

Tips on Bullying

One of the biggest concerns from parents during the back-to-school season is bullying. Some 160,000 kids skip school every day because they fear of being attacked or ridiculed by bullies. The good news is that these disturbing statistics can be limited with the proper education.

As an educator that has worked with hundreds of children on anti-bullying strategies, I have found that the most important skill a child should have when dealing with bullies is confidence. No matter what you teach a child, it will not be effective without the confidence to put the lessons into action. Children that fall victim to bullies usually are targets because they lack the confidence to stand up for themselves. Therefore, it is very important that you begin instilling confidence within your child if you want him or her to effectively handle bullying.

Here are a few tips on how you can build confidence within your child:

Make sure that you are a good listener when talking with your child. Try not to ignore your child's feelings. Children are more confident when they feel like they are being heard. If you, as a parent, take the time to listen to your child then he or she will have more confidence to speak their mind when dealing with bullies.

Pay attention to your child's moods. If your child is grumpy or agitated, then most-likely he or she can act the same way around other children. That can increase the chance of your child falling victim to unnecessary arguments and fights with others. Factors that can affect your child's mood include:

- Lack of proper sleep each night. Children need at least 8 hours of total sleep per night. If they are not getting the proper amount of rest, then it can affect their mood the next day.
- Insufficient diet. Certain foods affect children's moods including foods that are high in sugar, caffeine or fat. Keep your child's diet balanced with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Lack of exercise. Children that do not exercise regularly tend to have a lower level of energy which will affect his or her mood. This can also lead to obesity which makes your child more prone to bullying.

Keep your child active in extra-curricular sports and activities, such as Martial Arts. Your child will make plenty of new friends and learn skills which can build confidence. Make sure the activities are healthy and are focused on character development. Also make sure that the teachers and coaches are experts at working with children and building confidence. If you pick the right activity, then you will notice a change in your child's confidence almost immediately.

Is your child a confident individual? If so, then the next step is to speak with your child about anti-bullying strategies.

Here are five strategies that you should review with your child:

1. **Assert yourself.** Have your child practice standing tall and using a strong voice saying: "That's teasing. Stop it." or "Stop making fun of me. It's mean."
2. **Use "I want."** Role-play with your child by having him or her address you (the bully) by saying: "I want you to leave me alone," or "I want you to stop teasing me."
3. **Question it.** Have your child practice responding to an insult with a non-defensive question: "Why would you say that?" or "Why would you want to tell me I am dumb and hurt my feelings?"
4. **Ignore it.** Bullies love it when their teasing upsets their victims, so help your child find a way to not let his or her tormentor get to him/ her. Pretend they're invisible, walk away without looking at them, quickly look at something else and laugh, or look completely uninterested.
5. **Make Fun of the Teasing.** Teach your child how to reply to bullies by saying something like: "Wow, you are so smart because you pick on other kids." Or, "Did you think of that all on your own?"

Remember, the key to dealing with bullies is all about how confident your child feels. The strategies above only work if your child is confident enough to say them. Role-playing is only half of the lesson. Your child must be exposed to enough role-models and equipped with the proper amount of stimulants that increase confidence.