

Protection Sixteen: Body Language

If a child looks confident, and appears as though they can take care of themselves, they will be less likely to be bullied. Both you and your children must be aware of what body language is saying. Body language is amazing.

You show people a lot of emotions that you don't intend to show them, whether you are aware of it or not. Sometimes you are angry and don't even know how angry you look or how angry your body language is. Other times you might be sad and not even know how sad your body language is. You might look vulnerable. Think about it,

When you are tired you might:

- Rub your eyes
- Put your head in your hands
- Close your eyes
- Yawn
- Stretch

When you are excited you might

- Be shaky
- Be very active
- Hold your stomach
- Be jittery

When you are angry you might:

- Put your hands across your chest
- Frown, in your mouth and your forehead
- Shake your fist or stomp your foot

People use your body language to make opinions about you. Someone using bully actions who sees you walking with slumped shoulders and looking at the ground, might think you are a good target. If you look angry, people might be afraid to approach you.

Another part of body language is understanding body space. Intimate: 0 - 18 inches, Personal 1.5 - 4 feet, Social 4 - 10 feet, Public: 10 feet and beyond

Understanding body space allows your child to use spacing between himself and others appropriately, particularly if a child appears very shy or very aggressive.

Activities:

Here is a body space exercise :

- Stand 18 inches apart and throw a ball. This is intimate space. Discuss when this it is appropriate to be this close to someone.
- Stand 4 feet apart and throw a ball. This is personal space. Personal space is regular

talking space. Discuss when it is appropriate to use this spacing.

- Stand about 7 feet apart and throw a ball. This is social space. Social space is where you might stand if you have just met someone. Discuss when you might use this amount of space.

- Stand 12 feet apart and throw a ball. This is public space. This is how much room you can give someone if you don't know them at all.

Discuss what kind of spacing (generally public) is appropriate if someone is using bully actions against your child?

Have your child use the body language that goes with the descriptions above.

Have your child practice standing up straight and looking confident. Stand in front of the mirror with them, and practice yourself.

Stand in front of each other and BE the mirror for your child. Have your child act out different body language types, and copy them, as though you are the mirror.

Talk about music and body language. What kind of body language is in music videos?

Watch some television shows together and talk about body language that you see.

For younger children, make up an action poem to recite. Simply brainstorm different actions - Hand on hips, arms across chest, arms out for a hug. String them together and say them, doing the action at the same time.

Have a box ready with the names of some emotions. Use the body language that goes with the emotion to play charades, taking turns with your child. For a list of emotion words, go to <http://nosuchthingasabully.com> .