

# Help your child be BRAVE against teasing about appearance

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Reducing teasing and negative comments about appearance is important for positive body image

Being teased about their appearance can make a child not like their body or the way it looks, and these thoughts can last throughout their life. Being teased, or hearing others being teased, can also impact how children think about other children's bodies and how they treat them. Butterfly Body Bright has a zero-tolerance approach to teasing about appearance at home, school, sport or anywhere else.

Appearance teasing might sound like calling a person 'fatso', 'tubby', 'shorty', 'skinny mini' or saying someone has 'a big tummy', 'big ears', 'no muscles', or is 'too tall or too small'.

Being teased about appearance can lead to:

- body dissatisfaction
- appearance anxiety
- social isolation
- body dysmorphic disorder
- eating disorders.

Appearance teasing is not always bullying or repeated harassment.

Negative comments (i.e., even affectionate family ones) or joking about a child's appearance can hurt their body image.

## Tips to help your children be BRAVE

### Try

- ✓ Having a zero-tolerance to teasing about appearance at home.
- ✓ Calling out people who make negative comments about appearance.
- ✓ Challenging your own thoughts on appearance and body size.
- ✓ Helping your child to see that all bodies are valuable, deserve respect and should not be teased.
- ✓ Encouraging your child to talk about how they feel about being teased or other negative comments. Accept all responses.
- ✓ Stopping your child teasing others about their appearance.
- ✓ Talking to your school if your child is being teased or bullied about their appearance.
- ✓ Listening and acknowledging your child's feelings if they're being teased.

#### Be positive and calm:

*'I am sorry that happened. How did it make you feel?'*

*'That behaviour and what was said, is not ok. Those comments are the problem, not your body.'*

*'What can we do to help you feel better?'* (N.B. Avoid using food to soothe)

*'It's not ok to tease anyone about how they look. A person's body is not a joke.'*

### Avoid

- ✗ Using appearance-related nicknames at home.
- ✗ If your child is teasing someone, don't say the people they're teasing should 'toughen up' or that they're 'too sensitive'.
- ✗ Saying bad things about your body or appearance in front of children.
- ✗ Speaking negatively about the bodies or appearance of other children, friends, strangers, people in the media or in books.
- ✗ Saying one kind of body (type, size, or shape) is better than another kind.
- ✗ Laughing at jokes and comments about how someone looks.
- ✗ Encouraging your child to change how they look so they won't get teased.

#### *Comforting a child who is being teased:*

1. When your child tells you what happened, listen, don't judge. Then thank them for telling you.
2. Take a deep breath before responding.
3. Explain the comments are the problem, not their body. For example:
  - ✓ "You did not deserve to be teased. It's not your fault"
  - ✓ "That was a mean thing to say/do"
4. Don't just say the comments aren't true. For example:
  - ✗ "You're not fat! You're just healthy"
  - ✗ "You're beautiful"
  - ✗ "You're prettier/thinner/better than..."
5. Create a safe strategy with your child to respond if it happens again. For example:
  - ✓ Ask the person to stop
  - ✓ Walk away
  - ✓ Tell a trusted nearby adult (e.g., a teacher)
6. Create a positive strategy with your child to manage their feelings (e.g., a cuddle, music, art/craft, having a walk, going to the park (BUT avoid giving them food to make them happy)).