

ARTICLE 1: Outsmart a bully

If your child is being teased or harassed, there are several strategies they can use to shut their bully down. Of course, some are more effective than others.

“Outsmart the bully” is a piece of advice often given by well meaning parents to their distressed kids. On the surface, it seems like a good plan of action. In reality, this formula has some problems.

Being picked-on is extremely stressful. Being threatened or publicly embarrassed creates such high anxiety that it triggers an instant flood of powerful hormones into the blood stream. This ‘survival mode’ has profound effects on the body and thought process, causes a person to fight, flee, freeze or submit. As you can imagine, this state is not conducive to clear thinking; the laws of physiology prohibit it.

Forget about ‘outsmarting’ the bully at this point -more than likely, the targeted child probably wont be outsmarting anyone.

That said, through the practice of visualization, mental rehearsal, and relaxation techniques, a person can prepare themselves for a confrontation. If your child can stay cool when they face an antagonist, there is a way to undercut the bully’s power and take the wind out of his (or her) sails.

Let’s say Richie is the mean kid and he loves to belittle Jeff in front of his classmates. It’s a regular occurrence, and Jeff is expecting it. As Richie makes his approach, Jeff announces, “Hey everyone, pay close attention to Richie, because he doesn’t get enough attention at home. Okay, we’re ready. You can make fun of me now.”

Suddenly Richie doesn’t feel so good. Instead of getting upset, his intended victim isn’t bothered at all. And the group dynamics have shifted, too- instead of being amused by his antics, they’re looking down on him. His game has been reversed, and his ego has been deflated. This technique isn’t just for kids – it can work for anyone, regardless of age or situation.

Of course, there is a chance that instead of skulking away, the bully might get so flustered that they get violent. Now the targeted child has a fight on their hands (and another compelling reason why children must learn some basic self-defense)

Before advising your child how to deal with peer-abuse, you've got to sort the useless cliches and gimmicks from practical game-plans. Giving a bullied kid the wrong advice can be disastrous.

*** Are you frustrated by the same, lame anti-bullying advice? Are you finally ready for a program that guarantees results? The Total Bully Solution is the most comprehensive and effective anti-bullying program ever developed. Easy to follow, step-by-step instructions will allow you to bully-proof your child in two weeks or less. Go to [Total Bully Solutions](#)

ARTICLE 2: Teasing

Teasing is a double edged sword- by definition, it can either be playful razzing or harsh, bullying ridicule. A little needling is an essential social tool, and is part of every healthy relationship.

When abused or overdone,teasing is a malicious form of social cruelty – applied correctly, it serves many positive functions, including: conveying acceptable group standards, managing conflict, and showing affection.

A child's disposition and sensitivity has as much to do with the interpretation of teasing as the intent of provocateur. Not all jibes are hurtful personal attacks. Kids with a delicate nature can benefit greatly by learning to distinguish between a joke and an insult, and how to deal with both.

RULES OF TEASING

- *Don't Tease A Stranger.* Or anyone you don't know very well.
- *Avoid Eye Poking.* Never joke about sensitive issues, like their appearance (weight, complexion, teeth, etc), their family, or religion. And if you accidental touch a nerve, back off and don't touch it again.
- *Know When To Quit.* One or two playful pokes is plenty. 3 is annoying. More is harassment.
- *Don't Hurt Feelings.* It seems obvious, but if the receiver seems distressed, they don't think its funny. Don't tease anyone who doesn't tease back.

GUIDELINES ON GETTING TEASED

- *Consider The Source.* If its coming from a loved one or friend, always give them the benefit of the doubt, even if they do push a hot-button.
- *Don't Let It Get To You.* Be Cool. I can guarantee this- if you over react, get angry,or hostile, you will get teased 1,000 times more. If you smile and shrug and play it off as no big deal, you'll be seen as a good sport.
- *Give Back.* Someone jokes with you,they've opened the door. It's Okay to return the favor, but remember,don't be insulting or mean. You don't want to create or escalate a conflict, you want to participate in a game.

Kids are universally teased about certain things. Coaching them how to handle these situations when they arise is easy enough with the use of preparation, role-playing and mental rehearsal.

The keys are to stay calm (no one thinks clearly when they're upset), and turn the attention back on the other person. Keep it brief. Don't argue or stoop to insults. After you've scored your point, you're done (even if the other person isn't)... just smile, say "whatever" and move on.

Lots of kids don't possess the verbal agility to parry and thrust. Don't stress. Standing silent and maintaining your dignity is a perfectly good answer.

"Amy has a boyfriend, Amy has a boyfriend"

Responses: "You sound jealous. Are you lonesome?" "I have lots of friends. You should try to make some"

"You're the worst player on the team!"

Responses: "Congratulations. I didn't know you were promoted from MVP to head coach"
"Thanks for pointing that out, Captain Obvious"

"Hey short-stuff. How's the weather down there?"

Responses: "Good. Are you getting enough oxygen up there?" "The weather's fine but the company could be better"

Remember, there's a big distinction between joking around and demeaning persecution.

ARTICLE 3: 7 conversation killers to avoid

Parents are often the last ones to know that their children are being bullied. A kid who's being chronically teased, picked-on, harassed or beat up carries a lot of shame inside, and being silent often seems easier than the alternative. After all, telling a parent carries the risk that:

- you might be disappointed, judgmental or get hysterical
- you will make a fuss at school, making the situation worse (and drawing retaliation)
- they will be labeled as a tattler or a rat

If you even suspect that your child is being bullied (threatened, pushed-around, shunned), talking to your son or daughter is the first step toward learning the truth. Before you can formulate a strategy to help them, you need to find out the nature and scope of the problem.

When a kid does admit they're being bullied, you have the opportunity to take positive action. But take care- you might blow it with one misstep.

These are seven common mistakes that anyone can make. When you know what to look for, you can avoid these common pit falls.

- **Being distracted, getting interrupted.** The TV doesn't need to provide background noise. Make sure cell phones and blackberries are off (yours and theirs).
- **Wrong Environment.** Sensitive conversations should be carried out in a place where no one else is listening - *and away from other siblings.*
- **Making faces, Getting loud.** If your face twists up and broadcasts distress or anger, your kid will clam up. If you get loud, they'll become silent.
- **Rushing.** If your child's conversation starts to wander (and it probably will), get back on track by asking, "what happened next", or "let's focus – what about XYZ?". Avoid saying, "Hustle up" or "Get to the point".
- **Meaningless Reassurances.** "Don't worry, everything will be fine", "Things happen for a reason", "This will work itself out", etc. It's 1,000 times better to say nothing than to throw poison down the well with these hollow cliches.
- **Interrupting.** When your kid talks, just listen. Do NOT jump in with corrections or contradictions. Do not finish their sentences for them. Do not talk over them. 1) its rude 2) it models bad conversational skills 3) it prevents you from learning

anything. A good rule of thumb is to wait until the other person finishes, and count two breaths before you speak.

- **Being Dismissive.** Examples include: “Tough it out”, “You’re being way too sensitive”, and “Come on, that’s nothing”. Do this and your kid won’t talk to you about anything important.

Avoid these 7 conversation killers and you’ll not only forge a better relationship with your child, you’ll be well on the way to helping them solve their bullying problems

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Even if you don’t have “the conversation”, you can successfully open the door by saying this:

“We know that school can be tough, and sometimes kids are thoughtless and even downright mean. If anything comes up, I hope you talk to us. We’re always here to listen, and there’s a chance we might have something to offer.”

ARTICLE 4: Back To School Anxiety

A parent might expect to see some symptoms of “Back to School Anxiety” toward the middle of August, when kids realize that summer is winding down. But some children have back to school anxiety every Sunday evening of the academic year.

Headaches or stomach aches. Being abnormally cranky, or depressed. Outright refusal to go to school, and full on explosive tantrums and emotional meltdowns. Without proper intervention, children who manifest high anxiety as early as kindergarten continue to suffer for years! (Duchesne, S., Vitaro, F., Larose, S., & Tremblay, R. E. (2008). *Trajectories of anxiety during elementary-school years. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37, 1134-1146.*)

Every child deals with the pressures of “doing well” and “fitting in”. But some kids are the targets of name calling, vicious gossip, intimidation, social exclusion and physical abuse. No wonder they resist being put back in that cauldron of torment.

What can you do if your child is showing signs of “school phobia?”

What To Do

- Find the Right Setting To Talk. You won't get a meaningful conversation in the middle of their favorite TV show, in front of siblings, or in a crowd.
- Reveal the Actual Problem. Physical symptoms and emotional outbursts are the symptoms-you must discover the cause. Some parents prefer to ‘cut through the bull-sh*t’ with direct questions, others slowly uncover the truth, like peeling layers away from an onion. Avoid giving cues about what you expect to hear.
- Listen. While it's okay to prompt your child to stay on track, do NOT interrupt, jump in with advice, or dismiss their concerns.
- Ask Questions. You need to know the extent of the problem. (What, exactly, are you afraid of? Who's involved, who's been a witness? Where did the problems

happen- face to face or online? Why do you think this is happening- if I asked the other kid(s), what reason do you think they'd give? How have you handled it in the past?). Remember- this is a conversation, not an interrogation.

- Validate. "That must be very difficult for you" "Of course you're upset, anyone would be" "Now I understand"
- Make Sure Your Child Isn't Playing "Pass It Down". There's always someone lower on the pecking order (another kid, a younger sibling, or family pet) - its a natural human tendency to vent frustration and rage by passing it down the line. Be clear that this is totally unacceptable.
- Keep Yourself In Check. Stay cool and be empathetic (sensitive and appreciative of another's situation/feelings), not sympathetic (taking another's sorrows and burdens as your own).
- Take Some Time to Reflect. Following your first instinct might not be the best thing to do.
- Plan A Course of Action.
- Teach Your Child Self-Control. This takes practice, but the pay-off is amazing. Staying calm under pressure is a vital life skill.
- Role-Play. Go over some likely scenarios and rehearse some very simple responses until your kid can execute them smoothly.
- Notify School Officials of your concerns. And send a followup letter or email. There are gazillions of laws and policies that educators need to comply with. It might help. It might not. But its worth the effort, if only do document the communication.
- Teach Your Child Self-Defense. I realize this is heresy, but I'm not a big fan of "tiny tot tiger karate" programs. A TKD kata will not make one iota of difference if a bully grabs your kid by the hair and slams their face into a wall. The best self-defense for children consists of basic techniques, drilled over and over, with spirit.

Now the hard part. Once you've prepared you child, take a step back, and let them handle it. (Research clearly shows that kids with over-protective parents are targeted more than their peers.)