



Ask BYFS

January 2007

Question: How do I help my child deal with teasing and bullying?

This is one of the hardest questions to answer. All parents want their child to be safe and have friends and not be hurt verbally or physically. Sometimes kids go through stages with their peers where teasing or bullying occurs. It is important to remember that teasing and bullying is learned and can be unlearned. It is a way kids have seen adults or other peers or fictional characters deal with a problem and get results. As adults we need to be able to increase their bag of responses so teasing and bullying is never a way for them to even attempt to deal with feeling bad - whether it is feeling bad about themselves, with being mad about something, with being upset about a family or school issue, with being teased or bullied themselves. We can help our child understand bullying behavior if they are victimized as well and offer them practical suggestions like avoiding the person who is taunting them, always traveling with friends so they are not in a position of being alone with this person, and asking a trusted adult for help to ensure safety. It is important for your child to solve as much of this problem on his or her own but to also know that you will step in if need be to ensure safety. What a sense of accomplishment children feel when they have been able to solve a problem like this - and what points you have earned for listening to them, reassuring them, and believing that they can figure this out! You have set the stage for a positive relationship during the often more challenging time of adolescence to come....

The tips below, "Bullying - No Way," are from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' "Make Time to Listen, Take Time to Talk," and may give you some other more specific ideas.

Bullying... No Way

Prevent your child from becoming a VICTIM:

- Instill self-confidence in your child.
- Help your child establish good social skills.
- Teach your child to speak out for him or herself.
- Teach your child to seek, if harassed, help from you and other caring adults.
- Try to meet with the child who is bullying to work things out. If the problem continues, call or meet with the parent of the child.

Prevent your child from becoming a BULLY:

- Present yourself as a model of nonviolent behavior.
- Clearly state that violence is not acceptable.
- Assist your child in finding nonviolent strategies for anger management and conflict resolution.
- Seek help from mental health/school counselors to help stop bullying and aggressive behavior.

The BYFS is here to support and nurture the social, emotional, and developmental needs of children, adults, and families in Bedford. Email your questions to sueb@town.bedford.ma.us and the Bedford Youth and Family Services team (BYFS) will choose one to answer next month. Your name and email will remain confidential. Be sure to visit the BYFS website at <http://www.town.bedford.ma.us/youth/youthindex.html>.
