

# TATTLING

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 1

All children tattle; it is a way of getting the parent to mind business that is not theirs. In a program I co-created for the schools, called Project Self-Esteem, we taught a way to stop tattling in its tracks.

With young children, you do the "broken record" which is to say the same thing over and over again. ( See "Lovingly Holding the Line"). The child says, "Suzie is getting a banana." You say, "It is not kind to mind someone else's business; why don't you go and do a puzzle." The child may or may not know what you are saying, but he/she will soon discover that tattling has no reward. If safety is involved, the parent will choose to respond.

With an older child, be sure the child knows the difference between REPORTING (telling something where safety/possible harm is involved) or TATTLING (minding someone else's business.)

Run through a list of things that could happen and have the child say REPORTING or TATTLING:

- (1) Your little brother spills the milk on the floor. (Reporting. Safety/possible harm may be involved.)
- (2) Your sister is using your comb. (Tattling. No safety is involved.)
- (3) Your brother is in the tree. (Reporting. Safety/possible harm is involved.)
- (4) Your sister is not eating all of her lunch. (Tattling as safety or harm are not involved.)  
If safety or harm is involved it is Reporting. Otherwise, it is tattling.

The child runs up to you, "Dixie called me a stupid poo-poo head!" Since safety is not involved, respond, "Are you tattling or reporting?" Whatever the child says, continually repeat your sentence, "Are you tattling or reporting?" The child will get bored and quit tattling. You can teach an older child to fog the teaser or to ignore the teaser. (See: "Handling Verbal Attacks.")

**Tattling is minding someone else's business.**