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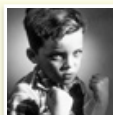


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Standing Up to a Bully

Source: Mike Dreiblatt and Steve Breakstone

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Bullying happens! Many of us can remember back to our own childhood and the hurt bullies caused to us or people we knew. As parents, we want to protect our children from experiencing this pain. One of the most important things we can do is to teach our children how to respond if they are bullied. Bullying is an abuse of power that one person has over another and therefore the target is at a disadvantage in any fight; verbal or physical. The following strategies are nonviolent, effective, and teach children to be self-reliant.

Ignore

Bullies want to see their target upset. Teach your child to ignore the bully. Targets should not show emotion, respond with mean comments, or hit the bully. They should not make faces, begin to cry, sigh, or make any gesture that signals to the bully that they are upset. The bully may try to outlast an ignoring strategy. The bullying and hurtful words may get worse before the situation gets better. If this happens, it is important to remember that when bullies don't get a reaction, they usually stop.

Walk Away

To stay safe, have your child walk away from the bully in a way that is boring to the bully - with their head up, back straight and a normal walking pace while staying focused on going to another location. They should not show the bully anger, fear, or sadness. Your child needs to be aware if they are being followed and walk to a safer place, preferably near adults. The bully may follow and continue to say mean things. It is important to continue to ignore the comments and walk away. If the bully follows for more than 10 or 15 steps, and there is no nearby adult, your child should firmly tell the bully to stop.

Tell the Bully to "Stop"

How Many Hours Do Your Kids Spend on Homework Each Night?

- Under 1 Hour
- 1 - 2 Hours
- 2 - 3 Hours
- 3 - 4 Hours
- Over 4 Hours

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Teach the Bully to Stop

Keeping a distance of 1 to 2 arm lengths, have your child say, "Stop!" or, "Leave me alone!" or, "Cut it out!" while making eye contact, and using strong body language and tone of voice. Teach your child to:

- *Look the person in the eye.* Eye contact shows confidence and strength, something most bullies aren't expecting. If eye contact with the bully is too difficult, suggest looking at an area very close to the eyes, such as eyebrows or nose.
- *Use body language that communicates strength and seriousness* -- head up, back straight, arms down in front or on the side of the body and feet at shoulder width. No fidgeting!
- *Use a steady tone and speak clearly.* It is essential to speak loud enough for the bully to hear. Some children choose to speak loud enough to get the attention of a nearby adult.
- *Make short statements* that are to the point, such as, "Stop!" or, "Cut it out!" or, "Leave me alone." Then turn away from the bully and, if possible, walk away.

Go to a Trusted Adult

When other strategies fail, or your child is in immediate danger, they should go to a trusted adult and say, for example, "Chris has been bothering me. I've tried ignoring, and then I walked away. Chris kept bothering me even after I said, "Stop," and walked away again. Would you talk to Chris?"

Some children think telling an adult is tattling. It is not. Tattling is when a person tells about the actions of another for the purpose of getting that person in trouble. It is tattling if no one and nothing is in danger or will be in danger. Telling is when a person tells someone in authority that a person or thing is getting hurt, or might get hurt, either physically or emotionally. Let your child know if the adult they spoke to does not help resolve the problem, they should seek out another adult.

Role-Playing - An Absolute Must

To stop the bullying, it is important that your child feel confident in using these strategies. These techniques should be practiced repeatedly with you or another caring adult.

There are no guarantees that any one strategy will completely end bullying, so your child needs to feel comfortable using many styles. Being bullied is rough for a child, but having caring adults teaches them how to address this challenge will go a long way towards building confidence and resiliency.



Mike Dreiblatt and Steve Breakstone are the authors of the book, *How to Stop Bullying and Social Aggression* and the founders of Balance Educational Services. They offer dynamic and focused bullying prevention workshops in schools for parents and educators as well as interactive presentations for students. For more information go to BalanceEducationalServices.com.

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