

Bullies to Buddies

The reality of bullying is a difficult concept for both the child and the parent. The victim or child has to deal with the pain inflicted on him by the bully and the parent has to cope with the pain that comes from knowing his/her child is a victim. In addition, the child usually turns to the parent(s) for advice on how to handle the bully. Frequently the advice given proves ineffective at stopping the bully's attacks. This results in frustration for both the child and the parent.

I came across a website that offers a new approach for the victims of bullying, one that I think can be effective if followed as directed. I am going to share some of what I have learned and have passed on to the students. I want you to be aware of what your children are talking about if they should bring this topic up in conversation. For a more detailed explanation you can go to the website – www.bullies2buddies.com.

The unit titled “How to Stop Being Teased and Bullied Without Really Trying” consists of ten lessons with topics like: Know Why You Are Teased, Change Your Attitude, Three Warnings, How to Handle Rumors, How to Handle Physical Bullying, Getting Revenge, How to Stop People From Hating You, and Dealing With Brothers and Sisters. The bonus lesson is proactive in that it discusses ways to have more friends. All of this information can be seen as proactive if it is learned and applied before the teasing and/or bullying begins. I'm suggesting that this be an issue that is discussed with your child(ren) before any bullying occurs. In most instances there will never be any bullying but it's better to be prepared rather than be caught off-guard.

In the past we have been taught strategies to share with our children if they ever have to face a bully – strategies like ignoring, talking it over with someone you trust, telling the bully how you feel when he bullies you, walking away, seeking help from your friends (the concept of strength in numbers), and so forth. Now an approach is offered that says the victim is to **do nothing** when he/she is bullied.

The unit stresses the importance of knowing why you are being teased. Usually when the victim is teased he tries to stop the bully. The more the bully teases the harder the victim tries to stop him. Such an exchange is exactly what the bully wants; he chooses a vulnerable issue with the victim and uses it to his advantage. He doesn't really care about or necessarily believe the vulnerable issue but rather, he's focused on the victim's reaction to his teasing. It doesn't really matter if the things he says are true or not. All that matters is that it bothers the victim. It's the pleasure he/she derives from upsetting the victim. To quote Lesson One (This information is written for the child.): “Think of it this way: If your parents are going to pay you to watch television, aren't you going to watch a lot of television? Of course you would! And bullies are just the same. You are giving them so much fun in return for tormenting you. Of course they are going to do it as much as possible!”

In addition to a change in behavior, there has to be a change in attitude, too. The changed attitude says that the bullying does not bother the victim in the least. As I tell

the students, this step is really, very difficult; the student has to truly mean that the teasing does not bother him. Even if the bully's insult is true, the victim needs to distance himself and not let the comments affect his feelings. In the mind of the bully teasing is a kind of game the bully wants to win. She teases, the victim loses control and becomes angry, and the bully wins the game. When the one being teased tries to stop the bully he only becomes more upset and looks more foolish in the eyes of the bully and the bystanders.

I tell the students that following this method is hard work and that it calls for determination and consistency. The unit even says that things will get worse before they get better. We've heard that before. But it does work. This annotated explanation does not address all the concerns that come up. For more information you can ask your child (grades 3-5), go to the website, and/or ask me.

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