

Slide 1: Welcome

I'm Jennifer Hancock and this is the special web presentation of Vaccinate Your Child Against Bullies

Slide 2: Who I am

I am a Humanistic parenting and leadership expert.

I transform people's lives with Humanism

Humanistic Parenting is all about respecting our children as the individuals they are.

The job of a Humanistic parent is to teach our kids the skills they need to succeed.

We approach child rearing the same way we approach all aspects of our life, in an ethical, compassionate and responsible way

You can find all about me and what I do at my website www.jen-hancock.com

If you want more information on Humanistic Parenting and the resources I provide, please visit me at humanisticparenting.info

Slide 3: The book

Today we are going to talk about how to vaccinate your child against bullying.

This is based on my book The Bully Vaccine which is available at all the online retailers in paperback and at the moment, it is also available on Kindle as an ebook.

For those of you who are with me live, you will be receiving an email from me with a link on how to download a free copy of my book.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with me, let me give you a little background on who I am and why I wrote this book.

Slide 4: Why this book

That's me as a kid. It's kind of hard to tell from the photo, but I had a severe under bite.

My jaw was huge. I had to have surgery in high school to have it corrected because, literally, I couldn't chew food very well as my molars didn't align at all.

I was also kind of shy and wore a blue hoody pretty much every day.

A fashion maven I was not.

I should have been bullied as a kid. But I wasn't.

The reason I wasn't was because the first time a kid try to tease me and be mean to me, my mom taught me the secret to dealing with bullies.

And it worked. I was never bullied.

Fast forward to the present day and I'm now a mother myself.

(click) -

That's my son.

He's just as dorky and cute as I was.

He's also gifted and is intentionally iconoclastic.

In other words, prime target for bullying.

The first time he came home from school to tell me kids were teasing him. I thought – crap.

If we don't nip this in the bud, he is going to be set up for the rest of his school career as a kid to tease.

No parent wants that for their child.

So, I told him what my mother had told me and taught him exactly what to say and how to say it.

And we practiced it. I also told him what to expect so that he would be prepared to deal with the aftermath.

He took my advice and nipped the problem in the bud and he hasn't been bullied since.

Everyone once in a while someone tests him, but he does what I told him to do and it stops.

He is now at the point where he is helping friends who are being teased and bullied and helping them to get it to stop as well.

I'm very proud of him.

But the reason I wrote my book was because I know this works.

And I wanted to share my knowledge with others so that they can help their kids the way I helped mine.

It breaks my heart to know that not every kid is receiving this advice.

Because if we can prevent bullying when it first starts, when the kids first start school, we can prevent bullying from ever escalating into the really aggressive stuff we see in middle and high school.

Slide 5: It's not about you

So what is this great advice?

Well – it's not about you.

When you are bullied, it's not about you.

It feels like it is, but it isn't.

The bully is usually dealing with their own issues of insecurity and they are targeting the easiest target they can find to help make themselves feel more secure.

In this program we are going to talk more about

Click – what makes a bully tick.

The reason we are going to talk about what motivates a bully is because – what I really want to teach you is how to train a bully to not bully by using “click – operant conditioning.

And don't worry, it's easier than it sounds.

Once you understand the principles of operant conditioning, we are going to talk about specific situations and how you can use operant conditioning to get a bully to stop bullying.

Then, you can use this information to help you child develop a strategy that will work for them and their specific situation.

Again, it's your job as the parent to teach them these specific skills.

Don't just tell them to read my book.

When they come to you with a problem, teach them the skills they need to deal with it effectively.

Slide 6: what makes a bully tick

Let's start by talking about what makes a bully tick.

Dealing effectively with a bully requires you to know what it is they are hoping to achieve by bullying.

Are they looking for status? Trying to impress someone?

Are they trying to hide something by drawing attention away from themselves?

The truth is you don't know. And you may never know.

But it's still important to consider what is motivating a bully because it helps you to recognize that

(click) bullies have their own problems.

The reasons they are bullying usually have nothing to do with their victim and everything to do with their own issues of insecurity.

This is really hard for children and some adults to understand and it's really critical.

In order to train your bully to not bully you, you have to put the focus on them and their needs.

To do that, you need to realize, they aren't be mean because they don't like you.

They are being mean because whatever it is they are dealing with is more than they can handle and it's causing them to act out.

(click) So don't assume you know what they are dealing with.

You might see them every day – but that doesn't mean you know what's really going on.

(click) Once you understand this, it is very easy to feel compassion for the bully.

Slide 7: The hardest part is compassion

Now, why would I ask someone who is a victim of a bully to feel compassion for them?

Because – feeling compassion for a bully has several very tangible benefits to you.

(click) The first is that it puts you in the right frame of mind to actually implement the training you need to do to get the bullying to stop.

We are going to get into this in more detail later, but basically, you are going to have to respond to what the bully does in an emotionless way.

It is easier to do that when you are not emotionally invested in what is happening to you because you are instead focused on the insecurities and fears of the person you are trying to train. And this takes compassion.

(click) The other reason to find compassion for a bully is because it helps you not be emotionally troubled by what the bully is doing or saying.

It's like being inoculated against bullying. The reason the cover of my book has a little girl with a forcefield around her is that is what feeling compassion for a bully does for you.

It prevents the bully from being able to hurt you emotionally.

Instead, you just feel bad for them.

This doesn't mean you should allow them to continue.

It's in the bully's best interest to learn more productive and socially acceptable ways to interact with their fellow humans.

But it does mean that by feeling compassion, you can forgive them for what they are doing even as they are doing it.

(click) The reason forgiving them is important is because it allows you to move past it.

It doesn't help the bully, it helps you.

And this is the hardest thing for people to grasp.

And this is the one aspect of what I teach that people rebel against the most and you should expect your child to have problems with this as well.

But it is your job as the parent to help them find that compassion for their bully.

Because it is compassion that provides the emotional inoculation that will not only protect your child from being bullied, but will help them be a more compassionate person as they grow up into an adult.

The more you can help them practice this through their childhood the better off they are going to be.

And that means, you as the parent need to find a way to feel compassion for the little jerk who is making your kid cry.

After all, if you can't find that compassion, you won't be able to help your child find that compassion.

(pause)

Just remember, the kid who is bullying is a just a kid.

They weren't born evil.

They are just trying to find their way through interpersonal relationships despite their insecurities just like the rest of us are.

And again, you don't know what's going on in their life. So don't assume.

Let me give you an example – my kid was hit on the school bus story

(pause)

Be an adult and a parent and consider the bully worthy of your compassion and try to find a solution that will help your child and help the bully become more well adapted at the same time.

It may not be possible but again, by you making the effort, you are teaching your child to make that effort.

And again, this isn't going to leave your kid vulnerable.

You are taking this step so that you can come up with a strategy to get the bullying to stop that will actually work.

Slide 8: Operant conditioning 101

Let's move on to operant conditioning and how to train a bully not to bully.

First a little background.

I used to train dolphins. That's me in the photo

I went to college in Hawaii and was a volunteer trainer at a dolphin cognition research facility.

The dolphin's name was Hiapo btw.

While there I learned how to train animals using operant and classical conditioning techniques.

So that's where I learned how to do this.

Now, obviously, when I was a kid, my mom didn't teach me operant conditioning.

What she did teach me, in addition to feeling sorry for the bully, was, in a sense, to "ignore them."

And I'm sure you've all heard this advice, ignore them and a bully will go away.

And it's not bad advice, because it is based on operant conditioning techniques.

It's what you do when you extinguish a behavior.

The problem is, that's a short hand phrase for what you really want to do.

And fortunately for me, my mom was a bit more specific when she told me what to do. And you need to be more specific too.

Here's what my mom told me.

A bully wants you to respond to them, so don't give them what they want. Don't respond to them in the way they want you to.

The difference between just ignore them and don't give them the response they want makes all the difference in the world.

Slide 9: reinforcements and responses

When you are going to school with a bully you can't ignore them.

They won't let you.

But you can refuse to give them the response they want.

So let's talk a little about reinforcements and responses because this is what you need to teach your child.

There are three types of reinforcements.

Positive – where the animal likes what just happened.

Negative – where they don't.

And neutral – which is neither positive nor negative.

When you train an animal – you use a combination of positive, negative and neutral reinforcements to get the animal to do what you want them to do.

(pause)

Now, most people have an instinctual understanding of the power of positive and negative reinforcements. However, they usually completely forget that they also have the option to not reinforce at all which is what the neutral response provides.

What you want to teach your child to do is to provide a neutral response to their bully.

If they provide a positive or negative response, the bully will count that as a reinforcement.

What you child needs to do is not reward the bullying at all. So you want to teach them to respond in a neutral way to their bully.

Which is why you first need to encourage them to find compassion for their bully because that's what makes it possible to respond in a bored and uninterested way.

This technique works wonderfully for verbal bullying. And it is often all that is required to get teasing and verbal taunts to stop.

I'm going to provide some real life examples later putting this all together.

For now, what you need to know is that non-reinforcing responses are basically bored tone of voice non-sequiturs.

They acknowledge the taunt and show that the victim wasn't bothered by it in the slightest and in fact thought it was a bit stupid and that's what you need to teach your child to do.

For instance, I taught my son to say – “That you for that information, it's very helpful” in a really bored tone of voice.

Now, if the bullying is chronic, meaning it has gone on for a while, the bully will also need negative reinforcement and positive reinforcement to actually change their behavior.

But if the bullying is in the beginning stages, you can usually get it to stop very quickly by simply not reinforcing it.

I will talk more about applying positive and negative reinforcements to chronic bullies later.

For now, we need to move on to the 2nd aspect of operant conditioning that you need to know about, and that is.

Slide 10: Reinforcement schedules

Reinforcement schedules

A reinforcement schedule is how often you give out rewards or punishments for behavior.

There are two basic ways you can reinforce an animal.

Constantly or variably.

Constant reinforcement is when you reward or punish every single time.

Variable is when you only reinforce or punish every once in a while.

However, when you reinforce and how often you reinforce has a huge impact on how strongly the animal associates the reward with the behavior.

And this may seem a bit counter intuitive, but variable (click) reinforcement actually creates a stronger behavior

Constantly reinforcing leads to a (click) weaker behavior

Slide 11: Reinforcing to our advantage

Now, we can use this knowledge to our advantage.

If we want to weaken our bully's desire to bully, we need to use a constant reinforcement schedule.

This will weaken our bully's desire to bully.

(click) If all we every do is this, our situation will improve.

To make this work we must give our bully the exact same response every single time.

Not just every once in a while. Every single time!

Yes, it's kind of boring, that's the point.

You don't want to be fun to bully. So make it boring for the bully.

Make your response consistent and do it every time they try to bully you.

(pause)

Unfortunately, most parents don't impress upon their kid how important it is to remain consistent.

And I'm going to make sure you don't make that mistake by explaining to you what happens when instead of being consistent, you variably reinforce your bully instead.

When you variably reinforce your bully, you strengthen their resolve to bully.

(click) It makes the bullying worse!

And not just a little bit worse, a lot worse.

In fact, most of the escalation that occurs with bullying is because the victim tries to "ignore" the bully for a bit, and when it doesn't get the bullying to stop, they start responding to the bully again.

Most victims fall into a variable pattern with their bullies. They sometimes respond and sometimes they don't.

That is the definition of variable reinforcing and you need to make it clear to your child – they need to do their chosen non-response response every single time.

No exceptions.

And the reason for this isn't just that by being consistent they will weaken the desire of the bully to bully.

There is another even more important reason why consistency matters.

And that is ...

Slide 12: Blowouts

Because of blowouts.

When you are trying to extinguish a behavior animals do something called a blow out and humans are no exceptions.

For example, vending machine.

Basically, what this means is that when you stop giving a bully their reward, they are going to be more aggressive in their bullying to try and get you to respond.

You need to make sure your child understands that this is not a quick fix. That they may have to do this for a while to get it to work.

Now, that isn't good news if you are a kid suffering. However, what will help them keep at it is knowing what to expect and seeing it play out exactly as you said it was.

It's empowering to know you are in control, even when your bully is getting worse.

So, here's what's going to happen.

(Click) let's imagine this line represents the severity of the bullying over a period of time.

(click) at the beginning, there is some level of bullying going on – this is our before level.

Once you start to retrain your bully not to bully by not reinforcing them, they are going to respond just like anyone does when they don't get their reward, they are going to become more aggressive.

(click) This is what is known as the blow out or escalation.

What the bully is doing is becoming super obnoxious as a way to get you to pay attention to them.

It is usually at this point that the victim responds and gives the bully what they want.

And thus the variable reinforcement pattern has been established.

The problem as I said before is that this variable reinforcement makes the bullying worse, not better.

Additionally, from a training standpoint, what the bully has learned is that in order to get you to respond, they need to be super obnoxious to get your attention, so they are super obnoxious.

This is why and how bullying escalates from name calling to physical violence and worse.

The victim is unwittingly reinforcing the escalation.

(pause)

I can't stress how important it is for you as the parent to make sure your kid understand how important it is that they don't do that!

They have to stick with the program because what you really want the bully to learn is that it doesn't matter how obnoxious they get, you aren't going to respond or give them their reward.

Once you reach that point – the bully gives up and you've won. (click)

The bullying behavior is extinguished.

If your child is experiencing a chronic situation, it is imperative you let them know to expect a blow out and how to ride it out and why to ride it out.

Without that information they will give in and resort to variable reinforcement.

The other thing is that when an animal blows out – they escalate their behavior. The reason it's called a blowout is because right before they give up, they throw everything they've got to get their reinforcement back.

The good news is when you get to this point, you are nearly done. The bad news is, it's really hard to remain firm at this point.

And it is usually at this point that people give in. You need to help your child ride out the blowout and get to the other side of this graph.

(pause)

One final word on this. Just as a person might periodically check to see if a vending machine has been fixed, the bully might periodically check to see if their victim is fixed. So, even though the behavior is extinguished, your child will still get tested.

They need to expect that and respond with their chosen non-reinforcing response.

Slide 13: How long does it take?

The next question is "how long does this take?"

The answer is (click) it depends on how long it's being going on.

Generally speaking, the less established the behavior is, the easier it is to extinguish it. The more established it is the harder it is.

In plain English that means
It is easier to prevent it than extinguish it.

If you can nip it in the bud, it will take just one or two interactions.

However, if it is chronic (click) it can take a while. A long while. Weeks or months.

But is it worth it? Yes it is.

At the end of this your child will have learned how to effectively deal with mean and obnoxious people and they will have the confidence they need to be the person they want to be.

And they will be a lot happier not being subjected to mean behavior from others day in and day out.

Slide 14: Real life – name calling

Now that you know the basics, let's look at a few real life examples.

First up let's talk about what to do about name calling because this is often the first sort of bullying that occurs.

Most of these are going to be either me or my son but one of them is a situation I was asked about on a radio interview.

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive. It is rather just by providing a variety of real life examples, you can get a better idea of how to create a strategy to get the bullying to stop.

And it is at this point we are going to talk about adding in the positive and negative reinforcement elements into our strategies.

First up – (click) name calling.

Son in school example – name calling

What is the lesson.

Be specific about what you want them to say and how to say it.

Make sure they know that the bully's might try to do this again, but that they need to keep saying their non-reinforcing phrase until the teasing stops

Let them know the bullies might try them again in the future, but to respond in the same way as before.

Additional cool note – my son is now friends with the kid who were teasing him. Again, these aren't evil kids. They are just kids trying to get along like everyone else.

Slide 15: Real life – threats of violence

Threats of violence

On the bus – dirty words example

Son was being threatened with a fist.

He didn't want to stand up because he was afraid he would get hit.

The kid is in the 3rd grade and bigger than him.

So I dropped it.

He finally wanted to do something about it – so I told him exactly what to say to call the bluff of the threat and that yeah – he had to be willing to take the hit.

Here is what I told him to say

No – I'm not going to say that and if you hit me I will report you and you will get in trouble.

Again – no emotion, and we practiced it.

Notice – I did not tell him to stand up for himself, I gave him specific instructions and we practiced what he was to do. And yes, this worked too.

Lessons learned:

It takes courage and because your child is the one who has to do this they have to be willing to do it.

Give them something specific to do and practice it

Help them understand that they bully is probably not actually going to hit them, but if they do, they will get in trouble for doing it. That will help them get the courage to stand their ground.

Tell them what to do if they do indeed get hit., which is to report it to a teacher or in this case, the bus driver.

He is friends with this kid now too, though a girl turned the boy in for saying the “f” word the other day. But my son says he isn't intimidated by this kid anymore and is able to stand his ground in confidence.

Slide 16: Real life – violence

While I've told my son he doesn't need to involve the teacher for name calling, all incidents of actual violence must be reported to a teacher, no exceptions.

Again – this is another story from my son.

He was assaulted on the school bus.

I reported it. I called the school and reported it.

I followed up with the school and we considered pressing charges. We couldn't because they didn't have the video tape.

But the result of me calling the school was that my son found out the school had his back.

The principal enlisted the 5th graders to police the bus and not allow this sort of thing to happen (they were in charge of reporting problems) and the kid was banned from the bus because it turned out my son was the 8th kid assaulted on that bus by this child.

Now, I used this as a way to teach compassion. We weren't going to press charges to get the kid in trouble. We were going to do it to get this kid some help.

That was lesson one.

Lesson two was the value in reporting violent acts. Adults will take you seriously.

Lesson 3 – I didn't label it bullying I told the school my son was assaulted on the bus. This changed the entire dynamic of my interaction with the school – it wasn't bullying it was much more serious than that.

(pause)

Now, back to the lessons of operant conditioning- Here is what needs to happen from a training standpoint.

The bully must receive a negative reinforcement in the form of getting in trouble for doing it. Otherwise it will continue.

But, the victim needs to remain emotionally neutral.

Ideally, someone other than the victim reports the incident to get the bully in trouble.

However, it can be the parent. It can be the victim themselves as long as they report in an unemotional matter of fact way.

Long story short, neutral reinforcement isn't going to be sufficient.

A negative reinforcement needs to be added.

And, it needs to be consistently applied – so EVERY TIME something happens it has to be reported. Otherwise you have a variable schedule and that makes the bullying worse.

If things have just escalated to violence, reporting it should nip it in the bud quickly.

However, if it is chronic, it is going to take a while to get the violence to stop.

But your choice is either to report every incidence and get it to stop or allow it to continue to get worse. There really isn't any other option.

Your child needs to understand this in these terms.

Every incidence of actual violence needs to be reported and acted upon. It is the only way to get it to stop.

And the more the practice it, and the more emotionally detached they can be from the reporting the better. But that is really hard to do because it is traumatic to be hit or assaulted.

If you need to create a bullying log to log incidences of verbal and physical harassment, that's what you do.

If you need to report on behalf of your child, that is what you do.

Don't leave it up to your child. Kids learn from example and you need to set the example of reporting if you expect your child to follow through with this.

Slide 17: Complex interactions

Let's talk about more complex interactions.

The incident I was told about was that a gifted child was having his lunch stolen every day and he never reported it. The bully just took his lunch and he allowed it to happen.

After two months a girl reported it and got it to stop.

The victim said he didn't report it because a) he felt bad for the bully and b) he didn't think it would have done any good because the bullies always win anyway.

The reason he thought that was because in his experience they always do.

You can report something and the bully will still do it.

His parent had never taught him to expect a blow out and how important it is to ride that out.

There are no quick fixes to retraining a bully.

After all, you don't expect a dog to stop barking at cars just because you asked kindly. A bully won't stop just because you asked either.

You have to retrain them.

In this case, I would have counseled the kid is that all you have to do to get it to stop is

Ask the kid politely to give you your food back. (they probably won't, but that's ok.)
If they don't, get up calmly and report what has happened to a lunch monitor.

Repeat as necessary until the bully learns there is no point in stealing yours or anyone else's lunch.

Notice, standing up for yourself does not involve violence. It is rather a state of compassionate non-compliance.

If the bully tried to escalate to actual violence, report that too.

Slide 18: Defending someone else

Once kids are bully proof and have the confidence to handle themselves so that they aren't bullied, they will start getting interested in helping out other kids.

Mine wanted to do this within a week of his first successful encounter with bullying (which was the name calling).

Here is what I told him to do.

If what is happening is name calling, say calmly – that isn't nice you should apologize. I

If the bully turns on you and says something mean to you, say your standard non-reinforcing phrase – in this case – thank you very much for that information, it's very helpful.

Repeat as necessary to get it to stop.

If on the other hand, your friend is physically hurt, you need to report it to a teacher and encourage your friend to report it as well.

Sure enough, the day after having this conversation with him, one of his friends who had been being bullied and was crying a lot about it was tripped on purpose.

So my son encouraged his friend and stood by him while he reported it.

Yes – I was very proud. The good news is his friend hasn't been bullied or teased or tripped since.

Bullies work in silence and they rely on not being reported.

They must be reported every single time or they will not only continue to do what they do, they will get more aggressive and violent.

Slide 19: To summarize

Read from list

Again – your job as the parent is to teach your kids what specifically they need to do to handle these situations.

This isn't a matter of temperament.

It's a matter of learning what they are supposed to do.

Yes, they need to handle most of these interactions on their own, but you, as the parent need to teach them how.

And you need to model it for them and help them find the emotional center they need to put this into practice effectively.

Slide 20: What else I offer

What else I offer as a next step.

These are programs that supplement what you just learned and go into more detail on basic life skills.

The book – for parents to read and discuss with their kids – ethics, decision making responsibility – what sort of person do they want to be.

Life Skills course – 6 hours of instruction – really detailed and really profound and it will help you live your life the way you already know you should – intentionally fully, ethically and compassionately.

Even if you feel like you are doing pretty well at the job of living life, my programs will help you do it better. And you will be really pleased with who you and who you are becoming when you are done with the course.

Slide 21: the bully vaccine

And of course, if you have not yet gotten your copy of my book The Bully Vaccine – please do grab yourself a copy. Available at <http://thebullyvaccine.com>

Slide 22: Learning More

If you liked this – please tell your friends and encourage them to join my mailing list so they can be informed of my next program.

I offer workshops, online and downloadable programs and books.

I'm available to speak to groups about Humanistic Parenting topics and Humanistic Leadership and personal development.

Contact me directly if you would like me to come speak to your group.

Thanks and have a great day.