



## Bullying: Not a Rite of Passage (Part 2 of a 2-Part Series)



When bullying is chronic or becomes physical, it is important that an adult becomes involved.

### What Can Be Done?

Bullying has become a pervasive problem in schools across the country. Despite districts' best intentions and policies, bullying often goes virtually unseen and unreported. Providing kids with strategies for diffusing the situation can help keep teasing from becoming a bigger problem. Judy Freeman, author of *Easing the Teasing* offers this advice.

#### Self Talk

If children can stop for a moment before reacting, teasing will stop. Bullies

love a strong emotional reaction from their victims. Questions like, "Is the teasing true?" and "Whose opinions count?" helps put the incident into perspective. Help the child realize that if the teasing is not true, why get upset? When teasing occurs, it is also important for the child to "self-talk" about her positive characteristics (e.g. being a good friend, drawing well). Simply helping the child to say to himself, "I am not going to let this person upset me" is empowering.

#### Ignoring

Simply ignoring teasing and walking away is one of the most powerful tools a child can learn to withstand and discourage teasing. Some kids feel that they will lose the respect of their peers if they don't stand up to those who tor-

ment them, but this usually backfires. The most powerful ignoring occurs when the intended victim simply walks away and joins other children. On the bus, ignoring would simply be looking away and not responding (or plugging in an MP3 player). Role playing with your child will help them see what ignoring looks like. Ignoring takes practice.

#### Turning the Tease Around

Reframing a tease or turning it around so that it taken as a positive compliment is an effective way to defuse a tease and deflate a teaser.

Examples include:

(continued on pg. 2)

### Other Strategies

- Sit near the driver on the school bus
- Take a different route to and from school
- Leave a little earlier to avoid confrontation
- Avoid unsupervised areas of the school or situations where you are isolated from teachers or classmates
- Develop interests outside of school which may foster new friendships
- Act confident. Hold your head up, stand up straight, make eye contact and walk confidently
- Take a self-defense or martial arts class to improve skills & confidence



## School Policies and Procedures: Best Practice

Districts best equipped to address the issue of bullying generally have:

**An Overall District Approach** including school-wide initiatives, classroom activities and individual interventions.

**Strong Leadership**, committed to systemic change.

**Teachers** who promote inclusive, caring learning environments and allow time for discussions about bullying.

**Thorough Policies** that clearly define bullying; state that it will not be tolerated; encourage reporting and bystander involvement; and focus on prevention, effective intervention and education rather than punishment.

**Participation of Key Stakeholders** including student, parents and staff, to make sure all voices are heard when developing policies and procedures.

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## Caring Hearts/Helping Hands

News You Can Use to Change Your Community  
A Community Care Team Newsletter



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### When is Adult Intervention Needed?

When bullying is chronic or becomes physical, it is important that an adult become involved. Children often do not report bullying for fear of retaliation. While it is important for children to learn techniques for handling bullies, parents need to be sensitive for cues that the child needs outside help. It is important to talk to your child about the details of the bullying and document specific incidents. Most schools have policies that outline specific consequences for bullying behavior. Encourage your child to talk to a trusted teacher or counselor about the situation. Be prepared to contact the school or the parents of the bully yourself if the situation does not improve.

#### AREA RESOURCES

TriCity Family Services 630/232-1070  
Family Counseling Services 630/844-2662  
Safe Harbor Counseling 630/466-8657  
Heartland Counseling 630/443-9100  
Centennial Counseling Services 630/377-6613

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### What Can Be Done? (continued from pg. 1)

- What a great put down!
- Thanks for your opinion.
- I appreciate your attention.
- How nice of you to notice.
- It's amazing to me that you always notice what I'm wearing (or doing)!

#### *Agreeing with the Teaser*

This strategy usually takes away the reason for the particular tease. A girl teased for her freckles can simply say, "Yes, I have a lot of freckles." A child called a crybaby can respond, "I know that I cry easily." Freeman gives an example of a small boy responding to his teaser, "Yes, I am short. In fact I think I am the shortest person in my grade and in my family." Other responses include:

- You've got that right!
- People tell me that a lot.
- That's right!
- I do that a lot.
- You are exactly right.
- That is totally accurate.

#### *So?*

Perhaps the most powerful weapon in the victim's arsenal is a single word... so? When said calmly and casually it communicates to the teaser that the put down really doesn't matter. It should be said in an indifferent tone. Similar responses include, "Your point being?" or "Who cares?"

#### *Complimenting the Teaser*

Another strategy that seems illogical but is very effective is complimenting the teaser. Responding to a tease with a compliment catches the teaser off-guard. Implicit in the compliment is agreement with the tease. But what really takes the teaser by surprise is the attention from the victim is positive. A boy teased for striking out could say, "I felt bad I struck out. I wish I could hit the ball as much as you do." This strategy will take practice and is most effective when the tease is either true or an opinion. Help brainstorm possible responses if your child has an area of vulnerability.

#### *What If MY Child Is the Bully?*

Children's attitudes and behaviors are shaped by those of their parents. Your actions influence how your child treats others.

- Be a positive role model.
- Encourage respect for individual differences
- Listen to what your children say—really listen to their ideas, jokes, concerns, daily trials, dreams and ever-evolving points of view.
- Keep the lines of communication open, even when it is tough and you're upset.
- Help your children understand the consequences of bullying, put-downs and violence. Talk about emotional as well as physical scars they leave.
- Share concerns honestly and openly. Show them positive ways to turn around bad behavior.
- Apologize when you have done something wrong or unkind.
- Get to know your children's friends to ensure they are a positive influence.
- Spend time with your kids doing fun things.