

Conversations to have with your Children

The following suggestions on how to address the potential change in mask mandates for our children is based on guidance from Dr. Vanessa Jensen, who has served as the Head of Pediatric Psychology for 15 years at the Cleveland Clinic.

It's important to teach kids early on that people have their own opinions and every family circumstance is different. **"That's your family's choice; that's cool. Let's go play"**

If children are being given a hard time by another child for wearing their masks, Dr. Jensen suggests **"Blaming it on Mom & Dad."** Tell your child to say **"My mom and dad want me to wear a mask"**. Or **"I have a sick grandparent at home so I need to wear a mask because I don't want them to get sick"**.

Help children understand that it is not their role to try and change someone else's choice or opinion. **One just needs to show respect for what someone else's belief might be.**

Parents should **model positive behavior** and **empathetic/non judgmental attitudes** for their children. If children see that you are accepting and being **respectful of others' opinions**, they are more likely to be respectful as well.

If your child is being picked on by another student, then the parent should **contact the teacher and building principal**. Reach out to **school support staff** (school psychologists, school social workers, and guidance counselors), if you feel your child is struggling.

Parents can suggest to their child to **"Just walk away."** It's better to diffuse, not fuel, any disputes that may come up.

More Helpful Tips

- Role play different scenerios
- Come up with positive responses
- Empower in social situations
- Listen to their anxiety and concerns
- Practice often to make them feel confident
- Contact the principal or teacher for help