

# He's Teasing Me!



*Parents can't stop all teasing, and not all teasing is hurtful. Playful teasing causes the one being teased and those hearing it to smile or laugh and feel included. It can create bonds. Hurtful teasing causes anger and resentment and can create isolation. Children who are hurt by teasing may suffer a loss of self-esteem. Some teasing can make school or play situations become painful. By understanding teasing, you can know when to let it go and when to step in and say "Enough!"*

## Why do children tease each other?

Teasing is often shown as funny on television shows or in movies. Children may imitate what other children or television characters do because they think that it's "cool."

Teasing can be a way to get attention, to respond to being teased, to feel superior, to be friends with others by excluding the victim, or to hide discomfort with differences.

## How can parents help?

*Listen to your child's description of the teasing.* Accept her feelings about it.

*Try not to overreact.* Seeing your child being teased may bring back unhappy memories of being teased in your childhood. Try to put those memories aside and remember that the teaser is also a child.

*Show her that you believe she can handle it,* and encourage her to be with others who help her feel good about herself.

*Give your child some tips to cope with teasing.* Suggest that he:

- Try telling himself, "I don't like this, but I can handle it. Just because he's saying these things about me doesn't make them true."
- Try ignoring the teaser. Pretend she's invisible or speaking an unknown language. Visualize an invisible shield that the hurtful words can't get through. Sometimes teasing loses its appeal when the victim doesn't react.
- Try using humor or responding in an unexpected way. Try turning the teasing comment into a compliment, calmly agreeing with the teaser, or responding with an indifferent "So?"
- Ask for help if the teasing becomes prolonged, constant, threatening, or violent. Don't expect your child to put up with being bullied or harassed. Adults—including parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors—should become involved when teasing becomes torment.

 For related Web resources, see "He's Teasing Me!" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.



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