

GUIDELINES

These guidelines represent different points of view from educators.

Feel free to contact us with your comments or suggestions.

1. RHONDA J.ARMISTEAD M.C. NCSP,

Immediate Past President; National Association of School

Psychologists

Be Preventive. The key to preventing bullying within either preschool or school settings is to promote safe, caring environments that promote positive interactions among children. The preschool years are critical times for teaching children how to control their aggressive impulses and to learn emotional self-control. Parents, teachers, and other adults have been called “agents of civilization” by Dr. Richard Tremblay, the University of Montreal scientist who has studied aggression in children for two decades...

Aggression, he has concluded, is an inborn human trait in every person that starts at birth, peaks during the toddler years and continues to decline into adolescence. The preschool years are a crucial time to teach children the fundamentals of social interaction- sharing and compromise, cooperation, and good communication. Adults play an important role in teaching kids to curb their aggressive tendencies.

Understanding that aggressive behavior is typical in young children is the first step in knowing how to respond to those who aggress against other children and to assist children who are targets. For most children, the use of aggression starts to decline after age two or three as they learn to control their impulses and learn to express themselves using language. Those who fail to learn socially appropriate behaviors early are at significant risk for later serious consequences both to themselves and to society. Evidence is growing that childhood aggression should be taken seriously.

Studies of school children reveal that the vast majority of youngsters continue to reduce their physical aggression from the time they begin kindergarten to the time they finish high school. However, about five to 10% of children maintain highly aggressive behaviors as they grow out of their preschool years. Implementing effective classroom management to reduce aggression and fostering social, emotional, and academic competency is key to preventing later behaviors commonly identified as bullying. These strategies can help:

Intervene early in conflicts between children: Adults are often reluctant to stop conflicts between young children and prefer that they solve their own problems. However, if children do not have the necessary problem-solving skills, adults have the responsibility to step in before children resolve issues by hitting, biting or being harmful.

They should intervene when interactions seem headed for trouble and suggest ways for children to compromise, or guide them to express their wants and feelings to each other. Adopting a clear code of conduct, enforcing a consistent approach to consequences, paired with positive, corrective expectations creates a safe, caring environment.

At home and school, adults should communicate that respect, cooperation, and caring are expected behaviors. Teachers should adopt a set of basic rules that communicate behavioral and social expectations. They should give clear messages that hurting others is not okay and follow these guidelines. They should emphasize that there are consequences for biting, hitting, taking from others, or saying hurtful comments to others. When children exhibit physical or verbal aggression or indirect aggression (e.g., spreading gossip, deliberately excluding others), teachers should use immediate and meaningful consequences. Immediate consequences that are reasonable, and are related to the behavior are more effective. Teaching children the meaning of respect, “treating others the way you would like to be treated” can start early

Model and practice appropriate skills. Children’s behavior improves more quickly when adults intervene to address inappropriate behavior and model what to do. Adults must model respect for children by

refraining from yelling, using harsh words, or berating them. Becoming angry at children when they misbehave does little to model their learning self-control. Following a conflict between children, adults should get them involved in resolving the problem with different skills.

Teach all Children Assertiveness and Resilience. Teach children to seek help in situations that make them feel unsafe. Encourage children to report events in which they feel threatened or unsafe. Practice refusal behaviors with children, such as expressing their feelings and telling peers to stop hurtful acts. Remember that refusal is only an option if children feel safe doing it. Adults can teach children how to handle routine teasing by turning their heads and walking away.

Information helpful to teachers in defining kids behavior. Bullying is often defined as behaviors that are intended to harm and are considered to be those that are “unfair and one-sided”. Bullying occurs when someone continues to hurt, frighten, threaten or exclude someone else with the purpose of hurting them. One sided means an individual or a group is trying to hurt someone else and the other person or group is not trying to hurt back. Bullying usually involves a power imbalance such as physical size, age or strength. Bullying is a concept older children will understand more readily than young children.

Bullying behaviors can include:

- . Hurting someone physically by hitting, kicking, tripping, pushing, etc
- . Teasing someone in a hurtful way
- . Using put-downs, such as insulting someone's race, appearance, or gender
- . Stealing or damaging another person's things
- . Spreading rumors about someone
- . Leaving someone out on purpose or trying to get other students not to play with someone

Differentiate reporting from tattling. Tattling is an effort to get someone else into trouble. Reporting is when a student tries to keep someone safe.

Ensure that students understand the definition of "bullying". If a school does not have a bullying policy, classes can create a shared definition of bullying by having students list these behaviors on the board and agreeing to report them when they occur.

What should teachers do when school age students report bullying

- . Take reports of bullying seriously

- . Support the feelings of the child who was bullied by listening and asking questions
- . Ask questions about the event
- . Ask questions about past experiences with bullying
- . Help the student who was bullied generate solutions for the future
- . Respond quickly with the initial goal of stopping any aggressive behavior and assisting kids in understanding hurtful actions and feelings. Use respect as an overall theme when talking with children
- . Make it clear that bullying behavior is unacceptable
- . Respond with a teaching model by providing correction and a statement of behaviors you expect to see in the future
- . Provide consequences appropriate for the behavior, age of the students, and the setting
- . Avoid using the term “bully” with kids. Use “students who bully”, “students with bullying behavior”. Calling a student, a “bully” suggests behavior is unchangeable and intractable.

What to do about children who bully.

- . Confront students who engage in bullying in a firm, but fair manner.
- Avoid harsh, punitive language and discuss behaviors in private.
- Avoid bullying the bully!
- . Ask questions and gather information listening for the motive

- . In a non-threatening manner, listen and try to connect with the student
- . Provide consequences appropriate for the behavior, age of the students, and the setting
- . Brainstorm alternatives for the future and help the child have a plan for avoiding bullying behavior
- . Follow up with this student to see how the plan is working
- . Discuss patterns of behavior with parents and communicate frequently when these behaviors occur. Enlist the parent to work with the school to stop bullying.

2. KEN RIGBY

Adjunct Professor; University of South Australia; www.kenrigby.net

Author of *Children and Bulling: How Parents and educators can reduce bullying in schools*. Blackwell/WileyMalden, MA

It is true enough that in some circumstances going to a teacher for help takes some courage – but it rather depends on the particular circumstances.

I think a child – even a quite young child - needs some strategies to try out BEFORE telling a teacher. In Australia – and possibly elsewhere – children in some classes are presented with a hand diagram (see below) which they discuss with children. It can help them to consider steps they might take, depending on the nature and persistence of the bullying. I

appreciate that there is merit in presenting children with a simple message – tell a teacher, but I think we should not underestimate the capacity of quite young children to think about what they can do themselves before they seek help.

3. JUNE ARNETTE

National School Safety Center

The first rule in any bullying prevention effort is to make sure that the adults charged with addressing bullying are behind the effort and understand the phenomenon of bullying themselves. It doesn't do any good to have a campaign that encourages kids to tell their teacher if the teacher isn't well informed or doesn't want to get involved. It makes things worse than better because the child who has been bullied feels victimized twice over—once by the bully and then again by a system that does nothing about it.

The definition of bullying lacks two essential elements that differentiate bullying from teasing: bullying is a repeated behavior and it is about abuse of power (i.e., kids do it intentionally to hurt others). The one doing the teasing will typically stop the behavior once they understand the harm teasing does to others. On the other hand, a bully typically doesn't stop the behavior because he/she intends to inflict harm.

Kids should tell their teachers but they should also be encouraged to tell

their parents. Their parents can be their best advocates if the teacher chooses to ignore the problem or is ineffective in their response.

Once a child reports bullying to a teacher, is the principal always to be involved? Not if the teacher is effective in his/her intervention with the bully. "Always" is too strong a word. Some principals want to know what is going on and others don't want to become involved until the teacher needs support.

How and when are parents of the victim and bully notified? Who notifies them? This depends on how serious the behavior is. Most parents want to know right away if their child is involved in an altercation or is physically hurt in any way. Who notifies them depends on how much autonomy is given to teachers at their school.

How can the teacher protect the victim from retaliation by the bully? This depends on how serious the behavior is. Most parents want to know right away if their child is involved in an altercation or is physically hurt in any way. Who notifies them depends on how much autonomy is given to teachers at their school. I don't think you can have universal rules about these things.

How can the teacher protect children from being labeled and treated

as a snitch? By providing ways for children to report anonymously or discuss privately the problems related to bullying that they are experiencing. Also by creating a culture within the classroom that says it is okay to tell.

How should the school discipline the bully? This depends on the established set of rules and consequences. Rules should be consistently and fairly enforced.

How should the school help treat the bully?

The answer to this question can be both simple and complex. The answer depends on what motivates the student to bully in the first place. Be prepared to invest time, energy, and care into a relationship with a student who bullies. It may be the very experience he or she needs to examine and change his/her behavior. Conversations with the student who bullies will help in the following ways:

- validating that there is a bullying problem that needs to be addressed
- identifying options and determining an appropriate course of action
- identifying a caring adult who is interested and willing to help
- referring a serious bullying problem to the appropriate support

services.

Talking with a bully can help when such conversations are guided by a purpose.* Using the following goals to guide a continuing conversation, help the bully:

- define and understand bullying and its consequences.
- identify the ways, times, places and people the bully targets.
- understand how bullying hurts others and him/herself.
- explore the reasons why he or she bullies.
- find respectful ways to express and use their personal power.

*** Note: Talking with bullies as a group is not recommended.**

The setting and nature of a group may reinforce negative behaviors, teach bullies how to bully better, or create new struggles for power or status. This strategy is best left to mental health professionals who have specific training and insights into conducting such activities.

Is the problem teasing or bullying?

Teasing and bullying behaviors are often confused. Some people think that all teasing is bullying while others think that all bullying is harmless teasing. An important distinction occurs when students are helped to understand their intention and the impact of their

behavior on others or themselves.

Students who tease may be convinced to give up the hurtful behavior when they are helped to realize that their actions are harmful and disrespectful of others. They may also be deterred by the consequences of breaking school rules. Students who bully are motivated by the idea that they have the power to cause hurt, embarrassment, fear or intimidation. Bullies typically have little regard for rules. Efforts to change their behaviors may require intense time, patience, and in some cases, the help of professionals and special programs.

How should the school help treat the victim? **A student who is a target of bullying** needs to know that bullies rarely stop what they are doing on their own. In fact it is more likely that over time, a bully will find more serious ways to hurt people. This is why it is important to tell a responsible and caring adult at school what is happening and to ask for their help. In the meantime, students who are being bullied can take actions to reduce the chances of the bully hurting them. Targets can avoid the times and places they are bullied, choose safe places to be at school, and stay close to good friends. It is important to not give up but to keep reporting bullying until help is provided.

4. ELIZABETH CARLSON

National Association of Elementary School Principals

I am concerned that you seem to focus solely on school... bullying at school, telling a teacher, etc. Bullies can be anywhere and of any age, and I think that message is worth mentioning, even if it's a simple introduction of "Bullies can be anywhere. Today we're going to talk about bullies at school."

Also, I hesitate to limit the advice to "tell a teacher." Telling an adult you trust, someone like your teacher or your principal or your counselor, is an incredibly important message. But I think just as important is the message that the child has the right to tell someone he believes will help him. I am saddened to admit it, but not all adults, not even all educators, treat children the same way, and children know it. If you toil each day in a classroom with a "No Tattle" rule (a horror in my book!) then the person you trust most may well be someone other than your teacher.

A couple more important messages: It's also the right thing to do to talk to adult about ANYONE who's being bullied. If you know someone else is being bullied, speak up on that person's behalf if he/she can't do it alone. Also, if the first adult you tell won't listen, keep talking until you find one who will. We want children to believe that all adults will help them, but sometimes it

just doesn't turn out that way. The adult might be busy or distracted or even confused about what to do. Persistence is key.

Once the adult has the information, it is up to him/her to decide whether or not it's actionable and what consequences should follow. For something like, "John ran in the hall," (clearly an unsafe thing to do any way you slice it!) the adult can say, "Boy, I sure am glad that's over. Someone could've been badly hurt!" A quick look at John to say, "Now that you know how upsetting it is when you run in the hall, I bet you won't do it anymore, will you?" The whole thing takes 60 seconds, but the "reporter" is acknowledged for wanting to keep everyone within the confines of the law, and the "perp" is scolded by the adult. Case closed.

But as the "reports" grow in severity, so too should the response by the adult. There aren't a lot of great benchmarks out there for "Report this to the principal but not this" except to say that if it were your own child who was involved, would you want the principal to know? It's sort of a "reasonable man" rule although perhaps it's more like a "reasonable parent" guideline (if such a thing exists!). There are, of course, places where lines are crossed... from simple joshin' around... to teasing... to downright anti-social behaviors, but it's often difficult to know exactly where those lines are (especially for the many behaviors that fall somewhere in the gray areas of behavior). And if it's difficult for the adults to determine, just imagine how hard it is for

kids to know!

Letting the parents (on both sides) know as soon as possible (again, being reasonable) is the right thing to do. Something as simple as, “Brianna has expressed to me her concern about some classmates who bother her. Has she mentioned anything to you?” can open the door to a helpful discussion.

As for dealing with the bullies themselves: ALMOST ALL CHILDREN WHO ARE BULLIES, KNOW IT. (Did you know this? Most bullies not only know they’re bullies but will admit it if asked directly.) If I could talk to the child first and have him tell me, “Yeah, I know I’m a bully,” then it made the conversation with the parent much easier. “John believes himself to be a bully. I think he’d like to stop and find some better ways to make friends,” is a lot easier for a parent to swallow than, “You’re child’s a holy terror, and nobody likes him.”

By the way, the easiest way for the teacher to help protect children from being labeled snitches and tattletales is to avoid those terms herself. Adults are great at sending kids mixed messages. Teachers and principals need reminders that their own words and actions should support the behaviors they want to see from their students.

No adult can promise a child that there will never be retaliation. What they

can, and SHOULD, promise them, however, is that telling an adult is the right thing to do, that adults are supposed to help children, and that any retaliation will be met with ever-increasing consequences for the bully.

It's amazing how many times a bully will back down from even the slightest confrontation. It's also amazing that there are cases so far at the other extreme that parents ask for their children to be moved to different classrooms or even different schools.

As for your definition of bullying, I would add "A bully tells you who you can and can't be friends with" to your list. For kids, there seems to be a subtle but significant difference between who you speak to and who you're friends with.

The NAESP platform does recommend that schools implement bullying prevention programs, by the way, but stops short of making specific recommendations. The things I'm telling you here are simply one woman's thoughts on the subject!

I continue to believe strongly that most young children... even well into first grade... just don't possess the moral development to always know the difference between tattling and reporting (Heck, I know many adults who don't know, either) such that a No Tattle Rule is completely

counterproductive to any bullying prevention efforts with four-, five-, and six-year olds. Kids know what “mean stuff” is; they know what it means to be “picked on”; and they know a far greater range of emotions than adults give them credit for. But they don’t know the qualitative difference between being called a “Stupid Head” and being called a “nigger,” nor should they have to. That’s what they have US for.

5. Bully Proofing Your Child

By: Naomi Aldort Ph.D.

www.AuthenticParent.com

In a phone counseling session Rebecca asked me how to resolve sibling aggression in her home. She described the bullying that was taking place in her own home. “My oldest, Sam (8) invites his brother, Leroy (5) to come closer to him by promising to show him something or to play with him. Once Leroy is in his room, Sam either holds him down to the floor or ties him to a chair.”

“What happens next?” I ask.

“Leroy cries for help and I come in. I scold Sam and help Leroy out, but nothing helps. The next day the same thing happens again. I tried punishment, consequences and time-out but nothing helps.”

“Lets examine how your response actually encourages more of this

behavior,” I responded. Rebecca was surprised but open to discover a new way to respond. “You have been reacting and taking sides against Sam. Instead, let’s consider a way to respond instead of manipulate, and bring solutions rather than teach justice.

When my son, Oliver, was three, he came to me one day and said, “They (his brothers) don’t let him have paper to draw on.” I gave him paper. He was happy. He learned to take care of himself, and his brothers saw an act of kindness. If I preached to his brothers, Oliver would have learned to get them “in trouble” by complaining and they would have likely bullied him in revenge. This is how bullying is born.

Our inclination to scold, punish or control the aggressor is counterproductive. The moment we take sides and focus on the aggressor negatively, we set in motion many more aggressive episodes. The reason is that the victim gets the adults to side with him, and the bully gets angrier and more hurt leading to more aggression. It works for the victim to stay victimized and set us in motion against the “bully.”

If we spank or punish more severely, we may get temporary fear based compliance. However, compliant little children are so deeply hurt that most grow up to be even more aggressive, self-destructive, depressed, or otherwise emotionally handicapped.

I asked Rebecca to explore her thinking using the S (self-talk/inquiry) of the SALVE formula from my book, *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*. She found that her thinking was a reaction and not a response to the children's needs. Her reaction included these thoughts:

"Sam should not hurt his brother."

"Leroy should not be hurt. He is such a good child. It is not fair."

"Sam will never learn unless we punish him."

Reacting to these thoughts, Rebecca tried to stop the aggression without responding to the need that was driving Sam's behavior or Leroy's habit of being a victim. Her thoughts created anxiety and fear that drove her to take sides and be angry and stirring more anger.

Instead of being the justice minister, be the loving solution:

"What would you do if your child was pushed down by a dog," I asked Rebecca.

"I would pick him up and get away from the dog," she responded confidently.

"Would your child ever run back to play with that dog?" I asked.

“No. He would not,” she responded.

“This is your answer,” I said. “You don’t react about the dog; you take care of Leroy and his safety.”

Rebecca pondered and then laughed. “That’s a relief; so I don’t have to do justice, only to respond to what is needed.”

“Yes. Then Leroy learns to be powerful by taking care of himself rather than being a victim. In addition, notice how you teach peace in this way.”

Rebecca realized that her original response was a demonstration of bullying. She bullied Sam while siding with Leroy. Both children were learning from her to take sides, to judge and thereby to ignite more discord and disconnection. Sam was left angrier and feeling more revengeful toward his brother, while Leroy learned that being a victim gets mommy to side with him. He gets to be the good boy and get his brother in trouble, which gives him a sense of power and superiority.

When Rebecca reacted to Sam, while ignoring the cause of his behavior, he was left more resentful, lonely and hurt and will escalate his aggression without intending to. The pain is too great and he has no control over himself.

We teach peace when we respond peacefully and without judging or taking sides. The reason I asked Rebecca how she would respond if it was a dog that hurt her child is so she can discover her own wisdom when she is free of judging.

When we respond rather than teach, children learn a lesson of peace and kindness. When a child runs into the busy street, we rush and grab her back to the sidewalk. Likewise we pull her out of deep water and we take the stone out of a toddler's mouth. We don't scold the cars on the street, the stone or the rain that gets the child wet. If we do the same with human interactions, the child learns to take care of herself rather than to blame and punish the other child.

When we rush to rescue and punish or scold, the children learn to be victims and bullies. The "victim" screams and mom (the "artillery") arrives and defends him. This gives that child a sense of power through victimhood while the other child, who is usually aggressive because of feeling unloved, scared or helpless, now has the proof, "I am unloved indeed. She always takes his side... and she doesn't even know what happened or how I feel." He is likely to continue his aggressive behavior because the reason for it has been re-enforced.

The bully and the victim both tell their stories from a victim point of view. One tells, "He hits me" and the other, "No one loves me." Both need loving support and tools to connect and stay rooted powerfully in themselves. They learn from the way we treat them. When we focus on punishing, we are not rooted in ourselves and we wage war. When rooted in ourselves we want to help, not to preach.

The next time Leroy approached Sam's room, Rebecca said to him, "You know what Sam is going to do to you. If you don't want to be tied, you can go somewhere else." Leroy ignored his mom's suggestion, but this time, when he screamed, his mom, said, "just get out of his room Leroy."

Realizing that his mom is not coming in to rescue him, Leroy got up and left. The next time Sam started his antics, mom repeated her suggestion. Leroy didn't go into his brother's room.

After a couple of weeks, the bullying vanished without ever scolding Sam or even talking to him. It vanished by empowering Leroy to care for himself.

In some situations the child may not be able to take get away. If a toddler or a small child cannot pull himself out of a situation, help him, but avoid punishing or preaching morals to the other child. Seeing your peaceful and kind action is the only worthy lesson. The aggressor is often in more pain

than the victim.

To bully proof your child:

1) Empower him to take care of himself rather than focus on the “bully.”

2) Provide opportunities for your child to feel worthy and powerful so he needs not look for power by being a victim, or by seeking superiority.

(Helping both children feel worthy prevents most aggressions.)

The Bully’s “Lesson:”

“But shouldn’t Sam be taught a lesson?” Asked Rebecca.

Yes. The aggressive child needs to learn that he is worthy, loved, and that you will listen to him and help him find the cause of his aggression. The lesson of your care, love and peace is the only one that will help him grow into a secure and therefore a kind and caring person.

The bullying child has a valid reason for his actions (see my video: The Child is Right, on my site; <http://naomialdort.com/lectures.html>.) He is obviously not aware of what drives him or had no opportunity to express his feelings. When you connect and listen to him, you will understand the reason behind his behavior and will be able to alleviate the cause of his aggression.

In the case of Sam, it turned out that he read in a book a description of

tying and overcoming someone. It scared him. He had no control over the drive to overcome his brother. It was his unconscious attempt to alleviate his own anxiety. Often, kids' aggression is directly connected to the way they are treated or what they witness at home but sometimes a story or a movie can be the cause. Aggression is an expression of anxiety, fear or feeling lonely, disconnected and unloved. Offer love, connection, understanding and tools to have power over oneself, and the need will be eliminated.

Taking sides creates war and aggression. If we want to teach peace, we must start by responding peacefully to both children. Whether using fists or words, children can learn to take care of themselves rather than set adults up as "ammunition" in their wars. Show up not as support to one side, but as a loving solution to both children. ©Copyright Naomi Aldort

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Naomi Aldort is the author of, *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*. Parents from around the globe seek Aldort's advice by phone, in person and by attending her workshops. Her advice columns appear in progressive parenting magazines worldwide. Naomi Aldort is married and a mother of three, a writer and two classical musicians.

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teleclasses and private phone sessions visit: www.AuthenticParent.com

We do not claim to have all the answers for preventing and eradicating bullying. We encourage everyone to learn more about bullying and make their own judgment about what to do about it.

We Do Listen Foundation

www.wedolisten.org