

# Smart Ways to Bamboozle a Bully

In the first two columns of my 3-part series on bullying, I covered how to know if your child is a target of bullying and how best to prevent bullying. But, what happens if your child is being picked on? What are some smart ways to bamboozle a bully? In this final column, I've included some effective responses and tactics that are taught in our Bully Buster Program.

## The 12 Ways to Walk Away with Confidence

1. Make friends. Treat the bully as a friend instead of an enemy.
2. Use humor. Turn a threatening situation into a funny one.
3. Walk away. Don't get into a fight – just walk away.
4. Use cleverness. Use creative imagination or responses to resolve conflict.
5. Agree with the bully. Let insults go – without fighting back.
6. Refuse to fight. The winner of a fight is the one who avoids it.
7. Stand up to the bully. Stick up for yourself. Say NO! to bullying.
8. Scream/yell. A powerful, loud shout can end conflict before it starts.
9. Ignore the threat. Be like a bamboo and bend in the wind.
10. Use authority. Call the proper authority – teacher, parent, police – to help defeat the bully.



## ON THE DEFENSIVE

BY RICK ALFORD

11. Reason with the bully. Use the most powerful tool you have – your brain.
12. Use martial arts. Learn martial arts stance and techniques to protect against bullying.

Here are some very specific responses that have been found effective when using the 12 ways to walk away.

### Question the response.

“Why would you say that?” or “Why would you want to tell me I am dumb (or fat) and hurt my feelings?”

**Use “I want.”** Communication experts suggest teaching your child to address the bully beginning with “I want” and to say firmly what your child wants changed. For example, “I want you to leave me alone” or “I want you to stop teasing me.”

### Agree with the teaser.

You can help your child create a statement agreeing with her teaser which typically takes the teaser off guard and diffuses the situation. Teaser: “You’re dumb.” Child: “Yeah, but I’m good at it.” or Teaser: “Hey, four eyes.” Child: “You’re right, my eyesight is poor.”

**Ignore it.** Use a “poker face”. Bullies love it when their teasing upsets their victims. If your child can find ways to not let a tormentor get to him/her, the bully will soon give up. A group of fifth graders told me ways they ignore their teasers: pretend the teaser is invisible; walk away without looking at the teaser; quickly look at something else and laugh; and look completely uninterested in the teaser.

**Call for help.** It’s important that your child understands that it is perfectly okay to tell a grown up about a bullying situation. Telling about a potentially dangerous situation isn’t tattling. Call a teacher, a friendly adult, a police officer – anyone who can help stop a fight before it happens!

It’s vital for all kids to know what to do when they see someone being bullied. The actions of these bystanders are critical to curbing bullying at school and in the playground. Tell your child that he or she can **be a hero** by speaking out against the bullying act. If they feel confident, they should tell the bully to leave the victim alone. They can also refuse to join in behaviors that encourage a teaser, such as refusing to give the bully an audience. In addition, they can show kindness to the victim and try to include

that person in their group. Just as essential, bystanders should be expected to get a grown up to help the situation if necessary.

Finally, strong training in martial arts gives your child many advantages over bullies and throughout life. The discipline and integrity which are integral to martial arts are carried by the child for a lifetime, and the training provides the physical, intellectual and emotional focus necessary to protect themselves and defend against many types of dangers. Perhaps most important, martial arts training gives your child the self-confidence and positive attitude necessary to avoid becoming a target of a bully in the first place.

*About the author: Rick Alford is the Founder and Head Instructor of Defensive Edge Martial Arts Academy located in Wakefield, Mass. He has been training in the Martial Arts for over 24 years and holds black belts in 3 disciplines including a 3rd Degree black belt in Small Circle Jujitsu. He is also a purple belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, is training in Kali/Escrima/Arnis and is a certified instructor in Fierce Israeli Guerilla Hand-to-Hand Tactics. Rick teaches regular Bully Buster and Stranger Danger/Safety classes. For more information, email rick@modernjujitsu.com or call 781-245-0250.*

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