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“Normally I wear a tank under my uniform shirt but I decided on Saturday to wear my new cami. LOVED it. It’s silky smooth and super soft.”



- aMarieT

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## Give Tattletales a Break!

Posted by [April Pesveteaux](#) on October 20, 2010 at 7:45 PM

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**Tattletales get a bad rap.** From the "mama's boy" to the immoral "no snitching" movement, people who tell are perceived as weak and sniveling. While tattling is unlikely to suddenly be cool, it's still important that kids who turn in a bully or another dangerous person get the respect they deserve, instead of contempt.

To differentiate between good and bad tattling, I asked Charlotte Reznick, PhD, author of [The Power of Your Child's Imagination](#), to guide us down this narrow path. First things first, how did telling an adult that some other kid is doing something wrong become a universally despised action?

One of the reasons people are against tattle tales is they think kids aren't working things out for themselves. Parents want kids to take responsibility, so if they come to mom or dad for every little thing, they're not learning to work things out.



However, kids speaking up can be a positive action in some circumstances, explains Reznick. "They're getting help when the situation is too difficult to handle on their own, and they are putting that moral code into practice. If you see someone picking on another kid at school, it's important to tell a grown up so they can handle it."

Teaching conflict resolution is one thing [Reznick does in her own practice](#), as when kids don't have these skills, they need to be learned.

If you want your child to take care of the problem you have to model the skills for them, and then practice. Parents also have to watch how they speak to each other and how they speak to their kids. If they're teasing or calling names, then the kids are learning to do that. Teasing can be quite hurtful. When you're kidding around, you have to be careful of what you're saying.

While **defining bullying** can be tricky, Reznick explains that while one kid can let a nasty comment roll off his back, another may become extremely upset. The more sensitive kids need to learn how to stick up for themselves and learn effective conflict resolution.

Essentially, if a child is tattling, he or she is asking for help in a situation they don't know how to handle. It's a parent's or teacher's job to help the child, and help the child help himself.

Of course, there are **tattle tales that fit the stereotype**, in which case Reznick suggests children be able to define their motives.

Are you telling on someone because it's the right thing to do, or is it to get them in trouble because you're mad at them? Is it someone just messing around, and you do the same thing? Do you want them telling on you?

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