

TIPS FOR TATTLING

Young children feel a moral obligation to report events or actions that indicate a rule has been broken or someone is doing something they shouldn't do. When children are ages 5-7, this duty bound behavior labeled 'tattling' is developmentally appropriate. In skill language the children are trying to demonstrate the self-discipline skill of Understanding the Reasons for Rules.

When tattling begins to surface with young children use one of these simple techniques:

1. Politely thank the child for reporting or noticing, but do nothing else.
2. Ask the child. "Are you telling me because you want me to do something or just to let me know?" If they want you to do something, encourage them to work with you and the other person(s) to solve the problem. If they are unwilling to be part of the solution the matter is probably not that important.
3. Create a complaint box and let children draw or print the problems they notice on 3x5 cards and place them in the box. Periodically open the box and review the concerns they have. Talk about each issue when things are calm. Brainstorm problem solving techniques that might be used the next time the issue arises.

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"I'm *not* being a tattle-tale! —
I'm being a reliable source!"

For older children "tattling" usually means they want to get the other person in trouble. In skill language they may not know how to take the initiative and resolve the problem, or, they are trying to figure out how to accomplish a task.

Children need to know that 'tattling' or 'peer-reporting' is an appropriate means of communication when someone's life is in danger, abusive actions are occurring or they are fearful that something will get out of control. In school, avenues to report behaviors that are dangerous, disrespectful or disruptive need to be taught to all students.

Explore the reasons why others tattle with middle schoolers. Sometimes people tattle so they can seem better than someone else. People tattle to get attention, hoping someone will notice them. A person can check their motives by asking "Am I tattling to help or hurt someone? Have I done everything I can to help solve the issue?"

In place of tattling, talking with others and getting a third party to help resolve issues are more productive forms of communication. Tattling can be curbed when children have been encouraged to accept others and have been taught how to be a friend and how to make friends. This month use the attached worksheet to help students explore the concept of friendship.

What Makes it Easy or Difficult to be a Friend?

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Select a statement and tell why it would make it easy or difficult to be a friend.

Put an E or D next to the statement.

1. ___ The other person knows my name.
 2. ___ The person gossips about others.
 3. ___ We like to do some of the same things.
 4. ___ The person says nice things to me.
 5. ___ The person calls me nicknames that I don't like.
 6. ___ We live near one another.
 7. ___ The person helps me get into trouble.
 8. ___ The person likes to laugh at others.
 9. ___ The person acts appropriately in most situations.
 10. ___ The person skips out on our plans if a better offer comes along.
 11. ___ The person won't take responsibility for their actions.
 12. ___ The person picks on others who are different.
 13. ___ The person ignores what I say and continues to do things I don't like.
 14. ___ The person lives far away from me.
 15. ___ The person is sensitive to the needs of others.
 16. ___ The person shows leadership qualities.
 17. ___ I can count on the person to be there for me in times of need.
 18. ___ The person will admit when they are wrong.
 19. ___ The person says they are sorry then they do something to show their sorrow.
 20. ___ We laugh a lot when we are together.
 21. ___ The person helps me be better.
 22. ___ The person likes to tease or bully.
 23. ___ The person listens to me if I tell them to stop doing something.
 24. ___ The person uses their social skills when meeting new people.
 25. ___ The person lets me copy their homework so I don't fail.
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