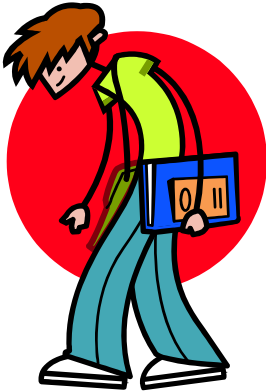


## The Teasing Teen

Almost every adolescent at some point is teased by peers or playmates. Being victimized or teased is particularly common among adolescents who have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder or other challenges that make them different from their friends. Teasing can further diminish an already frail sense of social competence (the degree to which teens feel they are able to cope proficiently with peer interactions) and self-esteem in these teenagers.



**In dealing with teasing, it is important to recognize why teenagers tease and what need it serves for them.**

Peer victimization and teasing occur in response to a high need for peer group acceptance. When

adolescents are confronted with a peer who is different from themselves, in even a small way, it threatens both their self-image and peer group acceptance. They see the parts of themselves that are unacceptable to the group reflected in the peer who is different. In an effort to reject the negative parts of themselves and to gain status in the peer group, they tease or make fun of the peer who is different.

Teenagers who tease need to develop more appropriate ways of gaining peer status. Once again, this rests on strong feelings of social competence. Telling a child not to tease is asking for a social skill that cannot be mastered unless there is a strong base of social competence. Without that base, the teasing will continue or will simply take another form. Acknowledge the need for peer acceptance. Work with the teenager cooperatively to help him/her to appreciate the unique viewpoints of each person in a social situation and to evaluate, understand and predict social consequences.

Teenagers who are victimized need to develop social competence and increase their self-esteem. Social competence cannot be acquired through learning a set of quick responses to teasing. The first thing for parents to do when a teenager has been teased is to validate the teen's

feelings and try to appreciate his/her point of view. Recognize that the teenager has been injured and hurt by the teasing.

**Helping the teen to recognize that his/her feelings are important and valid will aid in the development of a stronger sense of self-worth and social competence.**

Only after the teenager is over the acute hurt is it possible for him/her to begin to recognize the reciprocal nature of friendship and his/her role in it.





Integra, founded in 1967 by parents and professionals, is an accredited Children's Mental Health Centre dedicated to helping children and adolescents who experience social, emotional and behavioural problems related to their learning disabilities. We are a charitable organization administered by a Board of Directors comprised of dedicated volunteers from the community.

Integra has an experienced and multidisciplinary professional staff that is dedicated to creating and implementing a range of programs. Integra serves as a centre for research, practicum placement and continuing education.

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## TIPS FOR TEENS

### The Teasing Teen

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