

## Bullying Prevention Starts at Home

Bullying comes in different forms such as physical, verbal, social and cyber. The behavior is aggressive and can have long-term affects. Belittling, name-calling, and shaming are verbal aggression. According to \*research, the long-terms affects of verbal aggression by a parent include: high risk of depression, anxiety, or other mood disorder; increased self-criticism and negative thinking; physical aggression by child; engagement in delinquent behaviors; and problems with personal relationships.

### ***Strategies for Parents***

- **Empathy**- In adolescence teasing takes on new meaning and can be used skillfully by children to hurt, embarrass, and humiliate peers as a means of gaining social acceptance. Help your child learn to be sensitive to her own feelings and those of others as a way of changing behavior.
  
- **Positive Discipline**- Resorting to name-calling like “lazy”, “stupid”, or “brat” when you are frustrated with your child’s behavior does nothing to correct the undesirable behavior but does teach her this is an appropriate way to vent emotion. Address the specific behavior and how you expect her to do things differently the next time rather than punishing or humiliating her. Over time, if a child starts internalizing these negative labels they will become excuses for her behaviors and she will be less motivated to change.  
  
Ignoring, rejecting, or threatening loss of affection as punishment, can be just as damaging as name-calling. It also models social bullying.
  
- **Model an Apology**- Even the best parents lose their cool sometimes. Children benefit from adults acknowledging they make mistakes too.
  
- **Patrol Your Domain**- Some children are able to understand playful teasing and even have their own repertoire of comebacks while others are more sensitive. You set the standards in your home. Show your children you won’t put up with put downs, even between siblings. Hint: Address put-downs when they happen with a reminder (not a lecture).
  
- **Manage Your Stress**- Model healthy coping skills for dealing with stress including creating a support system. Also, know when to walk away when you feel yourself losing control and ask another adult for help.
  
- **Be a Role Model**- Your children are always watching to see how you interact with different people and handle situations. Be mindful of what you want them to learn from your actions.
  
- **Shower with Praise**- Your child does respect your opinion (even if she will never admit it). Reassure her that you love her and think well of her no matter what.

All information included in this handout was adapted from the following articles:

Bailey, Becky A. Sticks and stones: four causes for name-calling and four critical interventions.  
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/u/Becky-Bailey-No-Name-Calling/379002631/>

Levy, Beth M. Name-calling and teasing. *National Association of School Psychologists*  
<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisePDFs/namecalling.pdf>.

Peterson, Pam. Sticks and Stones and Hurtful Words, *Parenting the Preschooler*  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/pp/>

Name Calling. *Ask Dr. Sears* <http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/discipline-behavior/bothersome-behaviors/name-calling>

#### \*Research Articles Referenced

Sachs-Ericsson, N., Verona, E., Joiner, T., & Preacher, K.J. (2006). Parental verbal abuse and the mediating role of self-criticism in adult internalizing disorders. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 93, 71-78.

Teicher, M.H., Samson, J.A., Polcari A., & McGreenery C.E. (2006). Sticks, stones and hurtful words Relative effects of various forms of childhood maltreatment. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 163, 993-1000.

Vissing, Y.M., & Straus, M.A., (1991). Verbal aggression by parents and psychosocial problems of children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 15, 223-239.