



Victims often respond to bullies' demands with either passive submission or retaliatory aggression—rather than with self-confidence and assertiveness.

ASSERTIVENESS means expressing one's feelings and defending one's rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others.

Potential victims can protect themselves by learning to respond assertively. Assertive responses neither provoke the bully nor reward him or her with submission. An assertive manner also provides a child with an air of self-confidence and a sense of control that can deter a bully's approach from the start. Role-playing exercises help children use body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and words to respond assertively to a bully.

Standing Up

- 1** Review the chart *Bullying Actions and Victim Responses* (page 19) in advance. Select one or two examples from the *Bullying* (Provoking) column that fit your children's ages and circumstances. Feel free to adapt and/or embellish the scenarios, or add your own examples.
- 2** Explain that there are three ways to respond to a bully: by *Giving In* (Submissive), *Hurting Back* (Aggressive), and *Standing Up* (Assertive). Define *Standing Up*, referring to the definition of assertiveness above. Explain and discuss why *Standing Up* is usually more effective in preventing or stopping bullying than the other two types of responses. Review *Tips for Standing Up to Bullies* (next page).
- 3** Have another adult assume the role of the Bully while you demonstrate the types of responses. Make sure to exaggerate the differences between them.
- 4** Have the children watch, describe, and imitate your nonverbal communication (e.g., posture, eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice), as well as your words and actions.
- 5** Recruit a child volunteer to role-play the Victim. Encourage the volunteer to use his or her own words and to practice the response several times—each time improving it based on feedback from the group.

This activity will...

Help children understand differences between submissive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors

Give children guidance and practice in responding to a bully's provocations with verbal and nonverbal assertiveness