

How to deal with teasing



Violence among children and youth is considered to be **any deliberate physical or psychological bullying** of children and young people by their peers **with intent to harm them**, but it may vary in form, severity and duration. This kind of violence is typically repeated many times, and usually the opponents are not as strong (stronger against the weaker, older against younger or group against an individual).

Violence that happens at school and on the way to and/or from school may include these types of behaviour:

- Insulting and name-calling
- Pushing and shoving
- Taking money or other possessions
- Spreading gossip
- Avoidance or ignoring by peers
- Beating up or any kind of physical harm
- Threatening or intimidating

It's important for me to know that ...

Unfortunately, many of your peers also suffer violence - you are not alone in this situation.
You do not deserve this treatment - no one has the right to be so hard on you.

What should I do in these situations?

Sometimes you can solve arguments just by directly telling the person that the things they do offend or hurt you and asking them to stop. You can try the following techniques.

Expressing yourself assertively

What is assertiveness?

Clearly expressing your interests, feelings and opinions, without intent to harm others - saying exactly what you want and how you feel.

Sometimes people can be rude, try to get you to do things you don't want to, or prevent you from getting what you deserve. First and foremost you can say loud and clear: Stop it! It may not solve the problem, but it is a great start.

I'm strong!

- **Express desires and feelings in the first person: I want! I do not want! I feel! I think!**

- A way to regain a sense of power, if lost

- Speak in the first person, in a clear and confident way, to express desires and emotions in conflict

I want you to stop doing that

I want you to stop teasing

I feel bad when you do that

I feel angry when we're talking

If we only blame others without expressing our feelings, desires and suggestions for change, this creates more conflict.

It is also important to **pay attention to body language when we say these things**. For the sentence to have the effect you want, you need to have a relaxed posture, look the person you are talking to directly in the eye, and confidently say what you want. It is important to try to avoid wringing your hands, smiling inappropriately, holding your own shoulders, covering your mouth with your hands, or quietly mumbling to yourself.

So that you feel as confident as possible about 'performing' like this, you can practise in front of the mirror, with a parent or with us on the helpline.

Person: Hey, little guy, you got a problem?

Me: I don't like you being mean to me like that.

If someone at school bullies you and you do what they want you to, they might continue with their demands.

Here are some ideas on how to cope with teasing:

The 'powerful maybe'

The 'powerful maybe' is a technique that **can be used as a defence in any situation** when we don't like what the other person is saying to us. It allows us to respond to any verbal situation where criticism, condemnation or teasing aims to embarrass, humiliate and criticise us.

'Powerful maybe' means using statements such as "**you may be right**" or "**maybe that's true**" over and over again until the criticism stops. If someone uses strong and sarcastic words that simply can't be easily ignored, we can always resort to "yes sentences".

Person: Haha, when did you buy your clothes, last century?

Me: Maybe you're right.

Person: Of course I'm right. How can you wear them at all?

Me: Maybe you're right.

Person: Grow up, kid!

Me: Maybe I will!

Perseverance pays off

We have to understand that sometimes in life, people can ignore our words, and resort to ridicule or intimidation to try and make us change our minds or go away.

If someone ignores us, we need to repeat our words calmly until we get the reaction we want.

Responding to teasing

For different reasons some children love to tease others. Regardless of whether the teasing is gentle and fun or cruel and degrading, the aim is always to cause a reaction.

Any technique for responding to teasing requires persistence. You also always need to be aware that the aim of teasing is to get a reaction, but in these situations it's important to show that we aren't upset.

In any situation when someone is bothering us, it is very important to communicate directly how we feel and what we want.

The powerful "maybe" combined with persistence will discourage most bullies. If we are persistent, at some point the bully will give in, because we are taking all the fun out of their teasing.

Shrugging it off

This is a simple-to-use technique that can be used in all teasing situations. Shrugging it off simply means mentally, physically and verbally discarding teasing in a careless way.

To use this technique, we shrug our shoulders, look away, look like we're bored, use the words "I don't care" and "so what" and leave the situation without paying attention.

It is important to break eye contact with the person who teasing us. This way, we send a clear message that we don't want to keep talking.

Person: Hey, you walk like a clown!

Me: So what? (Shrug and walk away in the other direction)

Reverse teasing

For this technique we use a type of playful humour in response to the teaser. This is not just deterrence teasing or hitting back for your own satisfaction. It means responding with humour and

comic exaggeration. In response to the teasing you can say something like:

oh thanks, thank you very much you win you know, I think you're right

The point is that instead of fighting a taunt, we turn the teasing into a joke with exaggeration.

Person: Hey, kid! You got a problem? Don't you know how to walk?

Me: You're so kind

Person: Yeah, you walk like a penguin!

Me: Thank you, I've always wanted to be a penguin.

Person: Look at you, a little more and you'll turn into a penguin!

Me: Oh really! You're right, call my parents quickly!

Leaving the situation

In particular, we need to be cautious with potentially dangerous people who tease us and could hurt us. In these cases, the less you say, the better. One good way to cope with this kind of bully is just to get up and leave, or stay near an adult, not where this person could catch you in private.

Important to know!

- **You cannot change a person who is bullying you, but can you tell an adult** who can talk to them, to decide the consequences of their unacceptable behaviour and teach them acceptable ways of behaving (they sometimes threaten you if you want to tell someone, but only because they know the teasing could be prevented).
- **Keep talking about the problem until someone takes action.**
- **Do not respond to violence.**
- **Don't confront the bully with the problem.** If you know of any cases of violence, tell your parents, teacher, psychologist, teaching assistant ...
- Support from your parents (or other adults you trust) is very important and you should **always share your anxieties with them.**
- Remember that **no one has the right to stop you** leaving the school.
- **Professionals at your school (class teachers, professors, other teachers, psychologists, teaching assistants, head-teachers) have a duty to protect you from the violent behaviour of other students.** Confide in one of them, and they have a responsibility to find a way to help you.
- **Do not be shy about asking for help.**
- **Speaking out** is the only way to stop intimidation and violence.