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## Kidpower Tips and Resources for Health Care Providers Protecting Overweight Youth from Bullying

Young people perceived by their peers as being overweight are frequently targets of bullying and harassment. They also often struggle with image and boundary issues that diminish their sense of self-worth and confidence. Health care providers have the opportunity, even in just a minute or two, to communicate powerful information that can help young people protect themselves. In less than 90 seconds, you can:

1. **State the Risk:** Say, “Research shows that kids who carry more weight are often bullied and feel badly about themselves. That has been my experience with my own patients, too.”
2. **Lend Belief:** Say, “I know that you are valuable, strong, competent, special...[others that fit your patient]. You deserve to be safe from any bullying, harassment, and abuse and to feel good about yourself.”
3. **Give Guidance and Direction:** Say, “You have the ability to learn how to *protect yourself from hurtful words*, real world and online; how to *create emotional and physical distance* from harmful behavior; how to *change negative messages into positive ones*, and *how to advocate for yourself* until you get help. I have resources for you and your family so that you can learn skills to take charge of your emotional and physical safety, because YOU are important and deserve to be SAFE.

By expressing these key points, you are:

- implementing the standard practice of informing a patient about potential risks they face so that they are more likely to be prepared if that risk develops, not surprised;
- giving the young person an opportunity to hear that their doctor perceives them as worthy and valuable; and
- providing access to resources supporting emotional health, just as care providers might recommend a patient spending a great deal of time around water learn how to swim.

### Adult Leadership to Stop Bullying

While young people can learn powerful skills to protect themselves, the responsibility for maintaining safe environments for young people is the responsibility of *adults*, including principals, teachers, and parents. For everyone’s safety, youth must be held accountable for using their own power safely, just as a driver is expected to follow the rules of the road. However, roads are only safe when authorities take responsibility for ensuring that the rules are followed, and parents, teachers, and others in charge of young people are similarly responsible for addressing bullying and other unsafe behavior fairly, efficiently, effectively, and consistently. Kidpower resources include:

*Bullying Prevention and Positive Peer Communication Skills* <https://www.kidpower.org/bullying>

*Child Protection and Adult Leadership* articles <https://www.kidpower.org/library/articles#adult-leadership>

### Staying Safe from Bullying

To protect themselves from bullying, people of any age need skills for projecting awareness, calm, and confidence, because people communicating these attitudes are less likely to be bothered by others. People of all ages can learn how to project confidence even if they are not actually feeling confident, and this helps them be safer. They need skills for filtering messages that come to them through words, images, or gestures so that they can take in the information that is helpful and supportive while keeping out the information that is offensive, attacking, or otherwise destructive. They need to be able to create emotional distance in their minds and to create physical distance with their bodies when they are targets of bullying behavior, threats, or harassment. They need skills for setting boundaries if they are in relationship with the person engaging in the hurtful behavior. Finally, they need advocacy skills in order to persist in seeking help until the problem is addressed and stops. Kidpower resources include:

*Face Bullying With Confidence: 8 Skills We Can Use Right Away*

<https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/prevent-bullying/>

## Healthy Boundaries

If youth are experiencing teasing, harassment, or bullying about body size in the context of meaningful relationships, such as with close friends, cousins, or siblings, they need coaching on setting healthy boundaries. They will benefit from the opportunity to practice saying with confidence boundaries such as, “I understand jokes about weight are funny to you. They aren’t funny for me. Please make different jokes.” And, “I feel uncomfortable when you talk about my food choices. Please don’t talk about my food choices.” Youth also need support about how to assess the risks that come with staying in relationship with someone who continues to cross reasonable, expressed boundaries and about how to reduce exposure or, in some cases, end relationships altogether. Kidpower resources include:

*Assertive Advocacy Communication Skills* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/assertive-advocacy/>  
*Teenpower Boundaries: Setting Boundaries with People You Know* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/teen-boundaries/>

## Positive Self-Talk

Negative self-talk, which involves being critical and demeaning toward ourselves, can be as destructive as the hurtful messages coming from others. Youth will benefit from opportunities for recognizing and identifying negative self-talk and developing strategies for managing it, preventing it from ruling behavior and feelings, and redirecting it toward positive rather than destructive content. Kidpower resources include:

*Unsafe Words We Use on Ourselves* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/unsafe-words-we-use-on-ourselves/>  
*The Kidpower Trash Can Technique for Throwing Away Hurting Words* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/kidpower-trash-can-for-throwing-away-hurting-words/>

## Kidpower Resources for Adults Helping Young People Experiencing Bullying Because of Weight

Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower International is a global nonprofit leader dedicated to providing empowering and effective child protection, positive communication, and personal safety skills for all ages and abilities. Since 1989, Kidpower has protected over 3 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from bullying, violence, and abuse through greater awareness, knowledge, and action. Services include positive and experiential safety workshops, child protection advocacy training, an extensive free online Library, consultation, and publications.

### Kidpower Books include:

*Bullying: What Adults Need to Know and Do to Keep Kids Safe* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/bullying/>  
*The Relationship Safety Skills Handbook for Teens and Adults: Preventing Domestic Dating, and Interpersonal Violence* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/relationship-safety-skills-handbook/>  
*The Kidpower Book for Caring Adults: Personal Safety, Self-Protection, Confidence, and Advocacy for Young People* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/kidpower-book/>  
*Kidpower and Fullpower Safety Comics series* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/safety-comics/>  
*Cartoon-Illustrated Teaching Books for Educators* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/teaching-kit/>  
*10 People Safety Assignments: Individual Assignments for Teaching Children Ages 5 to 14 to be Safe With People* <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/10-people-safety-assignments/>  
*15 People Safety Group Lessons: Teaching Children Ages 5-14 to Be Safe With People* – includes Positive Peer Lessons <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/15-people-safety-group-lessons/>  
*Child Protection Advocacy Skills Workbook* – textbook from Kidpower Protection Advocates Training Institute <https://www.kidpower.org/store/products/child-protection-advocates-workbook/>

### Additional Library Resources Include:

*Choosing a Therapist for Your Child or Yourself* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/choosing-the-right-therapist/>  
*Kidpower Strategies for Safety Online and Everywhere Else* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/online-safety/>  
*Kidpower 30-Skill Challenge* (free e-book available in English, Spanish, and Arabic) <https://www.kidpower.org/millionsafer/kidpower-30-skill-challenge>  
*Kidpower Skills for Health care Providers* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/healthcare-providers/>  
*Kidpower Coloring Book* (free and downloadable in 10 languages) <https://www.kidpower.org/library/kidpower-coloring-book/>  
*PuppetPower Videos* – for Young Children and their Adults <https://www.kidpower.org/library/videos/puppet-power/>  
*Fullpower Safety Tips for Teens and Adults* <https://www.kidpower.org/library/safety-tips-handouts/>

**To Learn More:** Visit [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org) and [International Child Protection Advocacy](http://www.childprotectionmonth.org), a campaign to support adult leadership in keeping kids safe. [http://www.childprotectionmonth.org/](http://www.childprotectionmonth.org)