

6 WAYS TO DEFLECT TEASING

☞ Take the Sting Out of Teasing with Simple Responses

Sometimes all that is needed is to respond with, “Hmm.” or “Thanks for sharing.” “I’ll think about that.” “You may be right about that.” The response should be said very nonchalantly and blandly so a lack of concern is conveyed. Since bullying is primarily done to get a reaction, this can be a very straightforward and effective way to avert bullying behavior.

☞ Reframe Hurtful Events and Words

When we frame a picture, it is to make that picture stand out. We can choose what we want to focus on or frame and what we feel is unworthy of framing. Reframing is a technique to change one’s perception about an unpleasant comment or event. The person creates the image they want to frame rather than accept whatever is thrown at them. For example, if a boy is teased about his bright shirt, he can nicely respond, “Thank you for noticing my new shirt.” The teaser is expecting a reaction and is usually puzzled and his tease is deflated. If a child is bullied, they can later imagine themselves standing up to the bullying behavior or making friends with him or her.

☞ Talk Back to Self-Defeating Thoughts

Replacing negative self-talk with positive, affirming thoughts has been proven to increase self-esteem and confidence. To help replace negative self-talk in children, ask questions like, “Is that comment encouraging or discouraging?” or “Will that self-talk help you or work against you? What could you say that would feel better?”

☞ Visualize a Positive Outcome

Visualization has been proven very successful in making positive changes. It is important to teach children that anytime someone says something they don’t like, they have the power to accept or reject it. The choice is theirs.

One way for children to reject unpleasant words and behavior is to visualize the words bouncing off of their bodies like a foam ball. They can visualize making friends. They can visualize an invisible energy field around them like some movies and cartoons depict. Children can get very creative with this process. Find some image that your child can relate to and help them learn how to use it to deflect hurtful words and behavior.

☞ Disarm Bullying with Humor

When teased or called names, humor can effectively diffuse a bullying situation. For example, when a child is called skinny, the child can reply, “My ancestors came from a long line of preying mantises.” The sense of power is immediately drained from the teasing when the desired reaction is not received. Encourage humor in the home and show the difference between playful teasing and hurtful teasing.

☞ Follow an Insult with a Complement

If someone says you are fat, return with a remark such as, “You look really buff.” If a girlfriend says, “Your hair looks like a rat’s nest” simply reply, “I really like the way you fix your hair!” The complement should be sincere to be believable and effective.