

Bully-Proof Your Kids

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Empowering Our Children

1. Define and recognize bullying behaviors
2. Reinforce positive communication skills
3. Model empathy
4. Teach resiliency skills

What's Bullying?

Repeated pattern of hurtful behavior involving an intent to maintain an imbalance of power.

Types of Bullying

- Physical
- Verbal
- Relational
- Cyber

Roles

- Bully
- Target
- Bystander

Why Your Kids Won't Talk

- Embarrassed
- Afraid to make it worse
- Afraid you'll interfere
- Want to handle themselves

Signs of Trouble

- Academic difficulties
- Disrupted sleep/eating patterns
- Chronic illness
- Torn clothes, lost items
- Newly acquired items (bullies)

Adult Response

- Listen with empathy
- Check your baggage
- Partner to solve

Empowering Question

“What do you want to do about it?”

Kids Need a Plan

Simple

Behavior-based

Practiced

Coaching Kids to Respond

Stay Calm

Speak Up

•No!

•Agree

•Report

•Advocate

Stick Together

Raising Resilient Children

(Excerpted from Circle of F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Facilitator's Guide)

Show empathy. Empathy is the accurate reflection of another person's feelings. Listening and validating how children feel is the most supportive and effective way to teach them about managing emotions. When they share their feelings out loud, they are also clarifying for themselves. Avoid correcting or judging their perceptions with comments such as, "You shouldn't feel that way." Experiencing empathy allows us to offer it to others.

Teach positive social skills. Help children to communicate in a confident manner through direct eye contact, smiling, standing tall (shoulders over hips), and speaking in a pleasant but firm tone of voice. Reinforce basic manners like listening without interrupting, showing interest in others, making introductions, and appropriate topics for conversation. Many kids want to make new friends, but feel insecure about how to start a conversation.

Highlight internal strengths and characteristics. Validate your children's internal strengths by focusing on efforts to do their best. For example, reinforce what she did to earn an "A" rather than simply focusing on the grade. Or, compliment his ability to start conversations rather than being popular. Provide opportunities to develop what your child considers to be his or her unique abilities, skills and interests. Suggested reading: *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Buckingham & Clifton. (Not a traditional parenting book, but extremely valuable!)

Coach, don't solve. Help children develop critical thinking skills by resisting the temptation to solve their problems. While your intent may be positive, the underlying message is that you don't believe they're capable. Instead, listen with empathy and ask for their ideas. Act as coach and mentor using rhetorical questions, role-playing, past experiences, and suggesting possible scenarios. Self esteem increases when we feel capable. Struggling is part of the process. Coach kids *through* challenges, not around them.

Develop healthy coping skills. Resilient children do not necessarily suffer fewer difficulties they just know how to cope better. Regular exercise, proper nutrition and sleep, involvement in hobbies, and a strong social network of family, friends, adult mentors, and community provide the tools for children to positively respond to adversity.

Share your setbacks and successes. Help your child set reasonable expectations for adversity by sharing stories of your setbacks and how you recovered. Children often assume adults have only experienced success and therefore mistakenly interpret their own hardships as failing. Discuss global examples of how others manage life's challenges such as survivors of natural disasters. How did they do it?

Lighten up. Humor, laughter, and fun sustain us through dark times and provide a positive way to challenge negative thinking. Get silly, get dirty, take a risk and laugh!