



What Do You Do If ... You Suspect that Your Daughter is a Bystander?

- Encourage and model moral courage—the ability to stand up for what you believe is right in the face of social pressures to keep quiet. Today’s emphasis on peer acceptance is so great that it may be valued over what is known or believed to be right.
- Teach assertiveness skills. The capacity to be assertive is just as important for bystanders as it is for the victim. These girls can be very instrumental in bringing about change in the culture of bullying in a school, as relational bullies often need an audience for their humiliation tactics to work.
- Keep in mind that it is very difficult to stand up to one’s peers. Even as adults, we avoid getting involved in tense situations.
- Make sure your daughter knows how to end friendships that no longer serve her.
- When you see a girl stand up for another or be kind to another, **reinforce that behavior!** If it is your daughter standing up, tell her. If it is another girl, quietly tell her you noticed her courage and kindness. If appropriate, tell her parents or teacher.
- Reinforce all pro-social behavior.
- Discuss the traits of healthy and unhealthy relationships with your daughter. Role model good relationship skills. Make sure she knows how much you value your friends.
- Be aware of her emotional needs. Get her professional help if necessary.
- Be firm, but patient. Learning to navigate relationships is an important life skill but it takes time. There are no quick fixes.

Did You Know?

- For a variety of reasons, teachers intervene in only a fraction of the bullying incidents.
- Students are even less likely than teachers to intervene in harassment, which may be due to students’ widely held attitudes about bullying. Students interviewed about bullying say bullied students are at least partly to blame for their victimization, that bullying makes them tougher, and that teasing is simply done in fun. It is also true that students do not intervene because they are afraid of becoming targets themselves.¹

¹ *Bullying and Bullying Prevention: Information for Educators*, by Russell Skiba, PhD.