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How To Teach Your Toddler Not To Bully By Puja McClymont



Instilling good values and greater understanding of feelings in the early years allows for children to develop a variety of skills and coping mechanisms when faced with many situations that can happen through life. Teaching our children not to bully from a very young age is a key aspect for more empathetic, self-aware and kinder individuals in the future. Here are 5 top tips on how to teach your toddler not to bully by **Puja McClymont**.

Encourage open communication

Children love to talk. Parents can take advantage of this by encouraging open communication with their children on a regular basis. Use simple conversation starters like who do you play with? What do you like about them? What do you play together? This helps both the parents get a glimpse into understanding how their children socialise and also shows the children the parents are actively engaged and interested in their lives, which can lessen adverse behaviour with others due to a lack of attention at home.

Give them examples

When talking to toddlers, it's important to remember that they don't understand everything a parent says. Their preferred communication method is through play. Using toys as a form of role play, parents can help their toddlers understand how to play well with other children. It can also help them decide if a form of play is appropriate which would help them to start understanding the difference between playing and bullying. Role play at home can be highly beneficial especially if combined with open communication that encourages the child to re-enact an experience they've had which resulted in them being unhappy with another child. The parent can show the varying outcomes of different behaviours for the toddler to then choose which is the appropriate behaviour.

Teach them about inclusivity

Kindness and respect can start at an early age. By communicating often with toddlers, they get used to hearing certain words and phrases that will help them to identify good behaviour towards others. Bullying can occur when a child doesn't understand why another child is different. These differences can be communicated to children so that they begin to understand how to socialise better. Help children understand diversity and inclusivity (where appropriate to do so) in a way that teaches them that everyone is to be respected. Encouraging children to share their questions with parents is important so that they feel safe to explore diversity and inclusion which will then lead to better understanding as they grow.

Cultivate empathy through everyday experiences

Kindness can be cultivated with empathy. This can be demonstrated with examples in the home. For example, if a child hits a parent, simply telling them that what they did hurt, can help them understand appropriate behaviour. Doing this consistently rather than hitting back or getting angry will help to hone the message of appropriate behaviour towards others. Another way to cultivate empathy is when eating or playing with toys. Young children don't think that other children may have limited resources. It's important that parents are able to share that not all children have meals like they do or the many toys they have. Cultivating empathy allows children to be more compassionate around other children and helps them decide how they would like to behave towards them.

Let them know there are consequences

Teaching toddlers about consequences can seem difficult but if done consistently, they will get the message. If they learn that there are consequences to their actions, this enables them to think about the action they are going to take. At this age, they are developing the ability to distinguish 'right' from 'wrong' so it's important that parents take advantage and teach children consequences to actions. An example of this is if a child screams as an inappropriate response to eating their vegetables, the consequence could be that they don't have dessert. If they throw toys at the wall, a consequence here could be that the toy is taken away. Of course there will be a response from the child for this upset but this is where the teachable moment can happen. This is why open communication is so important as in this moment, the parent can explain why the consequence is happening.