

Name-calling, teasing may be the worst kind of violence

“Violence is Anything That Hurts Somebody’s Body, Feelings or Things.” This was the premise of a conference on bullying and harassment I recently attended, led by Martin Fleming and presented by the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office. The experience of this conference was informational and enlightening.

Bullying and harassment is not just an issue for schools to deal with, it is something that occurs at all ages and at all places. I hope that what I share will spark further discussion and will be used at home, school, on the court and on the field.

I firmly believe that name-calling, teasing, and harassment is the worst kind of violence. It hurts feelings, is long-lasting, and leads to other, more physically damaging types of violence.

There are four main points that I brought away from this conference that I feel are beneficial for all parents, educators, coaches and anyone who interacts with children.

1. If you don’t want the big stuff, focus on the little stuff.
2. What is the little stuff?
3. We need to set our expectations high for all kids at all times.
4. We have to do it together.

If you don’t want the big stuff, focus on the little stuff. This says it all. If there are clear and immediate consequences for the



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What is the little stuff? The little stuff is gossiping, eye-rolling, name-calling, teasing, taunting and trash-talking. If the little stuff is allowed at home, at school, on the court or on the field, it will lead to the big stuff, like shoving, punching, and fighting.

We need to set our expectations high for all kids at all times. Kids need to know that there is never an appropriate time to trash-talk. It is not OK to tease their little brothers or their classmates. Kids need to know that gossiping and name-calling are not acceptable and will lead to bigger problems. When the consequences are clear, fair, and immediate for the little stuff, children will think twice before they tease their teammate or opponent, taunt their little sister or gossip about fellow students.

We have to do it together. As a former coach and leadership teacher, I always like to compare everything to a team. We must be a team. We must do it together. It is not OK if the expectations are high at home, but not at school. Likewise, it is not OK if the expectations are high at school, but not on the sports team. Bullying and harassment is not just the threat of physical violence. It is also name-calling, teasing and gossiping. If we don’t want the big stuff, we must work as a team by having immediate and clear consequences for the little stuff.

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