



Description of the problem: The child ridicules others or calls them unflattering names. A child who is the victim of frequent teasing can suffer a decline in self esteem. Teasing usually provokes a strong reaction. The victim may react with tears, denial, or anger. Over the long-term, he or she can become fearful of social contacts and withdraw from others. The child doing the teasing observes these responses and realizes his or her power to hurt others. In addition, adults react to the teasing by not only paying attention to the victim, but also to the offender.

Factors influencing the problem: Try to determine if there is a pattern to the teasing. Does your child tease others when angry, excluded from an activity, frustrated, or told "no"? Is your child more likely to tease younger children, shy children, the same child, friends of the same sex, or older children? Identifying a pattern can help you better understand your child's problem and solve it. For example, your child may put down other children in an effort to bolster his or her own self image. Although the teaser will find that adults and other children don't like name calling, the negative reactions may not be enough to outweigh the satisfaction the child gets from having the power to hurt others

Suggestions:

1. Try to determine the cause for your child's teasing. Does the child tease others in order to boost his or her own feelings of inadequacy? If so, try to arrange for your child to experience feelings of competence and positive self worth from appropriate behavior.
2. If the teacher complains that your child teases others at school, determine if he or she is frustrated by work that is too difficult. A child who cannot gain attention for positive achievements will often settle for negative attention over no attention at all. A poor student may try to inflate his or her image of self by putting others down.
3. Is the child bored because lessons and activities are too simple? Are there enough materials to go around? Is your child teasing others for amusement?
4. Try to pay as little attention to the teasing child as possible. Instead, turn your back to the teaser and comfort the victim.
5. While it is relatively easy for you to ignore the teasing, the child who is being teased is likely to react strongly - reinforcing the teasing behavior in the offender. Separate the two children and try to calm the upset child as quickly as possible. Distract the victim with conversation and some interesting activity. If the teased child continues to complain, express understanding and say, "Sally sometimes forgets how to talk to others."
6. Try to establish an atmosphere in your home in which everyone ignores the teasing.
7. Enlist the help of relatives, teachers, and babysitters in ignoring your child when the child teases others.
8. When your child begins acting appropriately, pay attention. Make it clear that it is the teasing you don't approve of - not the child.
9. Praise your child when you see him or her getting along with other children. Let the child know that you value the ability to cooperate.
10. Don't allow older siblings to model teasing behavior by name calling or poking fun at a younger child in the family.
11. Communicate the rules about teasing and name calling in your home.

12. After your child has behaved rudely by ridiculing, name calling, or embarrassing someone, discuss exactly what was wrong with the behavior. Discuss how the other person probably felt. Ask your child to put himself or herself in the other persons place. For example say, "How would you feel if your sister told people that you wet the bed?"
13. If poking fun is your brand of humor, realize that children have difficulty understanding the fine difference between harmless and hurtful teasing. Your child may only be following your lead.
14. Remove your child from the presence of others when the child teases.
15. After your child teases someone, discuss alternative ways to behave.
16. Before your child has guests or interacts with others, provide a reminder that rude behavior is not acceptable.
17. Supervise your child when he or she is playing with someone who is the frequent victim of the child's teasing.
18. Make certain that your child understands that when you tease others you not only hurt their feelings or make them mad. Over time, other children will avoid you.
19. Talk to your child about the differences in people and about various challenging conditions, such as blindness, difficulty learning, or needing a wheelchair.

OTHER COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:



FAMILY ACTION PLAN: (List suggestion numbers of particular relevance and specific actions planned)