



PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #19

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Easing the Teasing

Teasing can be painful to even the most confident child. The good news is that helping your child learn coping skills can ease teasing.

Let your children know that they have the ability to control how they react to teasing. Strategies include:

- **Ignore.** Displays of anger and tears often entice the teaser to continue.
- **Agree with the facts.** A statement such as "Yes, I wear glasses. Now I can see!" can disarm the teaser.
- **Reframe.** Turning a tease into a compliment can be a great way to stop teasing in its tracks, i.e. "Thanks for noticing my red hair. I'm so glad you like it!"
- **So?** The response of "so?" to the teaser conveys indifference. When the tease doesn't matter, it loses its power.
- **Disregard.** It is easier to deal with teasing when a child realizes that he does not have to accept or believe what is said.

Source: Judy S. Freedman, M.S.W.; Easingtheteasing.com



When a child experiences teasing, it is important to see the problem from the child's point of view. Sit down and listen attentively to your child in a nonjudgmental way. Ask your child to describe the teasing. Where is it happening? Who is the teaser? Understand and validate your child's feelings. It might be helpful to relate your childhood experience with teasing.

Source: Parent Partners Empower, Fall 2001

Power Tools to Combat Teasing

You can help your children understand that teasing may not be able to be prevented and they cannot control what others say; however, even in these situations children do not need to feel helpless.

- They can choose to visualize the teasing as nothing more than a pebble that can easily "bounce off" of them. This provides them with the image of a shield that surrounds them and helps teases or bad words lose their impact.
- They can choose to practice positive self-talk. Encourage children to think about what they can say to themselves when they are in a teasing situation. A child could say to himself, "I like who I am, and I won't let what someone else says change what I believe".
- They can choose not to overreact by telling themselves, "Even though I don't like this, I can handle it."
- They can choose to see humor in the tease. Laughter makes the tease feel more like a joke and less like a personal assault.
- They can choose not to take the tease personally. Sometimes, the tease is something that another child says whenever his/her security is threatened.
- They can choose to respond with an "I message". In a structured or supervised situation such as a classroom, they could say "I feel upset when you make fun of my drawing. I would like it to stop."



- They can choose to move away from the teaser. On the bus or in the classroom, they may decide to move to the front where they will be within earshot of an adult.
- They may choose to defend themselves with a statement of "I like it that way."

Source: Parents and Schools Together for Success, Volume 4, Issue 4 Summer 2000.

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