

Teasing and Bullying Social Skills Kit for Young People with ASD

Joel Shaul, LCSW



Children with autism spectrum disorders often suffer quite a lot from being teased and bullied. I have designed some materials to help them to learn some coping skills in this area. This is not intended to serve as an entire curriculum or to function as a professional's entire response to the problem of teasing and bullying. Obviously, preventing cruel children from victimizing vulnerable peers on the autism spectrum is the main problem to solve.

The materials I provide here are to help with:

- *Increasing repertoire of functional responses to teasing and bullying
- *Increasing ability to distinguish "friendly" from "mean" teasing and to distinguish intentional from unintentional harm
- *Increasing ability to cope with anger, anxiety, sadness and other emotions associated with being teased and bullied

How to use the six illustrated panels:

The panels are designed to be used in several different ways.

First, they are to be displayed while using the cards to help children know how to respond to the questions and challenges on the cards.

Second, you might consider posting them on your wall as a bulletin board if you decide to not use the cards.

Finally, you can use them in small groups to hold up one at a time as instructional aids when you are dealing with this topic.

Decide:
Is it really teasing?
Is it really bullying?

Sometimes it SEEMS mean but it is NOT mean.



Friendly Nicknames? **Not On Purpose?**


Not all nicknames are mean.
Some nicknames mean a person is trying to be nice.

Sometimes a person might hurt you but it was an accident.
Sometimes they might say something you don't like, but they aren't trying to hurt you.

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Sometimes you can ignore it

Sometimes if you don't say anything back to people who are being mean, they will go away and leave you alone.



Try thinking of something else. Look away from the mean person and say nothing.

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Sometimes you can walk away

Sometimes you might be in a place where you can walk away from the person who is being mean.



Don't walk away if you are in a place where walking away is against the rules. Don't walk away if walking away takes you someplace dangerous.

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Sometimes you can tell them to stop

Sometimes you can tell them to stop it.
Say it loud enough but not too loud. Look at the person.




Try not to say it in a voice that is too angry. The mean person might want you to be angry. Try not to say it in a voice that sounds like crying or begging.

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If nothing seems to work, get help

Get help from people you can trust.
Get help even if mean people say you can't.




When you get help, don't tell the helping person what to do. Listen to what the person is telling you. If the first person does not help you, find another person who will.

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Try to avoid thoughts that make it hurt worse

Some kinds of thoughts hurt even more than the bullying.
Can you think of thoughts to fix the ones shown here?



Nobody will ever want to be my friend!
I'm going to get back at them for being mean!
I must be ugly, stupid, or a complete loser!
There's no hope for someone like me.
There must be something terribly wrong with me!

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How to use the cards:

There are three kinds of cards:


1. "What to do?" cards: These cards describe hypothetical kids in a variety of problem scenarios, and the person drawing the card has to figure out possible solutions. There is often more than one answer.
2. "What about you?" cards: These cards require the person drawing them to carry out a variety of brief learning tasks or to reflect on their own experience with teasing and bullying.
3. "What to think?" cards: Each card contains a thought bubble featuring a particular thought or belief that can increase the harm caused by the unkindness of peers. The task is to try to counter the harmful thought with one or more "antidote thoughts." (On my website, [I have a lot of good resources on coping with difficult thoughts and feelings](#)). A good way to use these cards is for you, the adult, to play the role of a child who endorses the thought in the thought bubble. The participants then have to talk you out of this way of thinking.

Options on using the cards:

- *You can shuffle up the cards and have kids draw them at random.
- *You can keep the cards in three separate piles and have kids draw from one pile or the other based on how they roll a dice.
- *You can select and discard cards and distribute the cards within the deck strategically so that the participants will draw cards that help them with their most difficult issues.
- *If you don't wish to use the cards, I invite you nevertheless to borrow the content of the cards in your own therapy/teaching. I tried to cover a lot of issues that affect children with ASD in reference to teasing and bullying.
- *A convenient way to use all these materials without printing and cutting is to [download the PowerPoint version](#).

This social skills topic is going to be really hard work both for your clients with ASD and for you as well. I hope these free social skills materials help. Good luck with it.

Joel Shaul, LCSW




What about
YOU?

If you are being teased and bullied at school, who are three adults you can get help from?

If you are **not** at school and you get bullied, who can help you?

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What to
DO?

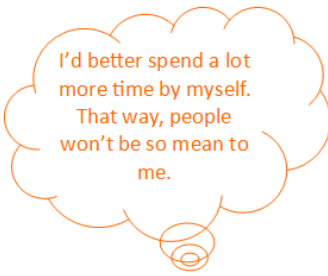
During lunch, some kids notice that Brandon has a hole in the back of his sweat pants. They start telling all the other kids and soon lots of kids are laughing at Brandon. He tells them to stop but they don't.

What should Brandon do?

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What to
THINK?



I'd better spend a lot more time by myself. That way, people won't be so mean to me.

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Is it really bullying?

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Not On Purpose?

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Sometimes they might say
something you don't like, but
they aren't trying to hurt you.

Sometimes you can **ignore it**

Sometimes if you don't say anything back to people who are being mean, they will go away and leave you alone.

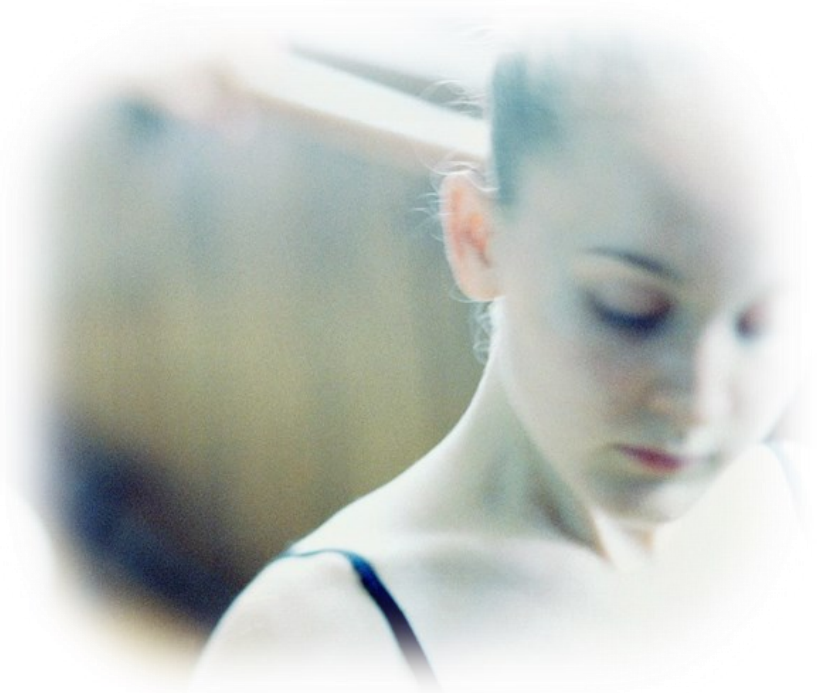


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Don't walk away if walking away takes you someplace dangerous.

Sometimes you can **tell them to stop**

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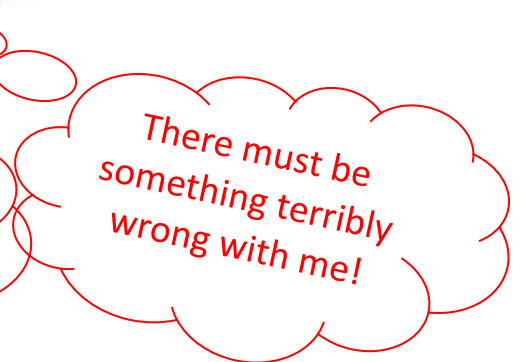
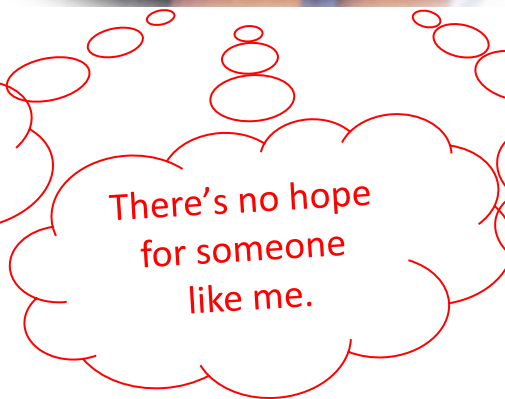
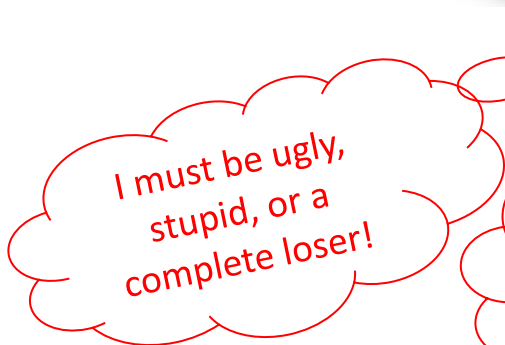


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Listen to what the
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If the first person
does not help you,
find another person
who will.

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Some kinds of thoughts hurt even more than the bullying.
Can you think of thoughts to fix the ones shown here?





What to
THINK?

I didn't like what that
person said about my
favorite TV show.!

That's mean teasing!

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What to
THINK?

That person called
me a "loser."
Everybody thinks
I'm a loser!

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What to
THINK?

People are so mean to
me. This means I will
never have any
friends

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What to
THINK?

A mean kid hit me in
that playground last
year.
I'm never going back
there.

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What to
THINK?

Here is why people
are mean to me.
I'm different. I'm
dumb. I don't know the

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What to
THINK?

I hear kids laughing
again.
I am sure they are
laughing at ME again!

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What to
THINK?

Some day, I'll get a
chance to get back
at them. Then
they'll be sorry!

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What to
THINK?

If I am mean to
someone, that is
just because other
people have been
mean to ME first.

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What to
THINK?

I'll go and hit one of
the mean kids.
Then they'll stop
bothering me.

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What to
THINK?

I'd better spend a lot
more time by myself.
That way, people
won't be so mean to
me.

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What to
THINK?

Here is what I
learned from getting
teased: Don't trust
kids your own age.

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What to
THINK?

When I'm grown up,
people will still be
mean.
Just like they are
now.

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What to
DO?

While watching the soccer game, Kayla suddenly gets hit in the head with a soccer ball. One kid laughs. Another one says, “Kayla! Are you okay?”

What should Kayla do?

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What to
DO?

Daniel does not like nicknames. He listens while boys in the lunchroom laugh and give each other dog names, like “Pete the Poodle” and “Bill the Beagle.” Suddenly, a boy turns to Daniel and says, “Look! It’s Daniel the Spaniel!”

What should Daniel do?

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What to
DO?

While Jason is walking down the hall, a boy Jason has never met walks up to Jason. The boy says, “Dude, why does your hair look so nasty?”

What should Jason do?

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What to
DO?

In the girls’ restroom, some girls start looking through Olivia’s purse while she is going to the bathroom. One of the girls holds up Olivia’s picture of her favorite pop star, and says, “Look! Olivia’s in love!”

What should Olivia do?

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What to
DO?

Jeremy really hates to be touched. At his summer day camp, some kids start playing tag. One runs up to Jeremy and tags him on the shoulder., saying, “Jeremy! You’re IT!”

What should Jeremy do?

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What to
DO?

The lunch line is really long. Peter has to hurry eating so much the he ends up getting lots of spaghetti sauce on his white shirt. When kids make fun him of him later, he tries to ignore them and walk away, but then other kids start teasing him.

What should Peter do?

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What to
DO?

A girl two grades older walks up to Alice and says, “I’m going to beat you up when you’re walking home from school today. It’s after you leave the school property, so no one can help you!”

What should Alice do?

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What to
DO?

Alex has trouble keeping up when the gym teacher makes them run long distances outside. For three weeks, other boys have been calling him “Alex the Turtle” because he is slow. Alex told the gym teacher, but she just says to ignore it.

What should Alex do?

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What to
DO?

Jeffrey is 11 and his brother, Alan, is 9. Even though Alan is younger, Alan beats Jeffrey at every video game. Jeffrey tells Alan, "It's MY turn to win a video game!" Alan says, "Shut up, you big baby."

What should Jeffrey do?

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What to
DO?

During lunch, some kids notice that Brandon has a hole in the back of his sweat pants. They start telling all the other kids and soon lots of kids are laughing at Brandon. He tells them to stop but they don't.

What should Brandon do?

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What to
DO?

Beth Brinker has been getting rude messages on her Facebook. Kids are calling her "Beth Stinker" and they are saying she doesn't shower very often.

What should Beth do?

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What to
DO?

Debbie usually gets teased by kids, but today seems different. Some kids have told her that Frank, a very handsome boy, likes her and wants to go out with her! After school, someone lends her a cell phone, and says, "Here! You can call him now!"

What should Debbie do?

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What about
YOU?

The adult will pretend to be a kid who is being teased because kids think her voice sounds weird. Make sure you help the kid understand ignoring, walking away, and telling kids to stop.

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What about
YOU?

Ask the adult playing this game to make up a friendly nickname that he or she can call you.

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What about
YOU?

If you are being teased and bullied at school, who are three adults you can get help from?

If you are **not** at school and you get bullied, who can help you?

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What about
YOU?

True or False:

If **YOU** are mean to someone, that means that **YOU** are a bully.

Explain your answer.

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What about
YOU?

The adult with you will pretend to be a kid who has been badly teased for being a slow runner. Your job is to help this “kid” by using these words:

“What happened?”
“You must feel awful?”
“I’m sorry.”

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What about
YOU?

One way to make nicknames is use the first letter of your name, like “Jolly Joe” or “Silly Sam.”

Just for fun, ask each person here to create a nickname for themselves this way.

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What about
YOU?

The adult is going to demonstrate two possible ways to deal with someone being mean. Pretend you are a bully and the adult is a kid. Call the adult “Loser.” The adult will demonstrate:
1. Ignoring, and 2. Walking away

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What about
YOU?

Ask each person in the room to practice the right way to look and sound when you Tell Them To Stop. The adult will make sure you are all:
1. Using the right tone of voice
2. Using the right expression on your face

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What about
YOU?

The adult will pretend to be a kid who is being mean to younger kids because mean kids are always teasing and bullying HER. You pretend to be a teacher who is helping her to do the right thing.

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What about
YOU?

The adult will pretend to be a kid who is upset after being teased for not being good at kickball. Help her by using these words:

****What happened?***

****That sounds terrible.***

****Let me tell you about a time when I felt the same way.***

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What about
YOU?

Imagine that you are seeing two teenage boys laughing together and calling each other rude names.

What would you do?

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What about
YOU?

Pretend that you are a teacher who is talking to a class. You are helping the class get ready for a new student coming tomorrow who is in a wheelchair and also has something wrong with her face. Make sure the students know the right way to treat the new student.

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