Love and Logic®

'TEASEPROOF' YOUR KIDS

by Jim Fay

"Mom, I don't want to go to school. It's not fair. Mrs. Taylor tells the kids not to tease me, but they still do it when she's not watching 'em. I try to ignore 'em just like you said, but they just do it all the more."

Loving parents who are confronted with this feel like a piece of their hearts is being ripped out. What a hopeless feeling we have when our kids are being rejected or teased by other kids. It is not uncommon at these times to have feelings that include both heartache and rage.

We think to ourselves, "Why can't the school people protect my child? Don't they realize that we put our kids in their hands, and therefore, our trust?"

The sad truth is that the more a teacher protects the child who is teased, the more resentful and aggressive the other children become. A teacher who tells kids to be nice to a specific child actually "marks" that youngster and sets him/her up for more intense rejection and ridicule.

When it comes to teasing, the only person who can protect your child from teasing is your child. Kids have some sort of built-in sonar that causes them to zero in on certain kids and they can be unmerciful in the torment.

Watching this happen can be a gut-wrenching experience for any adult. But the good news is that we can actually help kids become "teaseproof."

Have you ever noticed that some kids never get teased while others are constantly subjected to teasing? There is a pattern to this.

Kids who are never teased never worry about being teased. They can't imagine that it would ever happen to them. They have an aura around them that says, "I can handle myself."

Kids who do get teased constantly worry about being ridiculed and send out non-verbal messages that indicate lack of confidence and fear of teasing. Children are especially in tune with non-verbal signals of weakness. Without realizing what they are doing they zero in on these kids. Two subconscious goals come into play. The first is, "I can show others that I am superior to that kid," and the other is, "That kid's weak and I better show him that he needs to toughen up."

Remember that none of this happens at the conscious level. It just happens and appears to be human nature.

The trick to "teaseproofing" a youngster is giving him/her the skills to be able to handle teasing. Once the child realizes he/she can actually handle the problem, you will see a change in the non-verbal attitude. The other kids will recognize this and start looking for different targets.

Mr. Mendez, a wonderful second-grade teacher, "teaseproofed" his whole class. He said to the class, "Kids, the reason kids tease other kids is that it makes them feel superior. Now you can let them get away with this or you can use an adult one-liner. But first of all, we all have to practice the 'cool look.'"

This teacher had the kids practice standing with their hands in their pockets, rocking back on their heels, and putting a cool grin on their face.

He practiced this over and over. Every now and then, he would yell out, "Let's see your 'cool look.'" The kids would all jump out of their seats and put on the "look."

Once they had all mastered the "cool look," he said, "When kids start to tease you, put on your 'cool look.' Keep the look going while they tease. As soon as they get through putting you down, use your one-liner."

The one-liner he taught them is one of the famous Love and Logic One-Liners, "Thanks for sharing that with me." Mr. Mendez had the kids practice this, making sure that they kept the "cool look" on while they said the words.

Every now and then, when the kids would least expect it, he would yell out, "Let me hear your one-

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Love and Logic

liner!" And the kids would practice saying the words, making sure to grin while they said them.

Once the teacher felt that the class had mastered saying, "Thanks for sharing that with me," in the appropriate way, he started having them practice jumping up out of their seats, putting on the "cool look," and saying their one-liner.

The next step was for the kids to learn to turn around on the last word and walk away fast without looking back at the teasing child. Needless to say, they all did their practice until the skill was mastered. They even spent some of their recess time practicing this on the playground.

Now that the skill was learned, practiced and mastered, Mr. Mendez could implement his part of the operation. When children came to him to tattle about others teasing them he consistently asked, "Did you let him get by with it or did you use your 'cool skill'?"

In the event that child admitted that he had not used his/her skill, the teacher said, "How sad that you let him get away with it. Do you suppose you are going to continue to let him get by with it or are you going to use your skill? It's your choice, but tattling to me is no longer a choice."

Mr. Mendez tells us that the amount of tattling and complaining has been reduced by over 90%. He also proudly tells about one of his students who came to him asking if they had to use the one-liner he taught them, or could they make up their own.

This second-grader wanted to demonstrate to the class the one-liner that he used so successfully on the playground.

He stood before the class and said, "This other kid on the playground was dissin' me. He said I had the skinniest arms in the whole school. I put on my 'cool look.' I grinned and said, 'Bummer, I thought I was cool, man.' I walked away before he could figure out what to say. Man, I blew his mind!"

All the kids clapped for this skillful second-grader, and the teacher beamed with pride as he thought to himself, "Now that kid is really 'teaseproofed' for sure."

You don't have to wait for the teacher to "teaseproof" your kids. You can do it in your home the same way Mr. Mendez did in the classroom. What a gift you can give your child, and come to think of it, what a gift it is to a parent to know that we can send our kids out into the world "teaseproofed."

Since the development of the "cool look" skill, many different kids have found sanctuary in its use. One of the most creative applications was seen at a local school where the kids seem to take great pleasure in claiming to do research on the behavior of other kids' mothers and attacking each other with this information when they are mad.

One kid yelled out to the other, "Yo momma's a ho'." The youngster being attacked put on his "cool look" and returned, "I tell her to be nice, but she gets mad when I tell her what to do." With this he turned and walked away.

The teacher who witnessed this reported that the attacker's mouth fell open and all he could say under his breath was, "Man, that guy's weird. He be weird."

Now the kid who pulled this one off is absolutely "teaseproofed." Even if kids try to tease him, the attacks will bounce off like Ping-Pong balls off a stone wall.

People who are really successful implementing this skill purchased Words Will Never Hurt Me

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