

## **STRATEGIES TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO BULLIES**

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Bullies thrive on intimidating and controlling others through their mean words, physical aggression, nasty rumors, threats, etc. Therefore, it is crucial that bullying victims and/or bystanders disarm bullies and gain control by responding to them with strength and empowerment rather than upset emotions or fear by:

**BEING DIRECTIVE** – It is often helpful to look bullies directly in the eye and tell them to stop in a tone of voice that conveys that you mean it and are not afraid. Examples of directive responses include, “Stop it right now!” and “Do not ever bully me again!” Bullies quickly lose interest when they are unable to “get under your skin” and move on in the hopes of finding someone they can have more success with.

**ASKING QUESTIONS** – Asking bullies questions concerning the fairness of their behavior usually leaves them speechless and forces them to internally reflect on their behavior. Effective questions include:

- “What makes you think you have the right to bully me?”
- “Do you think you are behaving fairly?”
- “I know your bullying behavior is an attempt to feel better about yourself. How is it working?”

**OFFERING TO BE HELPFUL** – Rather than respond to bullies by bullying them back, “change the game” by trying to be helpful by asking:

- “How I can I help you with your problem with bullying?”
- “What could you do to develop greater empathy?”

**USING HUMOR** – Humor quickly disarms bullies and empowers victims and/or bystanders to take control. For instance, if someone makes fun of your sneakers you can respond by saying:

- “Thank you very much for your interest in my sneakers. I would be glad to give you a picture of them to take home.”
- “My sneakers told me they do not care how you feel about them.”

**BEHAVING UNPREDICTABLY** – Since bullies are looking for specific responses which make they feel powerful or in control, they usually have no idea what to do if a victim and/or group of bystanders responds to them in an unpredictable way by breaking out in a song such as *Jingle Bells*, congratulating them on a good try, dancing around them, etc.

