

Hi everyone,

For bullying week I wanted to share some resources with parents supporting children in understanding bullying behaviour to help reduce the chance they will be bullied or bully others. These are all strategies that we use in the school. Let's work together to continue making our community an enjoyable, safe and inclusive space for everyone.

This article is written by parenting expert Dr. Laura Markham, retrieved from ahaparenting.com, a great website to reference.

Kindly,

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Directly teach your child respectful self-assertion.

Kids need to know they can get their needs met while being respectful of other people. Give him words to stick up for himself early on:

"It's my turn now."

"Hey, stop that."

"Hands off my body."

"It's not okay to hurt."

"I don't like being called that. I want you to call me by my name."

Teach your child basic social skills.

Make games out of social skills, and practice at home. Role play with your child how to join a game at the playground, introduce himself to another child at a party, or initiate a

playdate. For instance, kids who are successful in joining groups of kids usually observe first, and find a way to fit into the group, rather than just barging in.

Sometimes kids want peer acceptance so much that they continue to hang around a group of peers even when one of the group leaders begins to mistreat them. If you suspect your child might be vulnerable, listen to what he says about peer interactions to help him learn to check in with his own inner wisdom, and work to provide healthy relationship opportunities for him.

Teach your child how the dynamics of bullying work.

Research shows that bullies begin with verbal harassment. How the "victim" responds to the first verbal aggression determines whether the bully continues to target this particular child. If the aggression gives the bully what he's looking for -- a feeling of power from successfully pushing the other child's buttons -- the aggression will generally escalate. It's imperative to discuss this issue with every child BEFORE they might be subject to bullying, so they can stand up for themselves successfully when a bully first "tests" them.

Practice with roleplays so that your child feels comfortable responding to teasing and provocations.

Roleplay with your child how he can stand up to a bully. Point out to your child that the bully wants to provoke a response that makes the bully feel powerful, so showing emotion and fighting back are exactly what the bully feeds off. Explain that while your child can't control the bully, he can always control his own response. So in every interaction, how he responds will either inflame the situation or defuse it. Your child needs to avoid getting "hooked" no matter how mad the bully makes him.

The best strategy is always to maintain one's own dignity, and to let the "bully" maintain his dignity -- in other words, to keep your dignity while withdrawing from the situation, and not to attack or demean the other person. To do this, simply say something calm like:

"You know, I'm just going to ignore that comment."

"I think I have something else to do right now."

"No thank you."

Then, just walk away.

Teach your child to count to ten to stay calm, look the bully in the eye, and say one of these things. Practice until your child has a strong, self-assured tone.

Teach kids to intervene to prevent bullying when they see it.

Bullying expert Michele Borba says that when bystanders -- kids who are nearby -- intervene correctly, *studies find they can stop bullying more than half the time and within 10 seconds.*

The best interventions:

Partner with the victim and remove her from danger - Go stand with the victim physically, turn the victim away from the bully and walk her off in the other direction -- towards adult help. Say *"You look upset"* or *"I've been looking for you"* or *"The teacher sent me to find you."*

Get help - Bullies love an audience. Get the other kids on your side by waving them over to you, yelling, *"We need your help."* Confront the bully: *"You're being mean."* Then walk away: *"C'mon, let's go!"*

And of course, if you're at all worried about safety, shout for a teacher or dial 911 on a cell phone.

Strategies for Kids

Here are six of the most successful strategies to help kids defend themselves, courtesy of bullying expert [Michele Borba](#). Be sure to check out her [website for more info on bullying](#).

Assert yourself.

Teach your child to face the bully by standing tall and using a strong voice. Your child should name the bullying behavior and tell the aggressor to stop: *"That's teasing. Stop it."* or *"Stop making fun of me. It's mean."*

Question the response.

Ann Bishop, who teaches violence prevention, tells her students to respond to an insult with a non-defensive question: *“Why would you say that?”* or *“Why would you want to tell me I am dumb (or fat) and hurt my feelings?”*

Use “I want.”

Communication experts suggest teaching your child to address the bully beginning with “I want” and say firmly what he wants changed: *“I want you to leave me alone.”* or *“I want you to stop teasing me.”*

Agree with the teaser.

Consider helping your child create a statement agreeing with her teaser. Teaser: “You’re dumb.” Child: *“Yeah, but I’m good at it.”* or Teaser: “Hey, four eyes.” Child: *“You’re right, my eyesight is poor.”*

Ignore it.

Bullies love it when their teasing upsets their victims, so help your child find a way to not let his tormentor get to him. Fifth graders offer these kid-tested ways to ignore teasers:

“Pretend they’re invisible,”

“Walk away without looking at them,”

“Quickly look at something else and laugh,”

“Look completely uninterested.”

Make Fun of the Teasing.

Fred Frankel, author of *Good Friends Are Hard to Find* suggests victims answer every tease with a reply, but not tease back. The teasing often stops, Frankel says; because the child lets the tormentor know he’s not going to let the teasing get to him (even if it does).

Suppose the teaser says, *“You’re stupid.”* The child says a rehearsed comeback such as: *“Really?”* *“So?”* *“You don’t say,”* *“And your point is?”* or *“Thanks for telling me.”*

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