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Telling or Tattling?

It is very important to know that you CAN and SHOULD tell an adult if you are being bullied or have seen someone being bullied.

This can be confusing because a lot of adults don't want us to be a tattletale or a snitch. Even trickier is that sometimes if we don't tell an adult something, they might say 'Why didn't you tell me about that?'

We used to be really confused by this until we learned the very important difference between tattling and telling:

Tattling: If it will only get someone **in** trouble, you don't need to tell an adult.

Telling: If it will help get you or someone else **out** of trouble, you should tell an adult.

If it's both, or you aren't sure, ask an adult to help you figure it out together. You can ask the adult to please be patient and help you figure out the difference between telling to help someone and tattling.

Here are some simple examples:

"James is sucking his thumb again"

This is an attempt to get him in trouble—don't tell an adult.

"James' front tooth fell out and he's a bloody mess"

James needs help—tell an adult.

"James' front tooth fell out because he was sucking his thumb"

It's kind of both, but James does need help—tell an adult.

"Johnny isn't sharing the swing"

This is an attempt to get him in trouble—instead maybe you could try to talk to Johnny or work it out with him on your own.

"Johnny is knocking kids off the swing"

Johnny might get in trouble, but the other kids need help—tell an adult.

"Susie is being bossy"

This is an attempt to get her in trouble—don't tell an adult.

"Susie is telling everyone to ignore or be mean to Sally"

Susie might get in trouble, but Sally needs help—tell an adult.