



## Understanding Bullying

## Expressing Love This Valentine's Day

## Fun Learning Activities to Bring the Learning Home



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# Bring the Learning Experience Home

La Petite Academy® is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

## Infants

Play this fun game when your baby is alert and curious. Hold onto a set of keys, shake them a little so they jingle and say to your baby, "One, two, three, drop the keys." Drop the keys. Does your baby watch them fall down? Pick them up again and place them in your baby's hand. Help her try to drop the keys by opening her fingers.

## Toddlers

Sit on the floor next to your child. Place 3-4 building blocks (or you could use empty boxes or containers instead) on the floor and start to make a tower with them. Place a small toy on top of the tower and say to your child, "The (name of toy) is ON the tower." Knock the tower over so the toy falls down and say, "The (name of toy) is OFF the tower."

## Preschoolers/Pre-K

Place an empty box or basket on the floor. Have your child gather and roll up socks into balls. Ask him to place the sock balls in the basket. Place the basket on top of your child's head and encourage him to balance it. Challenge him to not drop any socks! Remind your child not to hold onto the basket while balancing it on his head. Can your child walk around the room while balancing it?

## School-Agers

Play this card tossing game with your child. Divide a deck of cards equally between you. Stand several feet away from a wall and take turns tossing cards at its base. The object of the game is to get a card to lean upright against the wall instead of falling flat on the floor. When a card falls flat, it stays where it is. When a card leans against the wall, whoever threw it gets to collect all the cards lying on the floor. Play until one of you has all of the cards, or whenever you want to end the game.

# Expressing Love

This Valentine's Day and throughout the month of February, we encourage you show love and appreciation for the people in your life.

## Five things to do for your child:

- 1. Cut-up Notes:** Go through magazines and find letters that spell out a special message for your child. Attach the letters to a mirror, the inside of a lunch box or some other special place for your child to discover.
- 2. Count-Down:** You have likely heard about the 12 days of Christmas. How about the 12 days of Valentine. Leave messages or small treats hidden for your child each day. Label the discovery with the number of days left until the holiday. Encourage your child to organize the numbers to keep track of the days until Valentine's Day.
- 3. The Day You Were Born:** Make a special book for your child recounting the day (or night) s/he became part of your family. Tell the story every year, emphasizing the emotions that surrounded that amazing time in your life.
- 4. This Is Why:** On 20 (or more) separate strips of paper, write a reason why your child is special. Connect the strips so that they make a chain. Hang the chain where your child can reach and encourage her to remove a strip every ½ hour to read all of the reasons she is special to you.
- 5. I Love You Names:** Write the letters in your child's first name down the left side of a piece of paper. For each letter, think of a word that starts with the letter that describes your child. Write a word for each letter and post the poem on your child's door so he can see it.

## Five activities to do with your child:

- 1. Random Acts of Kindness:** Involve your child in planning and putting into action some random acts of kindness. These can be anything from leaving cards and a flower on the front porch of a neighbor to walking downtown and adding coins to parking meters.
- 2. Love Collages:** Collect a variety of magazines, some glue and construction paper. Pick a person that you and your child both know and care about. Look through the magazine to find pictures of things that you think would make that person happy and create a collage. Deliver it to the person you selected to spread a little cheer.
- 3. Decorating Cookies:** Bake or buy some simple sugar cookies (or just use graham crackers), mix food coloring into some white frosting, and set these out with some craft sticks for a fun and messy time. Work with your child to decorate the cookies for family, friends and neighbors.
- 4. Scavenger Hunt:** Create hearts in a variety of colors and sizes. Hide them throughout your house and challenge your child to find as many as possible.
- 5. Dancing Hearts:** You will need paper hearts, crayons and thread for this activity. Use the crayons to decorate the hearts and string them on the thread. Hang the string of hearts in front of a vent or fan to see them dance in the breeze.

# Understanding Bullying

Have you heard these words before? *"You can't come to my birthday party. I'm the oldest so I get to decide what we play. They are my toys and I only want Suzie to play with them."*

If you have, you're not alone. These words, or ones similar to them, are said by children across the nation. And when children are regularly treated negatively by their peers, bullying is taking place.

## Let's Start by Exploring the Different Ways That Children Bully

There are a variety of ways that children bully one another. It is important to be aware of the different methods that children use so you can recognize what is happening.

### Physical Bullying

To help determine if physical aggression between children is resulting from a situation where bullying is occurring, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the physical aggression always started by the same child?
- Is there one child who always seems to be the "victim" of the physical aggression?
- Do you notice that the child that is being aggressive is also verbally hurtful? (For example, calls other children names or tells them they can't play.)
- Do you notice that other children are afraid of the child who is physically aggressive?

### Emotional Bullying

Emotional bullying usually involves taunting, exclusion and gossip. There is a book titled *Queen Bees and Wanna Bees* that explains emotional bullying through a visual description. Here is what it says:

- Close your eyes for me and imagine you are in the middle of the ocean. You're not alone. You are surrounded by other people. In the middle, is a raft that is large enough to hold a select few, but not nearly large enough to hold everyone. There is one person that is in the middle of the raft, being pulled by others and struggling to stay in that spot. There are others that are floating in the water, clinging to the edge of the raft while trying to push, pull, or shove other people off of the raft so that they can climb on. As you look around, you also notice that there are individuals, floating all by themselves in an inner tube, enjoying the sun and splashing in the water.

Now that you have this scene in your head, let's relate the different parts to how people or children use emotions to bully others. The raft in the above scene represents popularity. Some people struggle to climb on it, trying to get certain people to like them by letting them play with their favorite toy, and trying to kick others off by telling them they think their shirt is ugly. At the center of the raft is a leader, who is usually liked by everyone. Those that are floating in their inner tubes, well ... they don't really care about being popular.

Regardless of which description fits your child, they still need to feel important.

## How to react to bullying

Often, people react to bullying like they react to a challenging behavior. For example:

- Sophia hits Oscar.
- Oscar screams, *"You can't come to my house."*
- You see what happened, walk over and comfort Oscar while saying to Sophia, *"Hitting hurts. You can't hurt my friends in this house. You need to sit in time out and think about what you've done."*

Through this method, you are comforting the victim while punishing the aggressive child. When bullying is taking place, a reaction like this will only support bullying, rather than diminish it.

Instead, when you become aware of a bullying situation, here are the steps that you should follow:

- Sophia hits Oscar
- Oscar screams, *"You can't come to my house."*
- You walk over to the children and say, *"Oscar, I saw Sophia hit you and you told her she can't come to your house. Did you like it when she hit you?"*
- Oscar says, *"No."*
- You say, *"Then you need to tell Sophia to stop because that hurts."*
- Oscar clenches his fists, stiffens his body stares at Sophia and says, *"Stop. I don't like it."*
- Sophia says, *"Fine. You can play in the block area."*

In this scenario, you encouraged the bullied child to defend himself. You gave Oscar the tools, or words, he needed to express how he felt. And, you put Sophia in a situation where she did not get what she wanted through bullying.

It's important to note that children's behavior reflects that of the adults in their lives, and the treatment they receive from these adults. With a family that is democratic in its decision-making, and inclusive of everyone, children learn they are valuable members of a group, learn to help one another, and learn to make decisions as a group. Remember – the most effective tool in preventing bullying is you.

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of the monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at [educationteam@learningcaregroup.com](mailto:educationteam@learningcaregroup.com). We would love to hear from you.



We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for being a part of the La Petite Academy family.

Whether you have just enrolled, or if your child has grown up at our school, we thank you for choosing us as your early education and care provider.

We value each and every one of our families, and look forward to inspiring your child towards a love of learning in 2011 and beyond!

