



Parent Assignment #4: Grade 3

"Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you."

That generations-old phrase has a nice rhythmic ring to it and sounds wise enough. However there is no comfort on the playground, the bus or in the bathroom, where a nasty insult or humiliating rumor is directed to a child or even an adult.



The truth is, words can and do hurt. Unlike a banged-up knee that magically stops aching with a Band-Aid, hurtful words have the power to injure a child's spirit and self-esteem. Those wounds can't be patched up with a clever adage or a pat on the back.

Name-calling and teasing unfortunately are as much a part of children's lives as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Sometimes the behavior is playful and good-humored, used to show affection or attention. But too often it is cruel and hurtful, causing the target to feel sad, angry and humiliated, or worse, to become withdrawn from schoolwork and other activities.

Children learn to use name-calling and teasing as weapons to gain social power. Later in childhood, such tactics are the number one accompaniment to bullying and often are precursors to violence. Putting an end to name-calling and verbal bullying requires effort, every day, in schools and in homes. Here are some strategies parents can use with children to discourage hurtful teasing and name-calling.

When A Child Is The Target

Be observant...

Look for changes in the child's mood, appearance or behavior. Reluctance to go to school, silence about what is happening at school, or low self-esteem can be indicators that a child is being verbally harassed or bullied.

Ask questions...

Show interest in the child's day and ask open-ended questions that are less likely to be answered with yes or no. Instead of "How was your day?" try asking, "What happened at lunchtime today?" or, "What kinds of things did you do on the playground?"

Share your feelings...

Talk to children about a time when you were bullied or verbally harassed as a child. Share how it made you feel and how you handled it.

Empower children...

Teach preventative tactics such as reporting harassment to teachers, counselors or administrators. Also teach children to stay near friends or adult supervisors. Try role-playing to reenact the verbal bullying and brainstorm witty comebacks or other non-aggressive ways to respond.

When A Child Is The Perpetrator

Set good examples...

Be aware of your own behavior, as it sets the standard of behavior for the children around you. Do you yell taunts or names at opposing teams during sporting events, for example?

Examine discipline tactics...

Never discipline any child out of anger or use put-downs when a child misbehaves or makes mistakes. Children who use verbal harassment as a bullying method require discipline that is non-violent, consistent and logically handed out.

Show disapproval...

Let the child know taunting and name-calling are unacceptable. Express disappointment or concern if you know the child has taunted someone. Ask the child to apologize to the person he or she taunted.

Foster empathy...

Provide opportunities for the child to be of service to others -- volunteering at a shelter, making cards for sick children, cleaning up a neighborhood. Encourage a child to always think about how it might feel to stand in another person's shoes.

It is important for children to know that verbal harassment is serious. Telling children that name-calling doesn't hurt, not only disregards children's feelings, it also sends an underlying message that such behavior is acceptable.

Source: <http://www.guidancechannel.com>

Assignment

Ask your child to review the day's lesson, and handouts with you. Discuss their feelings about the lesson, and any issues that may have come up for them that day in school.

Choose one or more of the following:

1) Encourage your child to "interview" you regarding your experiences of hurtful words. Answer the following questions: Were you teased or bullied at school when you were a child? How did you feel when children made fun of you? What did you do? Knowing what you know now, how would you have reacted differently? What do you think can be done to stop bullying in schools?

Reverse roles and ask your child the same questions. Discuss responses to look for similarities and differences.

2) Pick a movie, book or TV show you've both seen or read that had teasing or bullying in it. What did the victim and any witnesses do about it? What worked and what didn't? Did the story make teasing or bullying seem funny or serious?

3) Ask your child about a situation at school where they witnessed or was victim to hurtful words or bullying behavior? Role-play and practice ways different ways to respond. Have a contest to see who can come up with the best or funniest response.

4) Support bully prevention programs in your child's school. If your school doesn't have one, consider starting one with other parents, teachers, and concerned adults.



Livingston Youth and Community Services

Parent Assignment #4: Grade 3 Heartfelt Words

Student's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Which assignment did you choose, and why? _____

Was this lesson helpful? Yes/ No

Please explain _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____



Raffle Entry

Parent Assignment #4: Grade 3 Heartfelt Words

Student's Name: _____ Parent's Name: _____

School: _____ Grade 3

Please complete this sheet and return to LYCS, PO Box 822, Livingston, NJ 07039,
Fax: 973-992-9318, email: lycs@livingston.org, or leave at reception in school