

DEALING WITH TEASING

Teasing and bullying are common challenges for many students. And the problem is at its worst in middle school. While you can't control what other people do, think, or say, you do have choices when it comes to how you'll respond. Here are five things to keep in mind when dealing with bullying and teasing:

- 1. This isn't your fault.** You haven't done anything to deserve harassment.
- 2. Responding to bullying with violence, put-downs, or threats of your own can only make a situation worse.** If you choose not to play the game the bully is playing, you'll keep your self-respect and be much better off.
- 3. Don't believe what others say.** It's bad enough when people put you down, but when you replay their rude comments over in your mind, you hurt yourself again and again.
- 4. Change your response to the teasing.** When you choose to let someone make you feel bad, you give them power. Let the teasing roll off and you take back that power. It's not easy to block out put-downs or gossip, but you can try. When others are being mean to you, for example, do your best to remember all of the great qualities you have.
- 5. Don't suffer in silence.** Tell adults at home about the bullying. Together you can let school staff know what's happening and make sure they do something about it. If you're not comfortable talking to your family about the problem, discuss it with another trusted adult. When you speak up for yourself, things can change for the better.