

Counselor's Corner

September 2023

Teasing, Bullying, Conflicts: What's the Difference?

School is back in full swing and the inevitability of conflict comes with it. The words above are often used interchangeably, but understanding the differences can help adults coach kids on the best way to respond.

Teasing can involve neutral, friendly, playful words and actions but can also be negative, annoying or hurtful. Teasing is often meant to get attention or provoke a reaction. Strategies such as under-reacting or ignoring often put an end to teasing but children should be encouraged to seek help from an adult if those responses don't work. When teasing becomes hostile behavior intended to exert power over another person, it can escalate to bullying.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that is *intentional, persistent, severe, pervasive and involves a social or physical power imbalance between the person doing the bullying and the target.*

The four types of bullying are verbal (using mean words to hurt or intimidate); physical (harming a person's body or possessions); social (intended to hurt someone's social relationships or reputation); and cyber (harming others over a device). Children who experience or witness bullying at school are encouraged to stand up to bullying and report it, but parents and guardians should contact the school immediately if bullying occurs. Bullying is serious behavior that cannot be ignored and rarely stops without intervention.

Conflicts are arguments, disagreements, or fights between people and a normal part of relationships. While conflicts may involve verbal name calling or physical aggression, a one-time event of two children fighting with no perceived power imbalance is not an example of bullying.



(831) 429-1456

<https://www.hvesd.com/>

Upcoming Events

9/4 No School
Labor Day

9/7 Special Board
Meeting
3:30 pm MPR

9/13 Picture Day

9/13 Board Meeting
3:30 pm MPR

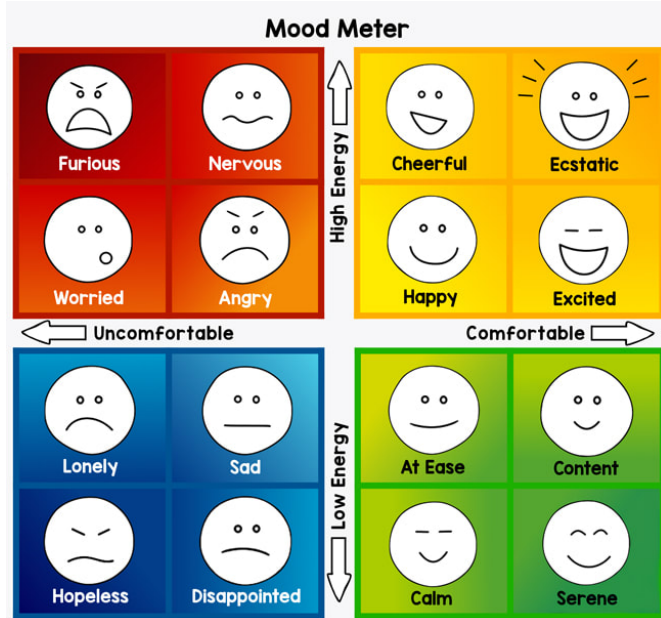
9/14 Coffee with the
Principal
8:30-9:30 MPR

9/20 Parent Club
Meeting
6:30 pm Zoom

9/25-9/29 6th Grade
Science Camp

Teaching Kids How to Handle Conflict

Dealing with conflicts is an essential skill since it is something that we all will encounter throughout life. Even though it may not be pleasant, it doesn't have to feel disastrous. We can teach kids practical skills to manage it in a healthy way.



The first step in the process is to help kids identify the feeling they are experiencing. Visual tools, such as a feelings chart, emotion thermometer, or mood meter, can be helpful for kids to identify what they're feeling. Sometimes the feelings are so intense that the child must first calm down before you can help problem solve.

Once the child is in a calm state, the next step is figuring out what the problem is. The younger the child, the more they may need your help to put words to the situation.

Help your child brainstorm possible solutions. It's important to help kids understand the process of evaluation of the possible actions. Sometimes you won't reach a solution that makes everyone happy or you won't know what the best option is, but that's okay. Kids may need to go back to the drawing board, but let them know the goal is to make their best effort.

Adults have the privilege of understanding perspective, but as a kid, the conflict can feel huge and urgent. You can help them to think beyond the conflict, practice empathy, and consider the context of the situation and the relationship. All of these can help the child take a step back to see the situation from a different vantage point and encourages the process of finding solutions.

Feelings are calm, problem is identified, perspective is taken. Now how does the child take the step of communicating all of this to the other person? Help your child to use "I" statements to name their feelings and even to write down what they want to say so they can share the things that matter. You may also offer to role play the conversation so your child has practice putting the thoughts into words.

Finally, one of the best ways to help your child learn conflict resolution skills is to model it. Practice these skills at home (especially when it's a conflict with your child!), and, when appropriate, share with them ways you have solved conflicts. It's powerful and impactful to share your own experiences and how you've learned from them.