sense of how your child is feeling.

However, you also need to be able to focus and listen to what they are saying.

2 – Before bedtime. Before bedtime can be an excellent time to discuss bullying as it can give your child a chance to process their emotions and reflect on their day- as long as there is sufficient time and emotional energy on the part of the child and the adult. Exhausted parents may struggle to listen and remain calm. Leaving your child upset and distressed before bed could result in them having difficulty sleeping- creating even more of a problem.

Allow enough time to have the conversation and to spend time discussing other things, watch a bit of TV or listen to music together before they settle down to sleep. This can help to make them feel more secure and connected to you. This time can also help your child feel like they have a safe space to talk about their experiences and feel supported.

3 – During family time. Having conversations about bullying during family time can help create a safe space for your child to discuss their experiences without feeling judged. It is essential to create an environment where your child feels comfortable to open up about their experiences. Sitting down as a family for dinner or a game night can provide a relaxed and safe atmosphere to discuss the topic.

If discussing as a family, parents or carers should be mindful of the presence of other children who may feel the need to act, may become distressed by a disclosure or who may blame the child being bullied. It may be better to have the initial discussion with the child individually first so that their sense of embarrassment or shame about the bullying can be initially assessed and for other family members to be prepared for the discussion and to offer support.

If you are concerned about a child or young person being bullied, please seek help. Speak to a trusted GP, school wellbeing staff, or a helpline such as:

[Dolly's Dream Support Line](https://dollysdream.org.au) 0488 881 033

Parentline in your state or territory

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

headspace 1800 650 890

Lifeline 13 11 14