

# Supporting your Child Through Friendship Issues: A Guide for Parents

## Conflict vs Bullying



### Understanding Friendship Issues vs Bullying

- Friendship issues often involve misunderstandings, disagreements, or occasional unkindness between peers but are usually isolated incidents.
- Bullying is repeated, intentional harm or intimidation involving a power imbalance.
- Encourage your child to describe what happened and how often, to better understand the situation.

### Practical Strategies to Try at Home

- Listen and Validate Feelings
- Create a calm space to listen without immediate judgement or dismissal.
- Acknowledge their feelings: "It sounds like you're feeling upset, and that's okay."
- Encourage Problem-Solving

### Help your child think through what they can do next, such as:

- Talking directly to the friend if they feel safe to do so.
- Finding ways to include others or join new groups.
- Practising what to say in tricky situations.
- Role-Play Social Scenarios
- Practice common friendship situations and responses at home. This builds confidence and social skills.

### Promote Positive Friendships

- Encourage your child to spend time with friends who treat them well.
- Support involvement in clubs or activities to widen their social circle.

### Teach Emotional Regulation

- Help your child manage feelings of anger or sadness through breathing exercises, counting or talking it out.

### Set Boundaries around the Term 'Bullying'

- Explain that not all unkindness is bullying and that it's important to tell a trusted adult if something serious happens.
- Encourage your child to report repeated or serious incidents to school staff.

### Keep Communication Open

- Check in regularly about how things are going with friends.
- Praise your child's efforts to handle situations positively.

### When to Contact the School

- ✓ If the behaviour is repeated, intentional, or causes significant distress.
- ✓ If your child feels unsafe or is reluctant to attend school.
- ✓ If you or your child need additional support or strategies.

