

# How to Encourage Empathy

## Consequences that Teach

Bullying is about power. Children will experiment with their power and push boundaries, this is a natural part of growing up, but sometimes it may lead to bullying. When addressing a child who has bullied, the important thing is to help them learn from the experience. Consequences that teach rather than punish provide a clear message that bullying is unacceptable while helping kids understand the impact of their actions on others.

When children bully, their privileges can be withdrawn and replaced by an instructive activity from this list of suggestions below:

## How To Encourage Empathy

- Help your children identify and label feelings of shame, embarrassment, anger, fear or sadness in themselves and in others.
- Have your children draw a picture of what they think it must feel like to be bullied. Talk about the feelings that children who are bullied might feel.
- Have your children talk with you, a sibling, or another adult about their bullying experiences and the impact it had on them.
- Have your children watch a movie about bullying (e.g., *Mean Girls*, *Back to the Future*) and encourage them to focus on the feelings of the victimized person. Help them to identify these feelings by looking out for facial expressions, body posture, and tone of voice.
- Have your children identify instances of bullying in the media (e.g., television, newspapers, radio, magazines, websites) and talk with them about their reactions to these instances.
- Talk with your children about their own strengths and weaknesses and how they can use power to help, not hurt, others.

## How To Make Amends

- Bullying is wrong and hurtful. It is a relationship problem that requires a relationship solution. The goal is to repair the relationship in a way that is genuine and caring and restore the relationship to a respectful foundation. Sometimes children are not at a point where they are able to restore a relationship - but they do need to respect other children and their right to feel safe.
- If your children can restore the relationship in a genuine way, without being forced, help them find a way to make amends.
- If they are sorry for their behavior and genuinely want to make amends, you can have your children write a letter or card of apology to the children who were victimized.
- Encourage your children to make a verbal apology that includes taking responsibility for the behavior and indicating what they will do to ensure the children who were

victimized feel better. It is important that the children who were victimized want to participate in this process and that the apology is given privately rather than publicly. Apologies conducted in front of others can leave both children feeling embarrassed.

- Encourage your children to repair or restore property or personal belongings that were damaged as a result of the bullying.

## **How To Empower Your Child With Kindness And Positive Activities**

Everyone needs to feel that they are being effective in the world and have the power to make things happen, including children and youth. This is what we mean by empowerment. The goal is to help children identify and use their power in positive ways that help and support others.

- Encourage your children to perform 5 acts of kindness and describe how they felt after completing each act.
- Encourage your children to observe other children in school or individuals in the community and look for acts of kindness. Have your children describe what they observed and how they think the people felt.
- Identify your children's strengths and abilities and provide them with opportunities to highlight these skills in ways that help others. For example, if your children excel at soccer, get them to teach or practice with younger children or siblings.
- When you are addressing children who have bullied, it is essential that you are constructive and avoid using your power aggressively. If you model bullying for your children, it will be difficult for them to develop healthy relationships.

Source:

<https://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents/how-to-encourage-empathy>