

When to get help

One piece of advice that appears consistently throughout these thematics is: If children come across something that makes them feel uncomfortable or worse, encourage them to report it – be brave and talk to someone they trust who can help, including you, the principal, or a parent. Children should pick this up from any one of the thematics, but just to be sure, here’s a family discussion focused specifically on the “when in doubt, talk it out” principle. Below, you’ll find a list of situations in which talking it out can really help.

Important notes

- 1. Children have been taught or conditioned not to “tattle” for so many generations that it has become a social norm, and bullying prevention experts have been working hard to help children understand the difference between “telling” and getting help. Help your children see that seeking support when hurtful things happen online is not “tattling”; it’s about getting help for themselves or peers when people are getting hurt.*
- 2. Fostering open communication and reminding children you’re always there for backup support and appropriate reporting.*
- 3. In the discussion below, any time children share about times they sought adult help, be sure the tone of the conversation is one that makes them feel proud and brave to have taken action, especially since they’re speaking up in front of peers.*

Goals for children



- ✓ **Recognize** that seeking help for oneself or others is a sign of strength.
- ✓ **Think out loud together** about situations where talking it out can really help.

Let’s talk



Here’s a whole list of situations you might run into online. We may not get through them all because I hope you’ll raise your hands when something on the list reminds you of a situation you’ve been in and what you did about it, so we can talk those situations out together.

Discussion topics



- 1. Ask your children** to silently read the list. While they do, ask them to think all about whether any of these situations happened to them, whether they wanted to ask for help in any of them and if they did or not.
 - You had this feeling that your account may have been compromised. (Discussion opportunity: What can you do to make your account security even stronger?)
 - You needed help remembering a password.
 - You were unsure whether something was a scam or thought you might have fallen for one. (Discussion opportunity: What are the warning signs?)
 - Someone tried to discuss something online with you that made you uncomfortable.
 - You received a creepy message or comment from a stranger. (Discussion opportunity: What makes something creepy?)
 - You wanted to discuss something someone said online that was really nice OR really mean.
 - You were concerned you may have shared something online you shouldn't have. Only tell us what it was if you feel comfortable sharing that, but even if you don't, tell us what you did about it.
 - You saw a peer being hurtful to another student online.
 - You saw someone threatening to start a fight or harm someone.
 - Someone posted a fake profile about another student.
 - You were concerned about another student because of something they posted or texted. (Discussion opportunity: Sometimes it's difficult to risk upsetting your friend, but isn't their safety and well-being more important?)
- 2. Ask your children** to tell what they did (or didn't do) and why.
- 3. Let's discuss** those situations.

Takeaway

It may not always seem like it, but being able to ask for help when you're not sure what to do is a brave thing to do. If it's to help you or someone heal something hurtful or stop harm from happening, it's both smart and courageous.