

POINTERS FOR DEFLECTING

Most people have someone in their lives who gets on their last nerve. This may be a critical spouse, an adolescent with an attitude, a nosy neighbor, a rude stranger, a tyrannical boss, a perverse coworker, or the resident know-it-all. These people are your teachers. They will give you countless opportunities to practice deflecting. The following pointers will help you make the most of their efforts to educate you.

- Study techniques for turning killer words into kindness, eliciting the causes of intimidation, and “grounding” insults with power words.
- Start with easy responses. Find out what happens when you say “Thank you.”
- Make up and review generic one-liners that can defuse any insult. Memorize them! Some require slight alterations, depending on the slur: “Well, I may be . . . (indignant tone), but you’re quite . . . (complimentary tone).”
- Rephrase, label, and validate feelings when cutting remarks are an expression of genuine anger.
- Keep a log of insults you’ve received and think of responses when you’re not under pressure. Often, intimidators repeat themselves, so you will have opportunities to use your responses later. This will also give you a handy one-liner: “Oh, that was good. I’ll have to add it to my insult collection.”
- Brainstorm responses with your children for cruel comments they’ve received: This can start in preschool: “I’m not your friend.” “Well, I’m not your toe.”
- Practice on your children when they’re having problems with attitudes and anger.
 - Child: You must be the stupidest parent I know!
 - Parent: Is there an award for that?
 - Child: I hate you!
 - Parent: It must feel awful to hate your mother. Or, Well you’re not the only one (to hate me)!
- Practice making bully busts when you are not a direct target. Focus on helping perpetrators with humor, understanding, and glimpses of their goodness rather than offering sympathy to “victims.”
- Brainstorm bully busts in classrooms, at clubs, and at other meetings.
- Be a part of the solution, not the problem! Make sure your bully busts pass the no-retaliation–no-effort-to-control–no-defensiveness test.

Deflecting Techniques			
1. Agree	5. Dramatize	9. Sympathize	13. “Dares”
2. Give compliments	6. Tone twisters	10. Ask questions	14. “But”
3. Take compliments	7. Reverse psychology	11. Express feelings, wants, limits	15. Non sequiturs
4. Golden nuggets	8. Label feelings	12. “Try”	16. Humor

RECOMMENDED READING

How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies by Kate Cohen-Posey (Rainbow Books, 1995).
When I Say No, I Feel Guilty by Manuel J. Smith (Bantam Books, 1980).
The Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield (Warner Books, 1993).