

Session 4

Personal Safety: Handling taunting/ bullying

Rationale

Children are often taunted and bullied by their peers, older children and at times by adults. They have a few ways of handling such incidents, ranging from retaliation, complaining to someone in authority, ignoring the taunts and at times, internalizing the damaging message. This can reduce a child's self-esteem. We need to help children understand that words, like the deeds of a person, describe and tell others about the character and personality of the person doing the taunting.

Materials required

- Marker pen
- Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Session 4- worksheets

Objectives of session 4

To impart and help children internalize the following messages:

Core message 1: The way a person talks and acts tells us about the character of that person.

Core Message 2: My qualities and abilities are more important what people say about my looks.

Core Message 3: We can help each other be safe

Core message 4: It is okay to discuss embarrassing feelings with people who care for me.

Core message 1: The way person talks and acts tells us about the character of that person.

Tell a story:

Ashtavakra's body was bent in eight places and hence he came to be known as 'Ashtavakra'. His grandfather Uddalaka took up the responsibility of his education. Ashtavakra was brilliant and by the time he was 11 years old, he was a complete scholar. His friends teased him about his body but he never cared. He said 'It doesn't matter how I look. See how much I know. Can you compete with me?' One day the King held a competition to identify the wisest person in the kingdom. Ashtavakra also went. He could not walk upright. He walked with a slow pace. When he reached the Court, the people at the court and other competitors all laughed at him. Ashtavakra said to the king – "I have a question" The King said "Ask". The court fell silent. Ashtavakra asked "Oh King whom are these people laughing at? The Creation or the Creator? Are they laughing at my body or the one who made my body?" People realized their mistake and felt ashamed. The King recognized Ashtavakra as the wisest person in his kingdom and honoured him.

Refer to other story ideas in the Annexure 4:1.

Discuss: Do people tease and taunt us sometimes? What can we do about it?

Closure: If someone calls me a donkey, I do not become a donkey. What bullies say does not become the truth. You can ignore the bully or make a joke out of it. The bully may taunt you but what do you think others really think of him/ her? **The words that people use, tell us about the character of these people.**

List down on the blackboard/chart paper their suggestions of different ways of dealing with people who tease or taunt and discuss.

Rationalize with them that ways to deal with this situation is to be assertive (stand up for one's right without violating the rights of others).

Material Required

Marker pen, Blu Tac / Board pins /
Double sided sticking tape / Cello tape
Marker pen, Chalk, Duster,
Blackboard

Tips for Trainers

- Encourage children to speak up and participate by saying "Thank you for bringing that out/ pointing that out. Let us have more response"
- Be aware of your facial expression and body language. Children should not feel intimidated or rejected. Welcome each response, expected, unexpected or inappropriate.
- When answers are inappropriate, these should be discussed such that children realize why they are inappropriate.
- Incorporate hand gestures and voice modulation to capture the interest of the students.
- It would be advisable to keep your language simple and also to intersperse some words from the local language during your session as it will help students feel comfortable and understand concepts better.
- Refer to other story ideas in the Annexure 4:1.

Core Message 2: My qualities and abilities are more important what people say about my looks.

Give a situation: Let us suppose you go to your grandparents' village and you fall sick. There is only one hospital there with two doctors. One doctor is very good looking but very rude and impatient at looking at patients. The other doctor is not good looking but is known to be very courteous and good at diagnosing and treating patients.

Ask: Which one would you prefer to go to?

Discussion: We prefer the second doctor because of his qualities and skills as these, and not his looks will help us get better.

Tell a story: **Bamboo and the crooked tree**

Once upon a time there was a bamboo tree and a crooked tree. Both were great enemies. They never liked each other. The bamboo always said that he is tall, green and handsome and he is strong. Many people use him to make all good things. They also use them to make their house. The crooked tree was hurt. Listening to the bamboo tree, the crooked tree felt that he was of no use. The crooked tree was so sad that he did not allow any body to come near him. One day a bird came and sat on the crooked tree. The crooked tree got angry. He said move away! Don't sit on me! The bird asked why? The tree said because I am ugly and crooked, I am useless. No one likes me. The bird said but you have nice and green leaves. The crooked tree said so what? What would my green leaves do? The bird said you can feed the hungry animals, it can be made into utensils, and children can play with your leaf. But it's only the leaf but I am crooked, and no one likes me. The bird said your dry twigs and branches are used to burn and create heat during the winters. You produce warmth to the people dying in winters.

Tips for Trainers

- First ask the question to a single child and then put it forth to the other children. This helps giving every child an opportunity to answer as well as provides opportunities to clear doubts if necessary.
- If any child gives a different answer from the expected response, do not correct the child; rather ask the child to state the reason and use such incidents as points for discussion.

Making Connections

Once children understand that what a person says and does tells us about the nature and personality of that person, they will be better able to deal with people who taunt or bully them.

We can focus on our abilities and behavior as these are more important than our looks.

Core Message 2: My qualities and abilities are more important what people say about my looks continued....

Some sit on you and some beneath you. You are the protector of us all. Therefore you are special. No matter what other's say, no matter how early you realize, the fact is you are special because of your abilities and because you can do things no one else can. So you are unique too. Now look around. You are the only one with such special shape. No other tree has got such a wonderful shape. You are not crooked but different and there is a beauty in this difference.

Tree said to the bird, 'oh, yes I am different and special and unique, I did not realize that I was of so much importance'

Bird said, ' Yes we all tend to many times under estimate ourselves and do not realise how special we are and what wonders we can do.

Core Message 3: We can help each other be safe

Ask children to talk about instances when they saw someone being bullied and they came to support or help their friend.

Ask them to also share incidents when they were being teased and another person came and supported them.

Discuss: How can one support another when they are being teased?

Role Plays: Make children do role plays of common situations of taunting/ bullying that they have seen.

Through the role play help them to find ways of helping each other.

In case children are not forthcoming please share a couple of incidents to kick start the discussion.

- your friends tease a housemate and ask you to join them in the teasing. You do not want to be a part of it but you do not know how to tell it to your friends. What can you do?
- you see a group of students teasing a younger child? What can you do?
- You are in the playground and you see CHI CHI hitting and calling GALU names. GALU is hurt. CHI CHI is not stopping. What will you do?

List down on the blackboard/chart paper their suggestions of different ways helping someone to deal with people who tease or taunt and discuss.

Rationalize with them that ways to deal with this situation is to be assertive (stand up for the right of the mistreated child without violating the rights of child/adult who is mistreating).

Closure: Children will realize they are not helpless. Most of the times teasing and taunting both by children and adults occurs in places and at times when safe adults are not around. That is why it is important for children to speak up and report what happened to them, or report what they've seen happen to someone else, and also to offer support—in whatever way is comfortable—to a child who has been mistreated.

Key Message to Communicate

Children can support other children when they are teased. However, they need to understand the difference between supporting/helping and confronting the person teasing/taunting.

Trainers need to rationalize with children that even if they feel that retaliation (“getting back at the person”) is justified they should not respond violently or use abusive language. If we respond to violence with violence, it just continues a vicious cycle of negative behavior. Secondly, sometimes aggressively confronting a child/adult who is bullying can be embarrassing for the person being mistreated, and it may even make things worse for that person in the long run. Thirdly it might mean that the safety of the child who is confronting is at stake; which is not advisable.

Alternatives to aggressive confrontation might be to say something like “Not cool”/ “Don’t be a bully”/“leave him/her alone” or to stand silently with the target as a show of support. Another option would be to support the mistreated child after the incident, perhaps helping that person report what happened.

Tips for Trainers

- You can replace these examples to any other daily happening of children which children find embarrassing. This will help the children to relate better.
- If there is a child with similar name as in example/story please change the name of the child

Core message 4: It is okay to discuss embarrassing feelings with people who care

Discussing Bedwetting: Bedwetting may happen. Full bladder control develops naturally at different times for different children. Sometimes, when we get up in the morning, we find that our dress is wet. We have to change our clothes and the bed sheets. Other people may tease us. We feel shy and embarrassed.

Why does it happen? What can we do about it?

Discussion: The muscles of our urinary bladder, our urine bag, are still learning how to hold the urine.

When you learnt something new, didn't it take some time to learn? Like tying shoelaces, or shirt buttons, did you learn to do it perfectly the first time?

Did it not take a few days of practicing, only then it came out perfect? Now don't you all say 'May I go to the toilet?' when in class/during any programme in the institution?

But sometimes, when you are very scared, urine may come out before you can go to the toilet. As you grow, the muscles will develop and will have complete control. What you can do is go to the toilet before going to bed. You can also use plastic sheets on your bed until your body develops control.

If you talk about such situations which make you feel shy/confused/embarrassed/angry/sad/scared to an adult who cares it will help you feel better.

Key Messages to Communicate

Expressing embarrassing feelings to people who care for us helps us feel better and get help.

Making Connections

If children are able to express their embarrassing feelings they will be able to seek help. This will also help them to seek help during uncomfortable situations.

Concluding the session:

Activity:

Tomatoes and potatoes: Watch me and do as I say. When I say 'tomato' you have to pluck tomatoes from a plant kept high above you. When I say "potato" you have to bend down and pick a potato from the ground. If you do the wrong action, you are out of the game.

Start the game by saying tomato and potato randomly and doing congruent actions. After a few rounds, do the opposite action. Many children will follow your actions and not your words! They go out of the game!

Summarize and review the key messages:

What did you learn today? Ask students to share.

Reiterate:

Core message 1: The way a person talks and acts tells us about the character of that person.

Core Message 2: My qualities and abilities are more important what people say about my looks.

Core Message 3: We can help each other be safe

Core message 4: It is okay to discuss embarrassing feelings with people who care for me.

I have come here to help you learn more about yourself, how to take care of yourself and be safe. I will come again and we will learn some more things.