



# The On-The-Spot SAFE Response Role-Play

## Practicing Responses to Bullying Behavior

To gain and maintain friends, as well as avoid becoming targeted by unkind acts or bullying, young children build resiliency by learning a variety of social skills. Role-playing is one of the best ways to learn and retain a new skill. To prepare your child for when someone says or does something unkind to them, use the below SAFE role-play to practice different responses to potential bullying scenarios. Modify the discussion and examples to match your child's developmental level. While role-playing, make sure to discuss with your child safety plans such as staying with other children, getting to and from school, not getting involved in any kind of physical altercation, as well as not blaming themselves for other's cruelty. Other ways you can teach and grow your child's social skills is through modeling, storytelling, videos, and games.

# STEP 1

Explain to your child what SAFE stands for and how practicing these skills can help them feel prepared if and when someone says or does something unkind to them.

**SAFE** means...

**S**tand Positive and Strong

**A**void The Situation

**F**ind Support

**E**xpress Your Feelings

*- From the No-Name Calling Week Resource Guide, Copyright ©2004 by GLSEN, Inc.*

## Stand Positive and Strong

What do assertive body language and words look and sound like? Role-play for your child the body language of a child with high self-esteem (direct eye contact, standing straight and tall) compared to a child with low self-esteem (slumped, poor hygiene). Explain appearing confident makes them a less attractive target. Encourage your child not to show fear or anger. Instead have them respond by using “I Messages” which strongly express how they feel and that they expect the negative behavior to stop immediately. For example, “I don’t like being called names and would appreciate it if you would stop” or “Don’t touch me”. In some situations, your child may find it useful to respond to the negative behavior by saying something clever or funny, but only if they feel it suits their personality and will silence the person bullying, rather than make him/her more aggressive.

## Avoid The Situation

Explain to your child that sometimes the best comeback is to ignore the bullying and go to a friend or adult for help. Share with them if the person bullying knows that their behavior impresses bystanders or is clearly irritating/annoying/controlling your child, it may continue. Impress upon your child they must think of their safety first and not allow their emotions to cause them to react with anger or violence. Help your child plan to avoid places and situations where they might be isolated (bathroom, locker room, back of the bus), have them sit with friends at lunch, and take different routes to class – preferably with a teacher or friends.



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## Find Support

Encourage your child to find others who have had similar experiences so they can support each other. Help them find new hobbies to enjoy, spend time with people who treat them well, and join group activities where they can meet new friends who might stick up for them. Share with your child that sometimes, no matter what they do, they will be targeted and it's not their fault. That's why it's so important for them to go to a trusted adult for help. Counteract your child's fear of retaliation with the fact that unreported abusive behavior is likely to get worse, not better. Tell your child that seeking help is NOT "tattling." We tattle to get someone in trouble, we tell to keep someone from getting hurt. Encourage your child if they see something, they should say something. They can even do so anonymously using any of [these methods](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips) ([www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips)).

## Express Your Feelings

Share with your child that being bullied can create feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, depression, and vengeance. Help your child brainstorm ways to relieve these feelings without being violent to themselves or others. Some ideas may be to write daily in a journal, listen to music, create art, exercise, or to use deep breathing techniques. Explain that when your child experiences negative attacks or feelings, they should practice saying positive statements to themselves in order to counteract them. Finally, make sure your child is not afraid to talk about their feelings with their friends, family, teachers, or counselors.

## Share with your child other great ways of responding to bullying, such as:

- Agreeing with the person bullying and mirror the insult, "You're right. I couldn't catch a ball if I had two gloves."
- Reacting in the opposite way to what the person bullying expects, "That's nice," "How about that," "Oh, well".
- Changing the subject or distracting the person bullying by asking an unrelated question, "What time is lunch?"

## Other great skills to teach during the role-play (at [www.BrowardSchools.com/Anti-bullying](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/Anti-bullying)):

- Broward County Public Schools [4 bullying rules](#).
- The power bystanders hold to stop bullying when they see it using the [4 bullying intervention options](#).
- Conversational skills.
- How to join a group.
- How to manage conflict between friends.
- Face-saving techniques for dealing with failure in social situations.
- Using the 3 R's to respond to bullying: Recognizing, Refusing, Reporting.
- How to report bullying using any of [these methods](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips) ([www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/SecurityTips)).



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## Step 2

Model through role-plays each of the SAFE methods with you acting as the victim and your child as the person bullying. Try to use realistic scenarios. Ask your child if there are certain hurtful words or phrases that would make your child feel especially fearful, angry, or sad. Consider using them if you both feel it would better prepare your child. Also, if you're able to interject humor, do so to show your child how it can diffuse a tense situation. Practice using the below role-play scenarios demonstrating each of the bullying types:

- Verbal: You are being called names.
- Physical: A student shoves you, knocking your books onto the floor.
- Mental: Former friends at school won't sit with you at lunch anymore, and whisper when you pass by. Later you find out a person started a rumor that you don't bathe.
- Electronic: A boy at school is posting ugly comments about you online.

## Step 3

Now that your child has watched you demonstrate how to SAFELY respond, reverse the roles. Let your child play the victim and you the person bullying. Coach and encourage your child after they try each SAFE strategy. Continue practicing until they feel comfortable and have found their own style of response.

### Want More Information on Bullying Prevention and Intervention?

Go to [www.BrowardSchools.com/Anti-bullying](http://www.BrowardSchools.com/Anti-bullying) or call the School Climate & Discipline Department at 754-321-1655.

