



# A B O U T F A C E

## Help Your Child Cope With Teasing

Everyone gets teased about something throughout his or her childhood and it is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with you. Teasing is a part of the childhood cycle of learning. However, kids with visible differences are more likely to be teased about their difference, which can be hurtful. Most often kids tease about physical and visible differences because it's an easy target and often kids tease because they are uncomfortable or don't understand the difference. Everyone gets teased about something throughout the course of their childhood, i.e. height, weight, appearance, religion, language, physical abilities; remember you can't stop all teasing, however, you control how it affects you!

### What is teasing?

There are two types of teasing: the playful teasing where you poke fun at someone and it is intended to make both parties laugh; and the harmful teasing where you make fun of someone to be hurtful and to get a reaction of fear or anger in an attempt to control the other person.

### Why do kids tease?

There are many reasons why kids tease. Some do it for fun; others do it for control; yet others do to make themselves feel better. Understanding why some people tease will help you decide how important this teasing is to you. Here is list of why some people tease:

- a) Kids may be jealous of you and they may wish they could do as well as you.
- b) Your friends may not know a better way of saying "I like you." It is odd, but many people are uncomfortable with complimenting others.
- c) Kids may have poor self-esteem and may feel inferior around you so they may put you down or criticize to make themselves feel better.
- d) Kids may tease you for fun - all kids get teased about something.
- e) Kids tease kids with differences because of a lack of knowledge, which evokes curiosity, fear and discomfort.
- f) Kids may not like you. Not everybody likes everybody and it's their way of telling you that they don't want to be friends.
- g) They want to control you. Kids want to control their own environment and therefore tease others in an attempt to feel strong and in control.

### Are You Going to Let the Teasing Bug You?

When you react to teasing, you are giving the teaser exactly what they want: a reaction! Deciding whether or not you are going to let teasing bug you is not a difficult thing. There are some steps you need to consider. You should practice this with your parents or good friends so that you are ready when the teasing does happen. Also, remember teasing happens all throughout your childhood and there will be times when you are prepared and times that you are not. Just keep practicing.

### Here are three questions to ask yourself when someone has teased you.

As you practice these, you will be faster at remembering and using them.

1. Who is doing the teasing?



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- Is it someone close to you or someone you hardly know?
  - Is it someone whose opinion matters to you or someone you don't respect?
  - Is this person important to me?
2. Why did the teasing occur?
- Is it for fun?
  - Is the teaser jealous?
  - Was it based in genuine dislike or are they misinformed about my difference?
3. Do you accept or reject the teasing?
- Think about questions 1 & 2, and then decide on your course of action
- Ask Yourself:
- Am I going to let it get to me?
  - Am I going to ignore it?
  - Should I tell the person how I feel?

## Strategies to Cope with Teasing

Overall the best way of dealing with teasing is to build your own self-esteem. Feeling confident about your abilities, using humour at the proper time, and having a good support group of friends or adults at school are the most helpful strategies.

At the moment that you are being teased, there are some simple things you can do to not allow the teasing to bug you:

1. Take a deep breathe and count to three. Then, let the air out as you count to six. This will help you relax so you can talk without sounding mad.
2. Stand straight and tall with both feet firmly on the ground.
3. Look at the person in the eye, say politely how you felt when the person said the unkind thing. Remember to say how you feel by using "I" or "me" statements: it makes me mad, it makes me sad.
4. Use your smarts: words, eyes, and whole body to stick up for your rights.
5. You might want to practice a few jokes that are comfortable for you to deflect the teasing and put it back to the teaser. However, try not to get into insulting jokes.
6. Plan with your friends how you might help each other. Sticking together and walking away tells the teaser that you are not concerned with their opinion.

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is the next stage of teasing. At this stage, kids use verbal or physical abuse to hurt you and embarrass you. Again the reason why kids bully is to control you. They want POWER and ATTENTION.

## Why Do Some Kids Bully?

1. Don't know how to get along with other kids. They have poor social skills.
2. They have poor self esteem and need to pick on others to make them feel better about themselves.



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3. Want to be in control of their environment and therefore want to control other kids.
4. They want to have or keep a "tough guy" reputation so that everyone will give them attention.
5. May be a very angry child and does not know how to express his/her anger in different ways.
6. Might be bullied at home.
7. Uses bullying as a way of protecting themselves from being bullied.

## **How to Handle the Bully**

Like dealing with teasing, the best way of dealing with the bully is to build your own self-esteem. Feeling confident about yourself and abilities, using humour at the proper time, and having a good support group of friends or adults at school are the most helpful strategies.

There are some things to remember when dealing with bullies:

1. Take a deep breath and count to three. Do not react or get mad.
2. Stand straight and tall with both feet firmly on the ground. Use your smarts: words, eyes, and whole body to stick up for your rights.
3. Have a statement prepared about a facial condition: Obviously you don't know anything about cleft lip and palate or Hemangioma.
4. Avoid areas where you know the bully likes to hang out.
5. Stay in sight of adults and ask an adult for help if needed.
6. Plan with your friends how you might help each other. Stick together.
7. Never fight.
8. Walk away with confidence.
9. NEVER become a bully to beat the bully!

## **Getting Ready for School**

There are ways of preparing children for school and all the issues that arise in day to day such as teasing, friendships and self-acceptance. Here are a few techniques parents can help kids to feel good about themselves, and build skills for positive social interactions.

1. Make sure that your child knows how to talk about his/her difference.
2. Help your child understand why kids tease and what he/she can do to deal with it.
3. Encourage your child to share medical history with the class through a project or presentation.
4. Find out about teasing and bullying policies they have at school.
5. Share information about your child's condition with teachers.
6. Communicate often with your child's teacher.



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7. Find out whether the school teaches about differences and tolerance.
8. Reinforce positive self-esteem and friendships.
9. Ask for the AboutFace school program presentation.

AboutFace is a national charitable organization dedicated to helping individuals with facial differences and their families. We support individuals whose differences are present at birth or acquired as a result of disease or trauma. If you or someone you know has a facial difference and would like more information, contact AboutFace at 1-800- 665-FACE or [www.aboutface.ca](http://www.aboutface.ca).

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