

# Four ways to help prevent bullying

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Bullying, in any form, be it physical or verbal, should never, ever be tolerated. It should result in severe consequences for the bully, because the consequences for the victim are also usually severe. Being bullied could cause the victim to have low self-esteem, fear of being around people, a lack of motivation to succeed and many other negative effects.

That being said, children need to face some opposition when they are young in order to grow into strong, healthy and competent adults. However, there is a large difference between building character and being bullied.

Since the dawn of time, there have been bullies. Nature, in order to balance life against available food sources, created the "survival of the fittest" rule. The weak or slow were culled out of herds of dinosaurs. This still happens even for today's wild animals. It is a harsh reality in nature, but it is still reality.

When a baby chick hatches, it is extremely difficult watching it struggle as it tries to break out of its shell. The hatching process is designed by nature to be hard and exhausting on the chick. As humans, our instinct would be to help the struggling chick.

But helping the chick hatch usually results in deformity and possibly death for the chick later in life. The chick needs the exertion required to escape its shell in order to force blood and ichor into its various body parts. Without that process, the chick's body will not develop naturally. This will cause the chick to become weak, unable to move properly and will cause it to be a target for bullies in the chicken coop.

And yes, there are bullies even in the chicken coop.

The strong try to keep the weak from eating, as well as pecking at it, and eventually the weak are culled from the flock. I used to raise chickens as a child and I saw this with my own eyes. It is heartbreaking when a chick dies because it can't break out of its shell, but it is a relatively quick and painless death for the chick.

It is even worse watching the chicken get bullied its entire life. Being constantly pushed around, attacked, and slowly starved to death after you took the time and care to help it hatch.

Survival of the fittest. Natural selection. Cruel and brutal in our eyes, but it is the way of nature.

The reason nature puts challenges in the path of all life, is to ensure we are strong enough to survive. From the time we are born until the time our life is over, we face many obstacles, and one of them is bullies.

Even though nature doesn't create bullies, it does give us a natural tendency to dominate or be the "alpha male" (or female as the case may be). But humans seem to take this tendency to the

extreme at times.

So how can you defend yourself against bullies if you aren't bulging with muscles? While there are no absolute ways to ensure you are never bullied, there are four basic things you can do that may prevent bullies from bothering you:

1. Project a positive self image. Believe it or not, the image you have of yourself is often how other people see you as well. Something as simple as keeping your head up as you walk around can have a huge impact on the way people, including bullies, see you. Body language can be your best defense.

2. Look people in the eye. Look people in the eye as you walk past. Don't go around giving people the evil eye, but at the very least ensure that you make eye contact. Avoiding looking at someone may give the impression that you are afraid, and fear is a bully's best, most often used weapon.

3. Pay attention to your surroundings. Walk confidently, and have the mind-set that you know exactly where you are going. Not only right now, but in life as well, and keep it in your mind that nothing could possibly stop you from getting there. This confidence in your path will translate itself into your walk. This may be enough to make a bully think twice before picking on you.

4. Project confidence. Even if you don't feel confident in yourself all the time, at least pretend that you do, even when you are alone. The more you practice at something, the better you become at it. Soon you will BE the confident person you want others to think you are. Remember: bullies are looking for victims; not opponents. A bully keeps his or her eyes open for any weakness that can be exploited. They have no interest in someone who projects confidence because picking on a confident person would be more effort than they want to expend, and more than that, they can't take the chance of looking weak themselves. They like the easy victories.

Parents, I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to project a positive self-image for your children. Your children realize that they are a part of you. If they see you as a strong, confident person, they will try to emulate you and hopefully become strong and confident in themselves. Praise your children constantly. Make sure they know that you love them and more importantly, make sure they know that you believe in them. Having someone who believes in you and loves you unconditionally can be the difference between success and failure in everything your children do.