

**Saleema**  
**Noon** growing up  
game plan

*Preteens  
& Bullying*

**A GAME PLAN FOR PARENTS**

## Listen. Like, *really* listen.

**Stay calm.** Try not to rush into problem-solving mode. Your preteen needs you to understand that they're hurting and this is a big deal. More than advice, our kids want to feel validated. And heard. Don't freak out/get angry. It won't help the situation, and it's not about you.

**Help your preteen** identify feelings around the issue, and remind them that it's okay to feel angry, sad, and frustrated.

**Let them know** it is normal to experience this growing up. Be careful not to belittle or minimize the situation, but help them understand that friendship and peer issues are unfortunately an inevitable part of life.

Most importantly, let them know you're here for them in any way they need you.

## Get the facts, take their lead.

**Get the details** about the situation and ask lots of open-ended questions.

Once you have a clear idea of **what exactly happened** and how your child is feeling, then ask them what they think would be the best way to solve the problem. Listen to them, then come up with a plan.

If they **don't want a plan** right now, respect that.

## Talk about power.

**Teach the difference** between power over (taken from someone), with (collective) and within (having agency).

**Explain** that a passive or aggressive response gives the bully your power. The key is to not give a reaction.



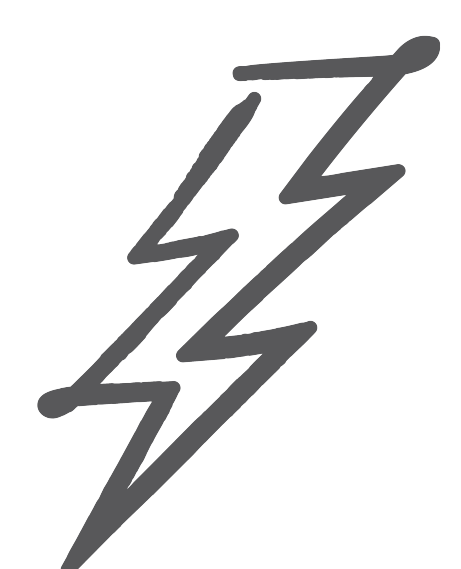
- What do you need most from me right now?
- How can I help?



- How did the bullying start? How did you respond?
- What specifically upsets you most about the situation?
- What do you think should be the next step?
- How can I support you best?
- What can I do for you right now?
- I respect that you just need me to listen right now. I'm going to check in with you tomorrow about this.



- Be boring to bully.
- People try to make others feel small in order to feel bigger themselves. Behind this is often a lot of pain.





## Teach the five steps to being assertive.

1. Use an 'I' statement, repeat if needed.
  2. Use eye contact.
  3. Use a firm, strong voice.
  4. Have a strong body.
  5. Report if needed.
- Practice these skills using role plays.
  - Teach the importance of being a responsible bystander. Let them know that not doing anything when someone is being bullied sends the message that they think it's OK.
  - Talk about the the difference between "ratting" and reporting.
  - Remind them we all have a responsibility to help others.

## Model confidence and respect.

- In your relationship with your preteen and interactions with others use language that demonstrates you can get your needs met without being aggressive.
- If you have their consent, advocate for your preteen. Ask your school how they're dealing with the situation in an assertive way.
- Be mindful that exerting power or control over your preteen will show them that bullying is the best way for them to get what they want.

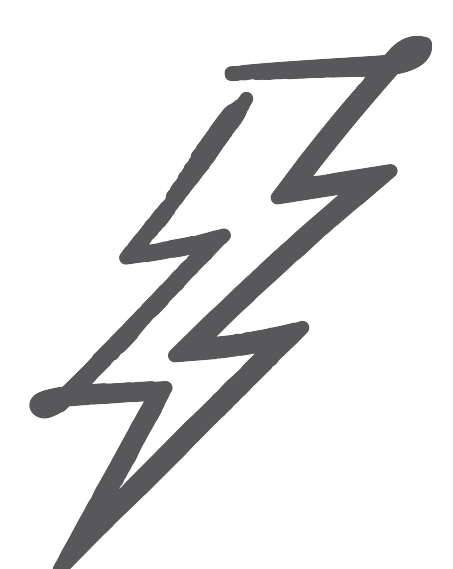
## Get personal.

- Share stories and experiences of when you've had to be assertive as a child.
- What was toughest for you?
- What do you wish you knew growing up?
- What are your experiences as an adult? What works for you?

## Be their cheerleader.

- “ I know you'll get through this because you are strong and brave.
- I have all the confidence in the world in you.
- I believe in you. I know you have the courage and strength to make this situation better.
- I'm proud of you. You handled that tough situation like a champ!

- “ • When I'm in a tough situation, the first thing I try to do is take a deep breath.
- I was bullied a lot in Grade 6 and it was tough. I didn't have the skills to know what to do.
- When someone is being aggressive toward me, I remind myself that everyone has a story. I try to practice kindness and compassion toward all people.



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## RESOURCES

[www.amaze.org](http://www.amaze.org)

[www.bullyingcanada.ca](http://www.bullyingcanada.ca)

[www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca)

Erase bullying (Gov. of BC)

[www.thebullyproject.com](http://www.thebullyproject.com)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)