

You are the Experts of your Family!

Tattling usually occurs before children have attempted to solve a problem or conflict for themselves.

What is Tattling?

The intent of tattling is often hurtful and is used to get another person in trouble, often over trivial behaviour. In this case, children do not reflect on the perspectives of others, and may use tattling as a way to solve an argument.

Self-regulation and self-awareness skills help children identify their perception of the situation to resolve the conflict using more appropriate behaviours.

Telling adults can be a child's way of protecting someone from harm.

When to Tell, Not Tattle

Encourage children to tell an adult when someone is in immediate danger. Acknowledge children's efforts to seek help for a problem that they may need help solving.

Approach conflict by identifying the perspectives of all people involved. Help children come up with a solution, and then review the outcome, making adjustments if needed.

Children are developing their own sense of morality and fairness.

Alternative Problem Solving

Help children recognize when to solve problems on their own and when to get help. Remind children that it is okay to get help from a caring adult in order to keep themselves or someone else safe.

As children get older, they develop important problem solving skills, such as assertiveness, self-advocacy, confidence, and clear and effective communication.

Check out these books for more information on **telling** and **tattling**:

1. *A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue* by Julia Cook
2. *A Children's Book About Tattling* by Joy Perry
3. *Don't Squeal Unless it's a Big Deal* by Jeanie Franz Ransom
4. *Telling isn't Tattling* by Kathryn M. Hammerseng
5. *What About Me: 12 Ways to Get Your Parent's Attention (Without Hitting Your Sister)* by Eileen Kennedy-Moore

How to tell:

Help children understand that telling is ok when they do it to help someone. It's never too late to tell, even if it will make someone upset. Tell children that if safety is a concern, then it's their duty to tell.

Some things for children to consider:

- ▲ If this is a problem you know how to handle, is it safe for you to handle it?
- ▲ If an adult isn't listening, be patient, take a deep breath and try again, say "it's about safety, please listen."

Tell your child: "When you know someone is in danger, keep asking for help until someone listens."

Awareness of emotions will help with problem solving & conflict.

A child who often tattles may be seeking a stronger relationship.

Tell kids that it's important to tell if someone is getting hurt.

Tattling happens when children are still learning to handle conflict.

Children who tattle are developing a sense of fairness and are still learning how to deal with conflict by themselves.

Conversation Starters: Talking about *Telling*

"What makes it hard to tell an adult about a situation when you know someone is getting hurt?"

"How can you support your classmates or family members when someone you know is involved in a dangerous situation?"

Conversation Starters: Talking about *Tattling*

"What is the difference between an emergency and something that can wait?"

"What strategies can you try to do in this situation to solve the problem before you ask for help?" Try role playing different scenarios together!

Reasons Children Tattle:

- ➔ **To get attention.** Pay extra attention to children's positive behaviours, so they will feel important without having to get other people in trouble.
- ➔ **To gain power.** Offer children the opportunity to take on leadership roles to empower them to solve some problems for themselves.
- ➔ **To manipulate.** Role model healthy interactions with friends and family members so children see how they can influence other people in positive ways.
- ➔ **To understand rules.** Be consistent with rules and discuss examples of how and when those rules apply to help sort out which rules are fixed and which depend on the situation.
- ➔ **To understand right and wrong.** Help children develop critical thinking skills by suggesting ways to problem solve when it is appropriate. This will strengthen their moral reasoning skills.