

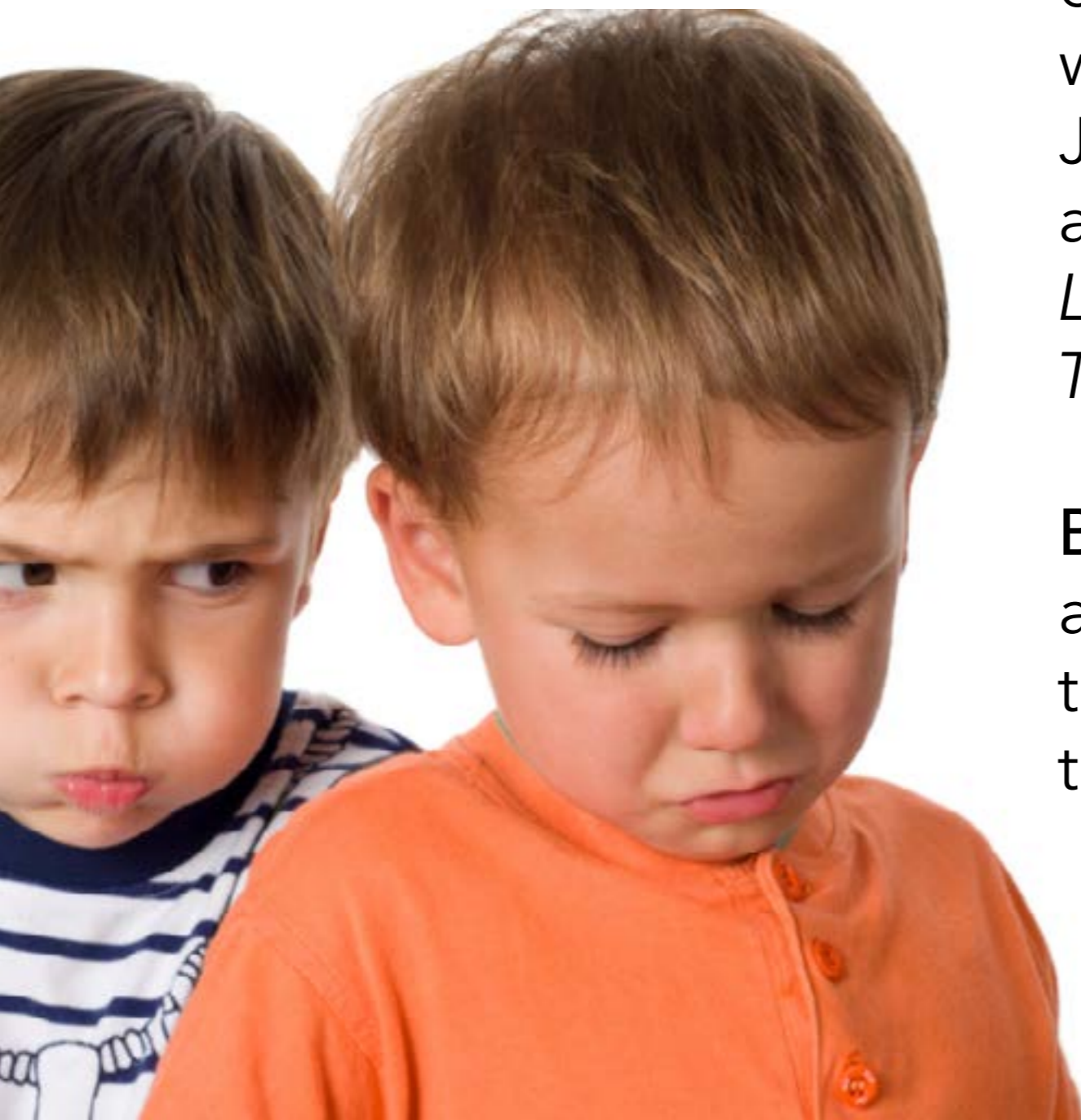
Raising a Confident Child



two little hands

How to

Bully-Proof your Preschooler



"We used to think bullying started at around third grade, but now we know it starts in preschool," says Joel Haber, Ph.D., psychologist and author of *Bullyproof Your Child for Life: Protect Your Child from Teasing, Taunting and Bullying for Good*.

Bullying is a source of stress, fear, and anxiety in young children, but there are some simple and powerful things parents and teachers can do to help children take charge of the situation.



Body Language

One of the best ways to prevent children from being bullied is to show them how to establish and control their own space. Children can use body language to send the message that they won't be pushed around. Give your child a scenario (someone calls you a name, or takes something that belongs to you) and role play to practice responding to the threat using strong body language.

- Stand up tall
- Look the bully in the eye
- Speak with confidence





Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries involves talking to the aggressor. However, communication can be challenging in preschool or childcare settings because children's verbal skills are still developing. Many parents and teachers use sign language to help give very young children another way to get a message across when they can't talk yet, or if they can't remember the words they want to use.

This mom recently witnessed her 15-month-old daughter's first attempt at dealing with an aggressor by using her signs:

My daughter was in her playgroup and was in a toy car when a boy (much older and bigger than her) started to push her out of the car. I stood back waiting to see what she would do...



My daughter looked at me then looked at the boy and signed 'No, no, no!', 'Hurt' and what looked like 'Wait'. The boy continued to push her - so I went to get her out, trying hard to hold back tears.... because I was sooooo proud of her!"

I'm proud that she was able to express what she was thinking, even without being able to say it out loud yet, and use the skills she knows to communicate it. I couldn't even believe that she was trying to say what she said, as 'wait' is not a sign we use all the time, and I didn't know that she understood the concept of waiting.





Using Signs to Prevent or Stop Bullying

"When it comes to young children, often bullying happens simply because they lack the vocabulary or understanding to express what they are feeling, so they act out," says Joyce Edmiston, a writer and preschool volunteer who is deaf.

"This is why signing is so great for these children. Working together with BOTH the bully and victim at this young age will teach them relationship skills, and also possibly help them to turn the angst into a friendship."

While there are many valuable signs you can teach children to prevent bullying (signs for feelings and manners, for example), the following pages will teach you five essential signs toddlers and preschoolers can use to deal with an aggressor.



Five Essential Signs for Bully-Proofing Your Preschooler

#1 STOP

Use a flat hand to “stop” the other hand.



[Click image above to play video. Doesn't work? Click here!](#)

[Download a printable flash card](#)

[See DVDs that teach this sign](#)





Five Essential Signs for Bully-Proofing Your Preschooler

#2 NO

Close two fingers to your thumb.



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Five Essential Signs for Bully-Proofing Your Preschooler

#3 HURT

Point one finger at the other (or twist them) where you hurt.



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Five Essential Signs for Bully-Proofing Your Preschooler

#4 WAIT

Wiggle your fingers like you're waiting.



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Five Essential Signs for Bully-Proofing Your Preschooler

#5 GO

Point your pointer fingers in the direction you want to go - as in "Go get the teacher!" or "Go away!"



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[See DVDs that teach this sign](#)





Teaching Tip

In my preschool classes, I use the signs for "STOP" and "GO" when talking about bullying with preschoolers. I explain to them that they have the right to ask the person picking on them to "STOP!" And I encourage them to "GO" tell someone they trust, like a teacher or a parent, about what is happening. I play the upbeat "Stop and Go" song to help them learn these signs.

- Shannon Moss-Henkel
Master Signing Time Instructor



Listen to the song:
"Stop and Go!"



Resources

Books

[The Anti-Bullying and Teasing Book for Preschool Classrooms](#)

[They Don't Like Me: Lessons on Bullying and Teasing from a Preschool Classroom](#)

Web Pages

[Bullying in Preschool: What Parents Need to Know \(education.com\)](#)

[The Good Birds Club: Parent Guide \(sesamestreet.com\)](#)

[How to Handle Preschool Bullies \(disneyfamily.com\)](#)

Book Lists

[Anti-Bullying Picture Books \(Story Time Standouts\)](#)

[Read-Together Books About Bullying \(Nick Jr.\)](#)

[Popular Anti-Bullying Books \(GoodReads\)](#)

Signing Curriculum

[Signing Time Preschool and Child Care Program](#)

