

## **Counseling Corner**

### **Teasing Isn't Something To Be Ignored**

from the American Counseling Association

Teasing may often seem a normal part of childhood. Most parents have had to comfort a teary-eyed child who has been the victim of a teasing episode at school. It's just what adolescents do, right?

While schools are working harder to combat schoolyard violence and bullying, too often teasing is dismissed as something minor and commonplace that doesn't do much harm.

However, the reality is that teasing can have painful and long-lasting effects. Studies have found that children who are repeatedly teased may end up suffering from depression, anxiety and sleep problems. They are more likely to avoid school, and in severe cases can suffer from serious emotional and psychological issues.

Parents often try to encourage their son or daughter to pay no attention to being teased, repeating that old adage, "Sticks and stone may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Or they may be dismissive, telling the child to tough it out, saying that being teased just builds character. Such advice, however, doesn't really help and may just convince the child that mom and dad really don't understand how painful it is being teased. Sometimes that can lead to the child withdrawing and not sharing experiences.

Instead, experts advise letting your child know that what has upset him or her is just as serious a problem to you. Listen sympathetically to what happened and try and see the problem from your child's point of view. Don't be critical or disapprove of how your child handled the incident. He or she is already feeling picked upon and hurt.

Be supportive, showing you understand why the teasing was upsetting. You might share stories, real or hypothetical, of your teasing experiences. Your child should understand it is perfectly normal to be upset by teasing.

Children can also learn how to handle or stop teasing. There are several books on the subject. Your child's school counselor can also help. The idea is not to report the teaser, since that will seldom stop the problem, but rather to get the counselor to help your child learn techniques to stop the teasing. A local professional counselor specializing in family and child counseling is another place to turn for assistance.

To adults, teasing may seem a minor issue, but for a child facing repeated taunting, harassment and ridicule, this is a problem that can have serious negative effects his or her life.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [counseling.org](http://counseling.org)*

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