

THE BULLY VACCINE CHEAT SHEET

HOW TO RESPOND TO ANY TYPE OF BULLYING

This material is taken from my book: The Bully Vaccine (<http://thebullyvaccine.com>). It is designed to act as a summary of the key points of the book and to provide step-by-step examples of how the techniques taught in the book can be implemented to deal with any sort of bully.

From an operant conditioning standpoint, the key to training your bully to no longer bully you is to decrease the reward the bully receives from their efforts and to increase the cost associated with their undesirable behavior. Once they realize the cost has become too high and the reward non-existent, they will stop.

TEASING

WHAT TO DO: Look the bully straight in the eye and say “Thank you very much for that information. It’s very helpful” in as bored a voice as you can manage. Practice this so you can say it automatically.

WHEN TO DO IT: Every single time someone says something mean. No exceptions.

WHY DO IT: A bully gets a kick out of seeing you respond emotionally. By depriving them of that reward, you decrease their desire to tease. Responding to them this way every single time also decreases their desire to tease.

OTHER BENEFITS: Bullies are looking for victims they can intimidate. Staring them straight in the eye tells them that you are not afraid of them and that they don’t intimidate you, making you a less than ideal target.

What will the bully do in response: If the teasing is new, they will just look at you funny. They may try to tease you again but if you respond this way every time, they will give up pretty quickly. If the teasing has been going on a while, they may escalate their behavior and threaten you with violence. This is to be expected. Remain calm and continue to respond to every single mean thing that is said as planned. If you are consistent and refuse to be intimidated you will get the teasing to stop.

THREATENED VIOLENCE

WHAT TO DO: Look the bully straight in the eye and calmly inform them that if they hit you or do anything violent to you at all that you will report them to an appropriate adult.

WHEN TO DO IT: Every single time you are threatened. No exceptions. Again, consistency is the key to getting this behavior to stop.

WHY TO DO IT: First: physical attacks of any sort are not to be tolerated and must be reported. Second: by telling them that you will report them, you are informing them that there will be punished if they carry through on their threat. This increases the cost of their bad behavior. Third, by remaining calm and looking them straight in the eye, you are decreasing the reward. You are not intimidated by them and threatening you isn't enough to provoke the response they were hoping for. If they continue, they are going to get in trouble. In other words, you have just told the bully that you aren't worth the effort.

OTHER BENEFITS: Again, most bullying is about intimidation. Bullies are looking for people they can scare into obedience. By refusing to be intimidated by them you are making yourself unattractive to them and by raising the possibility of negative consequences, you increase the cost and decrease their desire to bully you.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Most bullies who are threatening violence are not yet at the stage where they are willing to escalate to actual violence, especially if they believe you are serious about reporting them. Most will not be willing to carry through on their threat of violence and will de-escalate, either by leaving you alone or by resorting to name-calling and teasing. If they do that then respond to the teasing accordingly. There is, however, a possibility that they will escalate and carry through on the threat of violent assault. If that happen, defend yourself as best as possible and report them immediately.

ADDITIONAL TIP: If someone challenges you to a fight, do not take the bait. Do not meet them somewhere and give them access to hurt you. If they call you chicken, respond with your planned teasing strategy. Again, do not allow them to intimidate you into doing what they want you to.

RESPONDING TO ACTUAL VIOLENCE

WHAT TO DO: Defend yourself in the moment, and get yourself to safety as quickly as possible. And then, report them.

WHEN TO DO IT: Every single time you are hit, tripped, slammed into a locker, or have something stolen. Report it every time, no exceptions.

WHY TO DO IT: In order to get violent behavior to stop, you must increase the cost of committing violence. And to do that, you need to ensure that the bully receives a negative consequence for their behavior every single time. Do not allow them to get away with even a single minor incident. Report them every time, no exceptions.

WHAT TO EXPECT: If bullying has escalated to physical violence, it means your bully is already very invested in bullying you because they are willing to take a risk of getting in trouble or getting hurt themselves every time they engage in a violent act with you. Which means, when you start reporting them, they are going to do what's called a blowout. In layman terms this mean, they are going to get more violent for a period of time before they finally give up. I realize this isn't ideal but you don't have any good choices left. You are already being physically attacked. You can either allow that to continue and have it escalate on its own time, or you can provoke a blowout and get it to stop by reporting each and every incidence of violence until it stops. What you want your bully to learn is that the cost of bullying you is too high to continue and the only way for them to learn this lesson is to report them every single time.

CYBERBULLYING

WHAT TO DO: Don't respond. Don't send a rebuttal. Act as though you never saw whatever it is that was posted or that you never received the email. You want your cyberbully to think that you are too busy to be bothered by their nonsense. In fact, once you realize someone is cyberbullying you, I would just put them in my trash rules to prevent myself from reading their nonsense. Feel free to block them or defriend them so that you truly won't be bothered by them. Don't fall into the trap of becoming obsessed with what is being said. The sooner you stop paying attention to them for real, the sooner they will stop. I realize this is hard to do, but the less you are exposed to this negativity the better and you do have the power to block people out in the cyberworld. Use the tools to block them and if something gets through do not respond. You want your cyberbully to think that their obnoxiousness was lost in the ether or that you just couldn't be bothered to respond. Cyberbullies, just like regular bullies, are looking to get a response out of you. If you don't respond they will get bored and move on.

WHEN TO DO IT: Every single time someone posts something mean about you or tries to get your goat using electronic tools (cellphones, texting, online posts, whatever). Every time someone tells you that someone else posted something mean about you, respond with a bored, whatever. Every time you are asked whether something someone posted about you is true or not, say no, and that what that person did is pretty stupid and move on to a more interesting topic. You need to do this every time. Again, it's the consistency that is going to make this obnoxious behavior stop.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CYBERBULLYING AND CYBERSTALKING: If you are being cyberstalked and not just cyberbullied, you need to consider taking legal action. Cyberbullying is when someone uses electronic media to threatening your livelihood or your safety. Take such threats seriously and report them just as you would an assault and/or a battery.

WHY TO DO IT: The ideal way to respond to a bully is to not respond at all. The great thing about cyberbullying is that as long as you can control your emotional response and you are willing to block your bullies from your view, you can easily not respond. If you need to totally disconnect, do it. Believe it or not, you will survive being disconnected. It really doesn't matter if people are saying mean things about you online. The people that matter won't believe it and the people who do are idiots. I've been cyberstalked and I don't respond and almost inevitably people will come to my defense for me. The less you respond, the less the cyberbully will be able to feed their habit and justify their poor treatment of you. Don't feed the beast.

WHAT TO EXPECT: When a cyberbully doesn't get your attention through whatever venue they have chosen to harass you through, expect them to encourage other people to ask you about their harassment. This is the bully's way of checking to see if you got their harassing message. Say no and then tell the person you don't care and don't need to know what they said about you. The bully may try other ways to get your attention using both live and electronic message carriers. Just as in other forms, when you refuse to give them their reward, they will up their game in an attempt to get you to respond. This is why disconnecting and refusing to play their online harassment game is so essential. Don't respond to the intermediaries they send to make sure you got their message. Your attitude must be, they are an idiot spreading lies and they aren't worth your time, because they aren't.

DEFENDING SOMEONE ELSE

WHAT TO DO: if you witness someone else being bullied – look the bully straight in the eye and politely tell them to stop. If it is teasing, tell them what they said isn't nice and they should apologize. If it is threatening violence, tell them their behavior isn't acceptable and that if they act on their threat you will report them. If the bully continues despite your request that they stop, report them. If you witness violence against another student, find an adult immediately and ask them to intervene.

WHEN TO DO IT: every single time you witness someone being bullied. Every time, no exceptions.

WHY TO DO IT: In order to get bullying to stop, the bully needs to receive a negative consequence every single time they engage in undesirable behavior. Victims are often unwilling to stand up for themselves, or they were never taught how to, which means someone needs to stand up for them and it might as well be you. Additionally, you are doing the bully a favor by reporting them because it is actually helping them to learn more pro-social behavior.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Expect the bully to turn on you. They may threaten you or resort to name-calling. If they do, respond to the threat or the teasing appropriately and show them they do not intimidate you. Again, bullies are looking for people they can make afraid and by indicating you won't tolerate their behavior, you are letting them know that the cost of their behavior is going to be higher than they would like and this will go a long way towards getting them to stop.

RECAP

Bullies use a variety of techniques to instill fear in their victims. You can think of these things as a continuum. Bullying often starts out as name-calling and will escalate to threats of violence and escalate from there into actual violence. Your response will need to change as what they do changes.

Additionally when you take away their reward by not responding to them the way they want you to they will either escalate their behavior, in which case, you escalate your responses. If they decrease their behavior, you decrease yours.

For instance, if you or someone else is being threatened by violence and you respond by informing them they will be reported if they act on that threat, the bully will either deescalate to name calling (in which case you respond by looking them straight in the eye while telling

them their information is very helpful in a bored tone of voice), or they will escalate into actually violence (in which case you will defend yourself, escape and report them).

What is absolutely critical to the success of these techniques is that you respond as planned to the bully every single time they behave inappropriately. Do not allow a single instance of name calling to go unanswered. Likewise, don't just ignore the threats, let the bully know you aren't intimidated and that you will report them if they actually become violent. And definitely report every single act of violence. No exceptions. This consistency is what raises the cost of bullying to an unacceptable level and will get the bullying to stop.

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The Bully Vaccine: <http://thebullyvaccine.com>