TALKING TO YOUR KID ABOUT BULLYING & SOCIAL MEDIA

A Parent's Guide to Spotting the Signs and Starting the Conversation

Warning signs · Online vs. in-person bullying · Scripts that work · When to involve the school

A free resource from the Bulletproof Grace Foundation

From Survival to Purpose

Why This Guide Exists

Bullying today doesn't stop at the school gate — it follows kids home through their phones. This guide helps you recognize the signs, whether your child is being bullied, doing the bullying, or caught in between, and gives you real scripts to open the conversation without shutting it down.

1 in 5
students report being bullied (CDC)

988
call or text — free crisis line, 24/7

60%
of teens have experienced some form of online conflict

1. Spotting the Signs

Typical	Worth a Closer Look
Wants some privacy on their phone	Panics or hides the screen the instant you're nearby
Occasional "I don't want to go to school"	Frequent stomachaches, avoidance, or grades dropping suddenly
Normal mood swings	Sudden withdrawal from friends they used to talk to constantly
Deletes an old app	Deletes texts/DMs right after checking them, seems anxious afterward
Bad day here and there	Unexplained sadness or anger specifically tied to phone use

2. Online vs. In-Person Bullying

In-Person Signs

- Torn clothing, missing belongings, or unexplained bruises
- Sudden reluctance to take the bus, walk a certain route, or attend certain classes
- Eating alone or avoiding the cafeteria/certain areas of school

Online Signs

- Being excluded from group chats they used to be part of
- Sudden spikes of notifications followed by visible distress
- Creating new accounts / deleting old ones repeatedly
- Screenshots or messages they quickly close when you walk by

3. Starting the Conversation

If you suspect they're being bullied

"I've noticed you seem off after you're on your phone. I'm not here to take it away — I just want to understand."

"You don't have to have all the details figured out. Just tell me as much as feels okay right now."

Why it works: Removes the fear that opening up means losing their phone or privacy — which is often why kids stay quiet.

If you suspect they're the one bullying

"I saw something that worried me. Help me understand what was going on for you in that moment."

"This isn't about you being a bad kid — it's about a behavior we need to change together."

Why it works: Separates the behavior from their identity, which keeps kids from getting defensive and shutting down.

General framework for any hard topic

"I noticed [specific thing]. Can you help me understand what's going on?"

"What do you need from me right now — to just listen, or help fix something?"

Why it works: Non-accusatory framing that works across almost any hard conversation.

4. When to Involve the School

- Document what you know: dates, what was said/done, and by whom, as specifically as possible
- Request a meeting with the counselor or vice principal — most schools have a formal anti-bullying policy
- Follow up in writing (email) after any verbal conversation, so there's a paper trail
- If the school doesn't act, NM Public Education Department has a formal complaint process

If It Becomes an Emergency

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988 if your child expresses hopelessness or thoughts of self-harm

Crisis Text Line — text HOME to 741741

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline — 1-800-422-4453 if you suspect abuse is part of the picture

A Note From BGF

You don't have to navigate this perfectly — you just have to stay close. If your family needs more support than this guide, reach out.

Contact Bulletproof Grace Foundation

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