



# Teasing Happens: Tips for Parents

Teasing can be a real pain. Dealing with teasing from peers usually becomes an issue for most children around the age of 5 and peaks around the teen years. When relationships with friends and "being one of the gang" are important. Hurtful or mean teasing can begin to disappear around age 12 or 13, but more subtle forms can continue into high school.

Many children do not tell their parents or adults about teasing or bullying incidents at school, especially boys or older teens. It is important to be aware of what is happening at school.

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## Ways to explore the school situation with your child:

1. Talk a lot with your child about all areas of their life, especially if you feel teasing may be an issue. Ask general questions about who their friends are, who they sit by at lunch or on the bus, and if there are kids at school that they don't really like. Ask if they feel picked on or excluded.

2. Try to know your child's personality-how sensitive is your child to teasing? How sensitive are you?

3. Remind your child that everyone is different in some way and most children get teased about something. Share some of your childhood experiences.

4. Tell your child that you are concerned and you would like to help, but try to support their attempts to handle the problem themselves! This can be empowering for them.

5. Teach them that although they cannot control being teased, they can control their reaction. Encourage them to stay calm. Practice some ways to respond to teasing through role-playing and phrases.

6. Teach your child the difference between another child's curiosity about their difference and actual teasing. Encourage your child to express feelings about being different. The more secure your child feels about his/her differences, the less taunting by peers will have an effect.

7. Teasing can turn into bullying.

Some possible warning signs that this has gone too far include:

The child comes home with missing belongings, has changed friends abruptly, seems afraid to go to school or unwilling, suddenly doing poorly in school, complains of headaches, stomachaches, etc., has trouble sleeping, or appears anxious.

8. Talk to a teacher or other staff in the school to gain insight into your child's relationships with other children at school. If you are not comfortable talking with your child's teacher or not satisfied with the conversation, make an appointment to meet with the principal to discuss your concerns.

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