

Bully-Proofing Youth Techniques

Verbal Bullying:

Students who target feed on fear, attention, and things.

Take these away and you will starve bullying behavior. Just like a stray dog will go away if you stop feeding it, bullies also move on when they don't get the reaction they want from the kids they target.

Kids who target others are constantly testing everyone around them. If you pass their test you are left alone, if you fail their test they continue to target you, and others start to target you. This is the swarm effect. First one kid picks on you, then two, then four, and pretty soon every bully in the school is picking on you. It is almost as if you have one of those Arby's hats glowing over your head saying, "Come pick on me". The good news is that once you learn to take away Fear, Attention, and Things, the Arby's hat goes away and the bullies go away with it. When you respond correctly they will leave you alone as fast as they swarmed you.

You can't control being tested, but you absolutely determine if you continue to be picked on. The bully will not continue to target you unless you give them the reactions they are seeking. I don't care how many flaws you think you have, it doesn't matter. The more things about you that bullies make fun of means only one thing. You may get tested more than other kids, but once you learn to pass their tests you will not be picked on any more. (This technique has worked for kids with many extreme disabilities and shortcomings. They got tested more than their peers, but once they mastered these techniques they were left alone.)

What they are looking for and how to take it away is listed below. These techniques will be thoroughly explained and demonstrated during the student assemblies, as well as the parent training.

FEAR: Don't show kids who are bullying any fear:

Fear reactions is what kids who target feed off of and use to scare their peers into doing whatever they say. If you show any sign of fear, that alone can be enough to keep the boy or girl coming back and picking on you again and again. Most people are not aware that they give off fear signals. These are natural reactions to being uncomfortable. First you must learn what fear signals you are sending, then you must learn and practice sending non-fear signals. This must be practiced until you can do it without thinking at home, then practiced in real bullying situations with a friend giving you feedback later about any fear you are still radiating. Adults will rarely be able to witness bullying, so peers are the only real feedback available. Below are all of the ways we tend to send fear signals when we become scared, nervous, upset, or angry. Each of the different parts of the body reacts to uncomfortable situations instinctively and feed the dance. Below we will learn how to change these habits to react in the right way.

Each section below describes the wrong and the right way to control all the different parts of the body when you are being picked on by a bully:

HEAD

Wrong: Head tipped forward and down. Tipping the head forward projects fear to a bully and this will keep him or her coming back to pick on you over and over.

Right: Keep your head tipped slightly up. This makes you appear calm and relaxed.

EYES

Wrong: Looking down or nervously around with your eyes. If you watch two dogs approach each other, one of them will always look down to let the other dog know that he or she is "in charge". This "in charge" feeling is what a bully seeks when picking on you. If you feed him or her that feeling, he or she will continue to target you.

Right: Always keep your eyes higher than eye level and focus on something in the distance. Don't look directly over the bully's head, always slightly to the right or left. This will keep your eyes up and it will also keep your eyes from moving nervously around the room. By doing this you will not be projecting fear with your eyes. Don't look at the bully because this will feed him or her your attention, and he or she might also be able to see fear in your eyes.

MOUTH

Wrong: Chin shaking or moving side to side. Lips held apart and trembling. These signals will tell the bully that you are uncomfortable and scared. The more uncomfortable you appear, the more confident the kid picking on you becomes. Often a bully will become more aggressive as the victim appears more afraid.

Right: Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth or behind your front teeth. This will stop your jaw from shaking. Bring your lips together to stop your lips from trembling, but don't squeeze them together. Your goal is to look as relaxed and calm as possible. Yawning a couple of times quietly will project a very relaxed impression. If you appear bored and relaxed that is the opposite of appearing afraid. Remember how hard it is to sleep after you watch a scary movie. If you appear sleepy you can't appear scared at the same time.

BREATHING

Wrong: Allowing your breathing to speed up. This indicates fear.

Right: Slow down your breathing silently, and maybe yawn subtly. Really be careful to look natural and not forced. A fake yawn will make things worse.

SHOULDERS

Wrong: Curled forward and/or pulled up toward your ears. Just like a turtle, when we become afraid we try and pull our arms, legs and head into our shell. Unfortunately we don't have shells so we wind up curling our shoulders forward and pulling them up toward our ears. We also tend to keep our arms close to our body and our legs and feet close together.

Right: Keep your shoulders down and relaxed so you don't look tense and afraid. Do not push them down too hard or you will look tense.

ARMS

Wrong: Holding your arms in close to your body. Remember to not hold your arms up close to your body like a kangaroo. Also moving your arms stiffly projects fear.

Right: Let your arms and shoulders swing loosely and naturally as you move. Be careful not to over-exaggerate this or you will look uncomfortable instead of relaxed and confident. Imagine that your arms and shoulders are loose and relaxed. Always drag your arms naturally with your shoulders. Do not move your arms independently of the shoulders or it will not look natural. Any muscle tension in the body radiates fear.

HANDS & FINGERS

Wrong: Letting the bully see your fingers shaking or balled into fists. If the bully sees your fingers shaking they will know you are afraid no matter what other techniques you do to hide your fear. If they see you making fists you will appear to be tense and they will know they are getting to you.

Right: Hold your fingers together and curl them slightly to look natural. Don't look at your hands while you are doing this, simply bring your fingers together in a loose, curled, karate chop position. Next bring the thumb to the curled index finger for somewhere to let it rest naturally.

LEGS & FEET

Wrong: Walking fast to get away from the bully. The faster you walk, the more the bully will know you are afraid. When you come into a room where there is someone who picks on you, don't turn and leave immediately. First walk slowly past them scuffing your feet and pretend to look closely at some object in the room. Once you have crossed the room, turn and slowly walk past them again as you leave. Try to stay more than an arms length away from them so they can't push or hit you. This will fool the bully and everyone watching into thinking that you are not afraid of the person who picks on you. If the bully or anyone else in the room thinks you are uncomfortable or afraid, he or she may target you in the future.

Right: Walk at half your normal pace and scuff your feet slightly. By scuffing your feet you make sure your pace is slowed and it also makes you look relaxed and confident. If you are standing, make sure your feet are at least shoulder width apart. Shift your weight to one side and maybe dip one of your shoulders.

MOVEMENTS AND WALKING

Wrong: Making quick jerky movements. If you watch any great actor or actress, they always move very slowly and confidently. Slow movements make a person appear cool, calm, collected and confident.

Right: Slow down all your movements as much as you can while still looking natural. For example, if you have to scratch your ear, bring your hand up slowly, scratch your ear slowly, and then drop your hand naturally to your side again. Don't rush anything. Try to keep your hands away from your face when someone is making fun of you. Covering any part of your face sends out fear to the bully. Slow down your walking speed to about half your normal pace. This will confuse the bully, who expects you to speed up to get away. By not speeding up, you are no longer giving the person picking on you the reaction he or she wants. If you don't feed bullies the reaction they want, they will move on and leave you alone. If no one gives them the reaction they seek, they will be forced to be cool to people in order to get a response. This helps bullies learn to be a friend by teaching them how to treat people.

VOICE

Wrong: Talking back to a bully when they put you down. The tone of your voice will tell the bully that you are afraid. When they pick on you, pretend that they are a ghost who you can't see or hear. A bully gets 90% of their putdowns from the victim talking back. Don't respond so the bully won't hear fear in your voice and will quickly run out of things to make fun of you about.

Right: Never say a word to a bully even if you have the perfect comeback. Pretend like you can't hear or see anything they say or do. Silence, combined with the above body language techniques will project a cool and confident air. By not saying anything back to the bully, you will appear cool and mysterious. If you talk back they will toy with you like a cat playing with a mouse. There is no exception to this rule. If you talk back, they will pick on you forever. Whatever you say back is like playing one-on-one basketball with Michael Jordan and hoping to win. The minute you open your mouth you have already lost and fed the bully both fear and attention. The section below will discuss this in more detail.

ATTENTION: Don't give students who bully attention.

Attention is a bully's second favorite "food". Attention is given to a person in two ways. One way is by looking at the person. Another is by talking or responding to the person. To take your attention away from a bully you must not look at or talk back to him or her in any way. There are no exceptions to this rule. I don't care if you stayed up all night coming up with the best comebacks possible, if you use them the bully will keep coming back and picking on you. Trying to outdo a bully with putdowns would be like playing one-on-one basketball with Michael Jordan. Even if you practice for a whole year, he's still going to beat you. Let's say you get a couple lucky shots that go in...you're still going to lose the game. It is the same with a bully. This is a person who practices putting people down all day, every day. Now suddenly you think you're going to beat this person at their own game with little or no practice. If you are able to win by putting a person down worse than he or she puts you down, you'll probably end up in a fist-fight. And if putting him or her down is easy, you might be a bully yourself.

Remember; never say anything back to a bully no matter what. You will look much cooler pretending like they don't exist and concentrating on not showing any signs of fear listed above. By taking your attention and fear away, you will also take other peoples attention away from the bully. People watch bullying because they want to see how the victim will react. If you don't react to the bully, there will be nothing to watch and everyone will get bored and quit paying attention. The bully, who thrives on attention, will leave you alone because they can no longer use you to get attention and show off their power. This is the secret to no longer being targeted. Once the bully and everyone else know that you will not react to teasing, no one will want to tease you anymore. Remember, showing any sign of fear or giving any sign of attention is reacting.

THINGS: Never give material things to a bully.

It will never work to give a student who is bullying something (money, candy, food, CDs, DVDs, games, clothes, toys, etc.) in order to make him or her like you. As a matter of fact, the more things you give to a person who is bullying, the more things they will demand. The worst part is, the more things you give to a person targeting you, the less they will like you. Studies have shown that kids who bully view targeted kids who try to buy their friendship as suckers. Never give a person who is mean to you any material reward. It will only keep them coming back to pick on you.

Don't invite kids who bully you to go places with you either. This is the same as giving them things. They will see this as you trying to buy their friendship. Kids who pick on others like the power of knowing that you are so afraid of them that you will try and bribe them to not pick on you. If you meet their demands, they will only be nice for a short time, and then immediately turn and pick on you again. They have to keep you scared in order to get more things from you. This is not friendship, they are simply using you. They probably even make fun of you to other

people behind your back. You will never be able to buy a bully's friendship. You can only follow the suggestions above to earn respect. Believe it or not, a boy or girl who bullies will like you more in the long run if you don't feed them Fear, Attention and Things.

The presenter will demonstrate all of the above techniques in role-play form. I encourage parents to practice with their children until all techniques are mastered. Even when a child can do all of the techniques perfectly at home, it is still often difficult to do while they are in a real bullying situation. Many of the fear signals seem to creep back out in real bullying situations. Have your child find a friend who will watch them in real-life situations and give them specific feedback later about the above body-language. This will be the fastest way to master the techniques in real life situations.

Physical bullying:

Physical bullying is a small percentage of the bullying that happens. (3%-5% for boys and 1%-2% for girls) Most bullying is verbal and social. However, when physical bullying does occur it is terrifying for the kids who are targeted.

Most physical bullying happens on the way to and from school (bus-stops and buses) and/or in your child's neighborhood. Bullies will threaten, intimidate, and do subtle physical things at school, but most wait until they are off school grounds and away from adults to get violent. Just like a verbal bully, they feed off of fear. Doing the above body-language techniques becomes very difficult if you think the bully is going to physically attack you.

If your child is attacked he or she has the right to defend him or her self. If your child does not defend him or herself, the violence will escalate and the bully will become more and more aggressive. The chances of more serious injury increase with each attack.

There is a safer way for your child to defend him or her self:

- 1) Go to a local Martial Arts instructor. It doesn't matter if it is Karate, Kung Fu, Taekwondo or any other form. Any form will be fine. The key is that the instructor is skilled at teaching blocking and control combinations similar to what well trained law enforcement uses.
- 2) Tell the instructor that you would like your child to learn the instructor's five most effective self-defense (blocking and control) combinations. Don't just sign your son or daughter up for Martial Arts classes. Ask specifically for the instructor to teach your child the specific combinations mentioned above in a one-on-one learning style. The goal is to master the five combinations within about two to three months. After that, if your child wants to go on and learn more, great, but at least he or she will be trained quickly to safely and efficiently defend him or her self. If you just sign them up for classes it will take two years before your child will be able to effectively defend him or her self.
- 3) Once your child masters the five blocking and control combinations a strange thing will happen. Very few bullies will hit them anymore, and if they do it will only happen once. Now when the bully tries to physically intimidate your child, your child will be thinking of what combination he or she will use to defend him or her self. Now instead of radiating fear your child will radiate confidence and a funny thing will happen. The bully will sense your child's confidence and lack of fear and not attack. (Dogs react the same way. When they sense fear they bite. The bully can smell fear like a shark smells blood in the ocean.)

If the bully impulsively attacks anyway, he or she will wind up face down on the ground. (not hurt, but startled) Much like a criminal being controlled by the police, your child will be physically in control of the bully and the situation. Word will travel through the school and no one will physically touch your child again. Not only do these skills prevent violence before it starts, but they also balance your child's power with the bully, and for the first time that boy or girl will respect your son or daughter. Learning to defend your self safely is the key, and there is no shortcut to professional training. The instructor can tailor the training to the specific violent situations and settings that your child is facing. Have them teach blocking and control combinations specifically for what is happening in each bullying setting. (Examples: Hallway shoving, tripping, bus stop attack, etc.)

Many kids who previously bullied your son or daughter will seek out your child as a friend once he or she defends him or her self physically. It will now be your child's choice to decide if they want to hang out with the kid who previously targeted them or not.

Cyber-Bullying Internet Sites and Books

www.puresight.com Software that blocks cyber-bullying attempts by recognizing phrases, and notifies you as a parent.

www.spectorsoft.com Software that lets you monitor everything your child does on-line. What they send, receive, and search will be tracked. Good to get if you suspect or have caught your child targeting others. Also excellent if you are having problems with tech-savvy teenagers going to sites you have prohibited.

www.keylogger.com A free version of software that attempts to do similar functions that spectorsoft performs. Not as good, but free. For less tech-savvy teens this may be enough.

www.kidscape.org.uk Gives some basic advice about how to respond to cyber-bullying along with links.

www.cyberbullying.org General information and links.

www.internetsuperheroes.org General information and links.

www.cyberlawenforcement.org Can report serious threats received online. (Death threats, etc.) Not for reporting minor threats or harassment. Save all serious cyber-threats so you have evidence when reporting.

www.wiredsafety.org General information and links.

www.cyberbully.org General information and links.

www.netbullies.com General information and links.

Books:

Cyber-Bullying: Bullying In The Digital Age by Robin M. Kowalski PhD, Susan P. Limber PhD, Patricia W. Agaston PhD.

Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying by Sameer Hinduja and Justin P. Patchin.

Cyber Bullying: Protecting Kids and Adults from Online Bullies by Samuel C. McQuade III, James P. Colt, and Nancy Meyer.