



Tactics to
Teach Your Child
How to
Handle Bullies

A Parents' Guide to
Bullying
at home & in the neighborhood

Deanne Carter, LMHC
www.HeartHealing.org

Copyright 2012 Deanne Carter ~ All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed or stored in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without prior permission in writing from the author, except for professional reviewers who may quote excerpts up to 100 words. Material for this ebook is derived from the author's clinical research and patient interviews, and her own experience. Every effort has been made to provide accurate psycho-education on the topic of bullying. The information and suggestions provided do not create nor constitute a therapeutic relationship with the author, and she is not responsible for the implementation or results of implementing any suggestions contained herein.

Table of Contents

Letter to Parents	2
Neighborhood Bullying	3
Cyberbullying / Technology	4
Myths about Children Who Bully	5
Prevention: How to Protect Your Children	6
Sibling Rivalry as a Training Ground	7
Resources for Self Management of Strong Emotions	8
Self Management of Automatic Negative Thoughts	10
Decision Making Skills	12
Social Skills	13
Managing Conflict	14
A Word to Bystanders	19
Why is This So Hard?	20
Tattling or Reporting	21
And What If All That Doesn't Work?	22
Next Steps	27
About the Author	27

Dear Parents,

Bullying can inflict not only physical harm, but emotional distress on your children, yourself, and destroy your neighborhood climate.

It can transform the life of an innocent carefree childhood into a veritable hell. Bullying can catch kids off guard, especially when they are taught to be kind and include everyone. We don't want kids to be too passive.

However, there is a fine line between an assertive response and one that is entertaining or gives power to the person bullying.

While there are protection laws in place for schools, in many states, there are no specific

protection laws to cope with neighborhood issues. I have gathered my 15 years of experience working with children to help you navigate these treacherous waters.

The worst of this phenomenon is that your safe place at home becomes invaded. Home, a place of relaxation and a sanctuary, feels like a prison and your kids feel terrified and you constantly remain on tenterhooks, thinking of what they might do next to harass your family. It can be easy to let your energy be drained from staying in the adrenaline rush of being on guard. Yet, that allows others to have control over you.

In such a situation, it is important that you be informed of what choices you have, so you don't end up feeling powerless and frustrated. There are many social, emotional, and environmental factors that decrease the chance your child will be a victim of bullying and strategies you can use if your child is being bullied. This short book is a humble effort to empower you and your children.

Warmly,
Deanne Carter, LMHC, NCC
www.hearthealing.org

Neighborhood Bullying

Bullying includes acts that are verbal, social, physical, and/or coercive in nature that are unfair and one-sided, meaning, the relationship is consistently that of one person who has less power than the other. One-sided also refers to one person doing the bullying behaviors. It can be blatant in your face actions or more subtle behind your back.

Acts of bullying are generally repetitive, involve an imbalance of power, and are intended to hurt the target. Bullying causes pain, stress, and fear to those who are directly involved and to bystanders, as well. It damages the neighborhood community and is never justified or excusable as "kids being kids", "just teasing", or with any other rationalization.

A common phenomenon, bullying takes place around the world everywhere. Whether you are in school, on the playground, or at work, you are likely to experience this situation in one or way or another. When it's in your neighborhood, it is especially difficult to escape.

Bullying can be in the form of relational aggression which is a purposeful manipulation that is intended to do psychological or social harm by harming his/her relationships with others. It can take the form of:

- body language (tuning away, eye rolling, glaring)
- manipulative friendships (sharing information to damage someone's peer status, divulging secrets as power)
- alliance building (getting others to turn against)

- rumors or gossip (tell others your business or lies about your to feel important or have power)
- verbal insults (saying your ideas are stupid, making fun of your appearance, or things you like)
- social exclusion (passing notes or whispering in front of you, making guest lists without you on it).

When these are repeated, they are bullying behaviors.

Cyberbullying /Technology

Cyber-bullying is another type of bullying that is carried out through electronic media as a tool to bully others. Examples of electronic bullying are:

- using someone’s passwords and emailing from their account
- cutting/pasting to manipulate the text
- sending humiliating or hurtful text messages, pictures, or information using email or instant messaging
- text messaging via cell phones or voicemail
- three way calling and seeing if you’ll go along with talking about the person silently waiting.

The intention is to intimidate or humiliate others just for cruel laughs or as a means to having control over their lives. With the advent of technology, cyber-bullying is witnessing a rapid increase and could prove an emotional trauma for the victim, as the content could be accessible by anyone, making the victim the subject of public ridicule.

Characteristics of Neighborhood Bullying	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion • Following / Stalking • Staring / Dirty looks • Spitting • Teasing / Put downs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumors / gossip • Pushing / shoving / tripping • Hitting • Damaging or stealing property • Throwing things at

But Why?

At school, children tend to be somewhat segregated by age. Older children who have demonstrated responsible behavior are often used as mentors and have more access to younger children.

In a neighborhood, there is not the luxury of filtering your child's exposure to older or more aggressive children. This creates a built in imbalance of power.

Children who are socially awkward may use behaviors that are considered irritating to others. At times, this is done to justify bullying. Children who are quick to react can be an entertaining power trip.

At the same time, a quiet child may appear an easy victim to someone who wants more power. It is natural for children (and adults) to gravitate toward those who are most comfortable. Sometimes there are people who get you, or think like you, and there's a comfort in that. Children have the right to have preferences.

However, when there is power over others used to isolate another, it becomes bullying.

The majority of people who bully lack empathy, are impulsive, and feel empowered when demeaning others.

The state of mind or justifications of someone who bullies is hard to diagnose. Regardless, nothing justifies actions that bully a child or teen (or an adult).

Bullying May Stem From:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrogance• Shame• Jealousy• Attention getting• Power tripping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear• Anger• Desire for revenge• A way to avoid responsibility• Wanting higher social status• Unknown

Myths about Children who Bully

Myth: Bullies are insecure and anxious.

Fact: Bullies have average or unusually little anxiety and insecurity. However, "passive bullies", those who are bystanders or followers of the bully, are somewhat insecure and dependent.

Myth: Bullies are unpopular and really just don't know how to make friends appropriately.

Fact: Bullies are often of average or slightly below average popularity.

Myth: Bullies are more prevalent in lower socioeconomic areas.

Fact: Socioeconomic conditions, including level of income, length of parental education, and standard of housing do not have an effect on the number of reported bullies.

Prevention: How to Protect Your Children

The times I've seen families deal with bullying most effectively is when there is a **culture of empowerment, permission and encouragement** of children to:

- make decisions
- make mistakes
- have learning experience

and when parents model **healthy personal boundaries**.

When boundaries are either too relaxed -- such as by being nice or saying yes to everyone -- or too harsh as in advocating to not let anyone push you around, or just tell them off or slug 'em, then children are more likely to become victims.

It is not my intention to blame parents or victims of bullying. However, children who demonstrate the ability to think for themselves, have a solid group of friends, and are good problem solvers tend to be affected less by people who attempt to bully them. There is less reward and therefore, the person moves on to bully someone else who is more entertaining. Sometimes, you get lucky and it's that easy.

Having conversations and practice sessions at home is a great way to increase your child's comfort level. It gives them mental rehearsal for a time when they are shocked with how someone is treating them. That is not the ideal time for their brain to process the event and come up with possible solutions.

At the time bullying happens, the brain is in survival mode: fight, flight, or freeze with the amygdala sending signals to respond immediately. The prefrontal cortex which helps with forethought and planning action is not running the show.

Just like you rehearse what to do if there is a fire -- you have a safety plan, right? -- or what to do if mom or dad aren't home when you get off the bus, having a plan for when people call you names, if you feel afraid of someone, or if someone is physical with you, is empowering and decreases the fear level for children.

It is important to communicate it in a matter of fact way, and not sensationalize it with stories of kids getting beaten to death or kidnapped. Problem solving starts in manageable steps, every day.

Don't worry, we'll get to strategies for when bullying happens despite good preparation.

Parenting programs like **Love and Logic** or school programs like **Second Step, Steps to Respect, and Be Cool**, do a nice job of teaching kids how to problem solve.

At home, you can use learning opportunities when you are watching TV or observing others. That way, you are having the conversation at a time your child is calm and their brain is prepared to learn. Asking them questions in a playful or relaxed way helps them do the thinking.

Be careful not to just give advice or dictate how they should respond. The pressure to perform is enough to create a stress response that can affect how they store memory.

Sibling Rivalry as a Training Ground

Remember when your kids were 8 months old in the highchair and dropped something on the ground, just to watch if you'd pick it up again? Some things never change. It is a child's job to explore how they impact their world and how the world works.

Of course we want to channel that in a positive way, but we don't always get to have our fantasy family life. You can use your child's natural tendency to explore and test the world to your advantage! From this perspective, sibling rivalry can be a golden opportunity and a natural training ground for teaching how to handle difficult people.

Practicing Self-Management

Imagine this scenario: Your daughter walks over, slugs her brother and then yells and tattles that he hit her. Well, if he yells too, she sits back with sweet satisfaction at the reaction she was able to cause. He feels helpless because no one saw. You, the parent, may say, "you two knock it off", which furthers her satisfaction.

Give the attention to your son. And have your daughter go somewhere else, to undermine her unhealthy attempt for power.

You might use the analogy of a remote control. If he is upset with his sister then his job is to act as if the remote batteries are dead. She may try to push his buttons -- put him on the hot head channel, so to speak -- but he has to take back his remote.

Help him develop non-reaction skills by using a game to increase **self-management**. Have him stare at a spot on the wall while you try to distract him. You become silly and reward him for remaining focused like Luke Skywalker or whoever is motivating.

Practicing this while doing a yoga tree pose or eagle pose can work well, too. Time it, and challenge him to make his non-reactive staring response longer and longer.

Self-management can also be encouraged by giving him permission to go to his room and hit, bite, or throw a pillow. Giving a safe place to displace anger helps him take responsibility for it.

Be clear that it's not ok to retaliate and do that to his sister.

Reverse the role play. Let him call you names and react with a huff. Do be careful with this -- your energy is much bigger and can be scary. This is best done in a lighthearted manner. Let him experience how rewarding that is to see a reaction. Then, ask if that's the gift he'd like to give his sister when she slugs him.

Again, have him call you names or tease you and completely ignore him. Ask him if that was entertaining for him at all.

Better yet, wait until he gets bored, and then use that as reinforcement that ignoring his sister is the way to take back his remote / power. (And we all know how much they like to be in charge of the remote)

Practicing Self-Awareness

Now it's your turn to tease him and let him practice. Gently give feedback on his facial expressions or body language that show you he is bugged, therefore, rewarding your bullying behavior when you steal his remote and put him on the hot head or whiney channel.

This helps him have more **self-awareness** of how he may be giving away power. Be careful not to imply that it is his fault if he is being bullied. Rather, focus on the specific behavior that may be rewarding to someone trying to get power.

Resources for Self-Management of Strong Emotions

Here are a number of recommended books and some CDs that provide additional instruction or information about self-managing strong emotions in various circumstances.

For Mindfulness:

To increase awareness of thoughts, emotions, or physical body sensations that come before the symptoms of stress. Helps get to the root of the problem.

- **Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting** -- by Myla Kabat-Zinn and Jon Kabat-Zinn

- **Each Breath A Smile** -- by Sister Susan, Nguyen Thi Hop, Nguyen Dong and Sister Thuc Nghiem

For Positive Thinking:

Techniques for thought tracking to gain freedom from negative thinking.

- **Mind Coach** -- by Daniel Amen
- **You Are Not Your Thoughts** -- by Brian Despard
- **The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience** -- by Martin Seligman

Books that Build Skills and Inspire

Well regarded and written, these can be helpful for parents and kids alike.

- **Don't Pop Your Cork on Mondays** -- a series by Adolph Moser
- **What to do when...** (worry, sleep problems, anger, negativity, etc) -- a series by Dawn Huebner
- **Facing Fear Without Freaking Out** -- a series by Trevor Romain
- **I Believe in Me: A Book of Affirmations** -- by Connie Brown
- **Raise Your Child's Social IQ** -- by Cathi Cohen
- **Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting** -- by John Gottman

Create Relaxation Rituals:

Examples of relaxation rituals are the bedtime bath, a soft blanket, an affirmations book or write one thing you are grateful of today, a lavender pillow, music, etc. For more on this topic, see:

- **Indigo Dreams: Relaxation and Stress Management Bedtime Stories for Children, Improve Sleep, Manage Stress and Anxiety** -- by Lori Lite
- **The Most Soothing Lullabies in the Universe** -- a CD
- **Starbright: Meditations for Children** -- by Maureen Garth
- **The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids: Help for Children to Cope with Stress, Anxiety & Transitions** -- by Lawrence Shapiro

Give Kids Tools For Expression Of Emotions:

For example, anger – you may scream in a pillow, hit a pillow while you are in your room, stomp on the basement floor, squeeze/release your feet or your whole body, dance, take deep breathes; sad – ask for a hug, pet the dog, snuggle your blanket, draw, write, talk

- **Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children** -- by Linda Lantieri and Daniel Goleman
- **Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child The Heart of Parenting** -- by John Gottman, Joan Declaire and Daniel Goleman
- **Don't Rant & Rave on Wednesdays** – a series by Adolph Moser

Yoga Awareness /Physical Release of Stress

- **Yoga Calm for Children: Educating Heart, Mind, and Body** -- by Lynea and Jim Gillen
- **Storyland Yoga: Interactive Family Fun (ages 3 to 8)** -- by Ahmed Fahmy
- **OT For Children With Autism, Special Needs And Typical** -- by Britt Collins
- **Thera-Flex Therapy Putty (1 lb)** -- by [Thera-Flex](#)

Relaxation CDs:

Teaching self-soothing is beneficial in reducing the need for movement or chatter as emotion-management options. Relaxation also helps redirect adrenaline rushing activities like pushing people's buttons.

- **Rainbows and Sunshine**, Airy Melody Music (ages 6-11)
- **Indigo Ocean Dreams: 4 Children's Stories Designed to Decrease Stress, Anger and Anxiety while Increasing Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness**

Self-Management of Automatic Negative Thoughts

Every thought produces a chemical reaction, affecting your brain and body. Teaching kids to catch these negative thoughts can help them feel more empowered and make more responsible decisions.

- Focusing on the negative and / or discounting the positive**

Even if there is only one single negative detail, when you exaggerate and focus on it, the overall picture becomes distorted. This maintains a negative belief by ignoring any information that contradicts it. Trivializing your successes and positive qualities often keeps you stuck in not trying out new ways of being.

Over-Generalizing

Over-generalizing occurs when you take a single event or feeling and make it into an ongoing issue. Using words like “always”, “never”, “forever”, “no one”, “every time”, “everything”, or phrases such as “it’ll never get better”, “no one appreciates me” and so on are examples of over-generalizing. Making all or nothing statements like this results in lack of responsibility to change the situation because of the perception of hopelessness and feelings of fear.

Labeling

Labeling is a result of over-generalizing. Instead of describing one aspect that isn’t working for you, you label yourself or others as “inconsiderate”, “cold-hearted”, “irresponsible”, “lazy”, “airhead”, or something else that is negatively judgmental. Instead of addressing a behavior by setting a boundary or making a plan for improvement, you simmer in righteous labeling and mislabeling. This sets you up for perpetuating the other cognitive distortions.

Mind Reading

Mind reading is the act of assuming that you know what another person intends, thinks or feels, and you react negatively to your own assumption without checking it out. Others often respond with distancing and defenses. Do you *really* know, or are your fears keeping you distant from others?

Future Tripping

Future tripping occurs when you anticipate the worst, don’t put your best foot forward, or when your energy is depressed or defensive because you’ve already determined failure is coming. You set yourself up for a self-fulfilling prophecy and your brain / ego feels reassured, but the rest of you feels lousy.

Thinking with your Feelings

When your reasons for a belief are based in emotion rather than logic or evidence, you are thinking with your feelings and making them a truth without proof. “I feel inadequate” “I feel you don’t trust me” -- those are thoughts to check out. Oftentimes, we react on feelings related to past events and other cognitive distortions rather than facts.

☑ Guilt beating with “should”

Guilt beating happens when you've done something that you later decide or learn was hurtful to yourself or another, and instead of learning from the mistake, you beat yourself up with what you “should”, “must”, or “ought to” do or have done. This keeps you from acting on what you want to, can and will do. If not examined with facts and allowed to serve as educational for your personal growth, you could risk the guilt turning into shame. Perhaps you were parented this way to keep you in line. If so, that may relate to how well you like yourself or accept your flaws as an adult. How do you want to parent yourself now? And do you want to perpetuate that style of self-esteem crushing parenting with your children?

☑ Personalizing

Personalizing means to interpret events or actions of others to mean something about you. You take on responsibility / fault / shame / blame that is not yours. You are likely to do this to others, as well. What others say or do is about them, not you. This fault-finding critical voice keeps you small and fearful.

Kids need to be taught how to recognize when their brain is just making up a thought or is in a habitual negative pattern. You can make it fun -- name that way of self talk the *pirate voice* – the voice that steals treasures of truth -- to help them separate from it.

Decision Making Skills

Knowing how to make good choices is an essential skill for everyone. Asking your kids to be involved in decisions such as whether it's best to do homework as soon as they come home or after a 30 minute break, or if today looks like a sweatshirt day or t-shirt day are low risk decisions. Yet, it helps them create a habit of looking for information, assessing it, and then taking the responsibility to decide.

If you wake them up, tell them what they are wearing, tell them when it's time to come for breakfast, decide what they are eating for breakfast, tell them to go brush their teeth and remember to do it for at least the abc song, etc. your child is not learning to use their brain.

This can be a hard one for people who show love by doing for others -- however, I beg you to give your kids some learning experiences while it is safe.

The ***Parenting with Love and Logic*** program does a great job of demonstrating how to teach your children to think. You don't have to agree with all of their examples. Take what works for you and leave the rest. But know that there is support for you.

Social Skills

Children who have strong social skills are more likely to handle bullying effectively. It can be very helpful to your kids to incorporate these kind of skills into normal family communication, so that when needed these techniques are second nature to them.

The following are some suggestions for basic social skills, given in order of normal conflict in relationships to more severe and possibly dangerous situations. Where lists are numbered, the steps provided are best used in the order given. Where lists are bulleted, there is no specific order to the suggestions.

Please note -- When bullying is occurring, it is best **not to engage** that person.

Listening / Making Conversation / Meeting New People

1. Show that you are paying attention -- eyes on speaker, nothing in hands, body turned toward speaker, nod
2. Decide on something to talk about
3. Ask questions to show interest
4. Give a compliment to show you are friendly
5. Ask if they would like to be your friend, or play later

Joining in a Game

- Watch what's going on instead of assuming you know what's going on
- Give a compliment or say something positive
- Make sure you know the rules of the game
- Ask politely if you can play
- Say something like, "Thanks, can we play tomorrow?"

Feeling Angry

1. Relax: take deep breaths
2. Think of a happy place
3. Listen to music, stomp your feet, run around, growl in your pillow, snuggle with a stuffed animal, etc.
4. Come back and problem solve

Take A Chance To Ask For What You Want

When you have a minor problem with a friend you can trust, you can try to talk to them. You can ask for what you want, such as: *Please give me more space, or please remember to call me tonight.*

If you can tell that the person isn't willing to solve the problem with you -- and clues will be that they make excuses or blame you -- look at what you have control over. You can ignore them by watching tv, or walking off, or just announcing that you're going to play somewhere else. That way, the person doesn't get any power or attention from you.

Managing Conflict

Sometimes no matter how well you communicate or how good your own social skills are, there will be people who are just determined to pick on you. There are a few techniques you can use to try to defuse the situation before it escalates into violence.

Ignore It, Walk Away, or Go Play Somewhere Else

- Look at them with a blank face (not angry, or whiney), then turn away. Teasers want your attention and power.
- Don't let them see that what they are saying hurts your feelings.
- It IS important to talk to someone who can help you feel better, but not the teaser!
- Take a break from the person, first a short one, then longer.
- Spend time getting to know others so you can hang out with people who respect you.

Silly Comebacks

Be sure to say these in a silly tone of voice, *then walk away*. Some good ideas for being silly or asking silly questions might be:

Be silly:	Ask silly questions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Really, I didn't know.• That's the biggest compliment I've gotten all day.• Shhh, it's a secret.• You are so funny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you spell that word?• How did you get to be so smart?"• What?... Huh?... Did you hear something?...• That's amazing. Will you put that in writing?

Agree

Agreeing defuses tension and the urge to escalate, especially if they are bragging, or telling you that you are not good at something. You can try saying something like:

Yeah, and you are very kind.
Thanks for noticing.

Good for you.
You are so right.

Blow It Off

Refuse to allow yourself to get baited, especially when you are called a name, laughed at, or someone tries to gossip. Responses that blow it off could be:

And your point is?

Whatever.

Big deal.

Change The Subject

This tactic is useful especially when someone is trying to pressure you or someone else. Great comments and questions for changing the subject are:

What are we doing at recess?

Is that a new phone?

How did you do that?

Look, there's your friend.

I'm going to the swings.

What did you do last night?

Let's go ride bikes instead.

Our favorite show is on.

Did I just hear your mom?

Laugh It Off

Repeat your mistake in a silly way. For example: Trip again, but in a big way. Or, make a joke of it. For example:

If they say:

- You stink
- You're hair looks bad.
- You're a shrimp

Then you say:

- Oh, yeah, I thought I smelled eggs, I'm hungry.
- Oh, thank you, I worked on it all night to look like this
- Shrimp, mmmm, I love shrimp, I'm hungry.

Then walk away. By not engaging with an intended insult, and not hanging around waiting for a response, you'll be disempowering the bully.

Make A Deal

It is advisable to try this **only with friends you can trust**. Here are two examples:

- I'll work on not laughing when you trip, if you'll work on not calling me that name.
- I'll play jump rope with you this recess, if you'll play basketball with me next recess.

Name The Consequences

Naming the consequences -- when said out loud -- helps you feel in control of yourself, while also possibly serving as a reality check to a bully. You could be factual about the consequences, or you might be more silly.

An example of a factual response is:

I'm not going to argue with you about this, so I'm walking away now.

An example of a silly response is:

If I go further down the road I'll be stuck inside for a week so I'm staying up here."

Call It Out

Bullies thrive on instilling fear. When you name out loud exactly what it is that they are doing -- while it is taking a risk -- it may help to retain your own power and alert others to what is going on. This tactic can be especially powerful when combined with other strategies listed above. Examples of calling it out would be saying:

That's gossip.
That's teasing.

That's rude.
That's bullying.

Report To An Adult

Whenever you do not feel safe, are threatened, or when the rude behavior continues even though you are using other strategies, it's good to report what is happening to an adult -- especially one who is empowered to take action to correct the situation and protect you. When making a report, be prepared to cite facts as clearly as possible, including:

- What happened / what threats were made / what words used
- Who was involved / who was the leader / who watched but did nothing
- Where did it take place -- be specific
- When exactly -- date and time

Conflict Management for 7 Specific Situations

Some situations that provoke conflict are so common that kids are likely to experience them at more than one point during childhood. Learning to defuse these situations when young is excellent preparation for handling their grown up versions in the workplace and in other adult contexts later in life. You can provide your children with invaluable skills training by helping them recognize and transform the following conflict-laden situations.

1. Someone Doesn't Play Fair

Examples of unfair play are when a participant won't finish playing a game if they are losing, or cheats, won't get out, changes the dice after a roll, call for a redo, argues about a call, etc.

Possible Solutions:

- Talk it out. The short version is to simply tell them what you want, and then wait.

For example, hold the ball until they get out. Don't take your next turn until they fix the problem. This is an extension of the *do what you have control over* tactic.

- Use the "if...then..." tactic:

For example, say: "if you are going to be unfair, then you can't play with us."

- Go to another game.

2. Poor Sport

Examples of being a poor sport include bragging about yourself, or when others laugh at you when you make a mistake. Voicing put downs, making excuses and blaming others for your own mistakes are other ways people act like poor sports.

Possible Solutions:

- Ignore the poor sport – don't even respond with a look or gesture.
- Change the subject.
- Make a silly comeback like : "How do you spell it?" or "Thanks for noticing."
- Agree / Go along with them such as: "Good for you" or "you are the best."

3. Break Promises

While breaking a promise can be due to circumstances beyond one's control, it might also be a sign of passive aggression, which is a type of conflict behavior -- especially when it builds resentment. Examples of breaking promises can be forgetting a play date,

not calling as planned, choosing to play with someone else instead, and just not being dependable.

Possible Solution:

- Talk it out. Start a conversation by saying: “I want you to keep your promise and ____.”

4. Disrespecting Learning Time at Homework or Daycare

Disrespectful behavior is another type of passive aggression. It can take the form of humming while someone else is working, interrupting concentration by talking, ignoring reminder signals, copying others’ work, taking toys that don’t belong to you without asking permission, etc.

Possible Solutions:

- Ignore the interruptions -- Look away, turn your body away
- Walk Away -- Go work somewhere else

5. Disrespecting Personal Space

Disrespect can be shown with silent behaviors, too, such as putting your feet in someone’s space, hanging on them, standing too close, talking very loud right in their ear, yelling instead of cooling off before talking about a conflict.

Possible Solutions:

- Move away -- turn in chair so feet aren’t accessible, scoot over, find another seat or spot in line
- Walk away without responding when someone yells

6. Talking Behind Someone’s Back

Telling secrets, or telling others about someone’s problem as gossip rather than asking for help, talking about someone getting in trouble, or talking about who likes who are all ways of talking behind someone’s back.

Possible Solutions:

- Ignore it so you don’t give any attention and energy to the gossip
- Blow it off with comments like “And your point is?”, “Whatever”, or “Big Deal”
- Change the subject

- Give it less power by saying something like, “So, I made a mistake”, “I’m fine with it.”
- Take a break from the person – quit speaking to them.

7. Peer Pressure – Disrespecting Someone’s Request

Sometimes kids and adults give in to peer pressure because we think it will avoid a conflict. But really, it just teaches the bully that their methods work.

Examples of peer pressure that disrespects someone’s request are:

- Keep asking over and over again something you said no to
- Interrupt rather than listening
- Bossy about who you play with
- Bossy about what you should like -- making fun of what you like
- Try to take you away from your friends
- Ignore you when you won’t do what they want
- Take a break without telling you
- Not accepting difference in you or others
- Not including others

Possible Solutions:

- Name the consequences -- If...then...
- Help the person being talked badly about -- “I like him/her.” “I like doing that”
- Talk it out, the short version -- “I want you to include him/her”
- Change the subject -- come up with other ideas of what to do
- Talk it out, the long version -- I feel...when you...because then I think...I want...
- If...then... *For example -- “I feel frustrated when you make fun of my ideas because then I think it’s not fair. I want you to respect that I am different than you. If we can’t work out, then I’ll take a break from you.”*
- Ignore them and keep doing what you are doing

A Word To Bystanders

Many of the strategies in this guide can be used by bystanders who witness others being rude to someone. Whether you are a teen, a grandparent on a visit, an aunt or uncle, a neighbor, or even a store clerk or shopper, if you see bullying you can have a beneficial impact. Taking action could save a child from harm, and teach the bully that they aren’t so all powerful that they can get away with their bad behavior.

Get involved, be a helpful bystander, rather than giving power to the person being rude.

Of course, if you are a teen or child yourself and are ever scared, report to an adult. Otherwise, see if you can support the person being made fun of by saying, "I like that too", "I'll go do that with you" or "I like him/her".

Kids can have a strong impact on the neighborhood climate by being pro-active instead of standing by. Reporting is important, but for most situations, bystanders can be part of the solution, as well. Bystander power is using peer pressure for a positive outcome. The usual teasing /conflict management strategies work, along with these additional actions:

- 1.** If someone is trying to gossip about others, say "that's gossip" and walk away. It's highly tempting to get caught in the entertainment of gossip, but really hurts how comfortable and confident kids feel. Even when it's true, encourage your kids to resist being part of the drama. Encourage bystanders to get in there and change the subject or distract their friends away from it.
- 2.** If someone is making fun of who you play with -- like saying something like "eeew you sat next to Sarah" -- say something positive about the person such as *Sarah is fun and can get along with my friends, can you?* Then walk away. Bystanders can do the same thing to take away power and attention from the person who is being disrespectful.
- 3.** If someone is trying to tell you who you can be friends with then say something silly like "how interesting" or "thank you for sharing" and then go be with people who respect you. If you are a bystander to this, be sure to pay more attention to your friend being bossed and ignore the person's instructions of who to hang out with.
- 4.** When you put your attention on the bully and insist they, "stop it", you are more likely to give them a sense of power. Instead, give a brief statement like "that's bullying" or "that's gossip" and then put way more attention on your friend. "Wow, that is a cool drawing, come show me how you did that" and walk away removing the power of the bully.

Why is This So Hard?

Friendship is very important to children. When situations become difficult, they are often conflicted between just going along with it so they can have the friend, or risk losing this friend by standing up for themselves.

With the higher stakes come more opportunities for peer pressure by way of bossiness and manipulation that might sound like:

"I won't be your friend if you play with her."
"If you won't jump this ramp then you're a wimp."
"I'm mad at you because you called me out of the game."

There is also the more subtle peer pressure like standing next to your friend while they make fun of someone else or being the receiver of someone being talked about behind their back.

Giving the person being teased a compliment or saying something encouraging like, "I mess that up all that time" is a smooth way to say you don't like this and you are not going to treat people this way. Naming the consequences shows that you care and you don't like what is going on.

If you call it out, "that's gossip" or "that's teasing", the risk is that the person will get mad at you, so it is important to follow that up with changing the subject, coming up with something else to do, or laughing it off by joking "I'm a chicken too, balk, balk". The goal is to keep your power by doing what you have control over instead of trying to change the other person.

Kids are very attached to keeping their friends so it is very difficult to just ignore or walk away. It's extremely uncomfortable for most children to be sitting on their own, walking on the playground alone, or eating lunch without their usual "friends". Therefore, kids need practice to master the art of smoothly maintaining their inner power without becoming a bully themselves.

If you can compliment or encourage the person being made fun of, name the consequence, ask for what you want, use a silly comeback, or change the subject, then there is less attention on the problem, and kids feel safer to stand up for themselves. Calling it out by saying "that's gossip", or standing your ground by declaring "If you keep doing that, I'm going to play another game" or just walking away, works well if the problem continues.

Remember, it is good to encourage kids to report when bullying is repeated, when inappropriate language is used, when physical threats are made, or when there is any kind of potential danger perceived.

Tattling or Reporting

How can parents know when to step back to empower their kids, and when to get involved? Should you be concerned about teaching your kids to tattle on each other?

These are common concerns that many parents have. Here's the distinction I help my clients see between tattling and reporting.

Tattling is when you tell because you want to get the person in trouble. Tattling is also when you go tell before trying to solve it yourself by ignoring, walking away, asking them to stop, going to play somewhere else, offering a trade, etc.

When you tell before trying your own ideas, the person sees that they can easily take your remote and choose what channel you'll be on -- and they get power and attention. They are more likely to come back for more power and attention when adults are not around.

Reporting is for when you have tried to solve it yourself and the problem persists.

Reporting immediately is for when you are scared or there is possible danger such as

- someone is going to play with matches
- going out the gate without permission
- threatening to hurt you
- using foul language depending on age
- physically hurting you

Even when reporting, it is far better to ignore or make some blow off comment, rather than announcing "I'm telling." That gives away power.

And What If All That Doesn't Work?

Sometimes despite using all the techniques outlined in this guide, the bully just doesn't quit. In that case, try to keep the following points in mind.

Do Not Give Them Attention

- Ignore so you don't give any attention (but don't ignore the situation, get help)
- Walk away (get close to other kids or even better, an adult)
- Invite the person being bullied to come with you or sit with you
- Avoid by going a different way, or plan to be with others instead of alone
- Don't laugh when someone else is being made fun of
- Be direct and short with the person bullying: "I want you to leave us alone" rather than telling them "You are not being nice, you shouldn't treat people that way, and you are going to get in trouble".

Do Not Give Them Power:

- Blow it off: "And your point is?", "Whatever", "Big Deal",

- Change the subject
- Give it less power by saying something like, “So, I made a mistake”, “I’m fine with it.”
- Don’t whine or slump – stand up tall, look like you’ve got somewhere to go
- Don’t be a hot head; don’t tell the person what to do, blow up, or say things that challenge or threaten the person bullying
- Be Calm and Confident (if this seems impossible, go back to the self-management section): head up, eye contact, use silly comebacks, blow it off, agree with them, or change the subject first. If that doesn’t work, say in a strong voice, “I want you to leave me alone” or name the consequences: If...then... Since you cannot control others, you also need to get away and go report.
- Use Gossip/Rumor Blocks: “That sounds like gossip/a rumor to me.”, “So what, she/he is my friend.”
- **Adults:** Telling your child to retaliate is tempting, but only shows the bully that they can push your child’s buttons and therefore, has power over them.

Use Strength In Numbers:

- Stand up for anyone being teased or bullied by including them, complimenting them, and/or distract the bully by changing the subject or making a joke, and then report.
- Be a role model for accepting and respecting differences and include others
- Talk to friends and ask them to help you
- Tell grown-ups so they can be watching for opportunities to intervene
- **Adults:** talk with other parents in the community without going on a witch hunt. Document the facts about incidences without your judgments/commentary to encourage safe sharing from others.
- **Adults:** make your presence known. Invite other parents to be outside monitoring: garden, sit on the porch, take a walk, etc.

Get Help:

If you feel like you are in danger -- especially if it’s older kids, you’re alone, you don’t know the person...

- Yell

- Run
- Anyone can tell an adult: Who, What, When, Where
- **Adults:** you may need to file a restraining order or even a civil suit on your child's behalf
- **Adults:** consult an attorney
- **Adults:** listen, stay calm, take action to protect. Do not force kids to talk it out when there is a power differential.

Additional resources for getting help can be found online at:

www.mindoh.org – conversation starters for parents http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov http://www.antibullying.net http://www.ravendays.org	http://www.survivingbullies.org http://www.stopbullyingworld.com http://www.adl.org/combatbullying
---	---

Document:

- Keep a log:
 - Who -- including witnesses
 - What -- stick to the facts: specifically what was said vs “he was name calling”
 - Where – address and detailed location
 - When – date and time
- Consider recording devices
- Notify the school counselor or principal. Even though it is happening in the neighborhood, it is important for them to be aware and watchful.
- Notify the police. Unless there has been a crime (legal definition rather than moral definition), police are not going to have much input. However, you have the right to ask for your complaint to be documented. Follow up with written documentation and encourage other parents to do the same.

Communicate -- Give Peace A Chance

Bring information to the parent of the child or teen who is the bully. This may be very difficult. Consider that the more kind your tone and the fewer words you use, the more chance what you have to say will be considered. “I am concerned about the behaviors I have seen (who, what, where, when-stick to the facts). It’s sad to see. I’m hoping with some redirection from you, your child can learn to be more positive / safe and have healthy friendships.”

Have your documentation printed / recorded and leave it there.

Avoid trying to get the parent to admit, rather, share your observations, offer empathy if you can (“I can imagine this is very hard to hear.”) and give the parent some time to consider what they would like to do about it.

Share your decisions about things you have control over. “I’m going to have my kids take a break for now from playing in the cul-de-sac when your child is outside.” Avoid trying to dictate: “You should keep him/her in your yard where you can watch him/her.”

Keep communication open with your kids. Sometimes kids are very literal. When you say, “include everyone” they may think that means at all costs, or they will be in trouble. Inform them about bullying as you would about any other personal safety.

Watch for unexplained behavior or mood changes in your child. Ask questions.

More Help for Sibling Rivalry

Guide your child to solve the problem for themselves. Model these statement for them so that they become a habit in their thoughts, feelings, and vocabulary:

- “I bet that hurts.”
- “What do you think you are going to do?”
- “Would you like to know what some other kids try?” (see “What to do about teasing” for ideas)
- “Will that give them any power or attention?”
- “I hope that works out for you.”

Change Environmental Factors You Can Control

- Location of homework (on opposite sides of table with barrier up, or even in different rooms), seats in TV room away from each other
- Schedule morning bathroom access, TV access, choice of seats based on winner of the week (ex. for chore completion), TV remote access based on point system or time of day
- Make dates with each child, even if it’s for 10 minutes per day. Let the child guide the activity. Give them your undivided attention, listen, no advice giving without asking permission first.

- Meeting the needs of the individual (use various forms of discipline, as well as, rewards). Same rules, different support.
- Beware of tattling: Are they telling because they need help or because they want the power of getting the other in trouble? Discipline in private.
- Set up safe “fighting”: pillow fights with clear rules. It can be hard to share your space and toys and family and friends with the same people!
- Use “I notice that...” sentences which internalize compliments instead of focusing on pleasing you, the adult. This can contribute to increasing self-worth and decreasing the survival instinct of competition.

Give Personal Power Choices

Odd or even Cards or dice Write or type Colored paper or white Hand shake or high five Coins or cubes Do it yourself or with help Front or back first At your table or on the floor Read at desk or on cushion Addition or subtraction first	Which chair will you sit in Sit or stand on floor space Before or after Write or dictate On white board or paper Write story or draw picture By yourself or at the table Read to me or sibling Now or during TV time Colored pencil or twistable Broccoli or peas	Which color pencil This (motor skill) or another Partner read or by yourself Cursive or print Which one first Crayons or markers Fiction or non-fiction Start at top or bottom Spelling #1 or #2 Quiet at the table or in room Toast or bagel
--	---	---

Instill A Sense Of Belonging Through Contributions To The Family

Organize art supplies Pencil Sharpener Recycling foreman Computer/Electronics shut down Dinner menu presenter	Garbage assistant Mail pick up Pet Feeder Pet Food monitor – put on grocery list	Set up afternoon snack Note taker at family meetings Table cleaner Toy manager Phone Answerer Paper towel replacer
---	---	---

Next Steps

I teach my clients to keep these important points in mind when working with their children and the problems of bullying:

- When any child is bullied, we all lose.
- It really does take a village.
- This e-book is just a small guide to get you started.
- Bullying often has a lifelong impact on children.
- You can make a difference.

- Keep focused on finding solutions with what you have control over.

If you have tried some of the suggestions in this guide and aren't yet getting the positive changes and results you want, I strongly encourage you to reach out and get support starting with the school, and from other professionals in the community.

About the Author

Being a child, a teen or a parent is hard these days. With so many pressures and demands on your time and attention, working out the dynamics of stressful relationships and situations can feel overwhelming.

I am available for daytime or evening counseling and consultation appointments. I'll help you find your voice, see your options, surface your values and beliefs, and gain insight on what you want for yourself and your family.

You might think of counseling as a private and very individualized workshop where you can learn how to gain acceptance and understanding, without self-sabotaging behaviors. I will support you to manage your responsibilities in a way that leads you to feel proud of yourself by honoring your own integrity.

**If you are ready to begin
contact Deanne Carter, LMHC to get started
253-651-3752
or email Deanne@HeartHealing.org**