Michele Borba explains that teaching social skills to children as young as two will help prepare them for friendships, peer pressure, and teasing.

**Keywords**

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MLA

Author Michele Borba Discusses Friendship Skills

NATALIE MORALES, anchor:

Michele Borba, an educator, has written a book that offers help whether your child is being taunted or is doing the taunting. It's called "Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me: The Top 25 Friendship Problems and How To Solve Them."

Michele Borba, good morning. Nice to have you here.

Ms. MICHELE BORBA ("Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me"): Good morning.

Thank you.

MORALES: Obviously being a good friend and developing friendships should start at an early age. It really is important for your child's self esteem, for their well being, right?

Ms. BORBA: Oh, you're so right. And actually it starts around the age of two, because the first skill that kids need to be good friends is learning how to share. So we need to live--start that process going, guide them a little more.

MORALES: And how do you guide your kids?

Ms. BORBA: On the floor.

MORALES: On the floor.

Ms. BORBA: ´My turn, your turn, my turn, your turn.'

MORALES: Share.

Ms. BORBA: Sharing.

MORALES: That's the big word now.

Ms. BORBA: ´And that's what we expect you to do.'

MORALES: Especially at my house. Right.

Ms. BORBA: Right.

MORALES: Obviously your child, when they start to get a little bit older they start to become influenced a lot more by their peers than by... 

Ms. BORBA: Yes.
MORALES: ...you know, what parents tell them. So how do you as a parent handle that?
Ms. BORBA: Starting at a younger age--actually it's around the age of nine--peer pressure is setting in. There's a lot of comeback lines, there's assertiveness we can do. What you really want to do is empower your child by giving them tools that you can do, so that when you're out there, it isn't `just say "no,"' but show them how to say no.
MORALES: We're going to get to some of your tools in just a minute. But I want to ask you first how you even distinguish the difference between what is friendly teasing, vs. unfriendly and hurtful teasing?
Ms. BORBA: Once you teach your children the difference, it's really so much nicer, because they won't be so hurt by it. Friendly teasing is people are teasing with you.
MORALES: Mm-hmm.
Ms. BORBA: Unfriendly teasing is they're teasing about you. And once you get that distinction, kids will be able to figure out, `OK, he's still a buddy. We can laugh together.'
MORALES: So the first step is really teaching your children how to understand.
Ms. BORBA: Yes, sit down, talk it through, bring it up. Because the child's not going to come up to you going, `Mom, I'm suffering from low social skills. Can we work on it?'
MORALES: And it really...
Ms. BORBA: So open up the dialogue.
MORALES: My child is only 17 months old, but you can start to see, you know, when they start to bully or even just...
Ms. BORBA: Yes.
MORALES: ...you know, not really sharing things. It is hard as a parent, I think, to sit back and--and kind of just let your child develop those social skills, but also encourage them to--to be good kids and to--and to do the right thing without hitting or without striking.
Ms. BORBA: Yes. That's exactly so critical. Because you're goal is to help your child be able to figure out how to handle that social jungle without you.
MORALES: Right.
Ms. BORBA: And they need those friendship skills in order to do it.
That's what "Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me" is going to do.
MORALES: Yeah. Sometimes as a parent, though, you want to just butt in and say, `Hey, back off.'
Ms. BORBA: Don't butt in too much.
MORALES: Right.
Ms. BORBA: Instead, show them what--exactly what to do. And there's wonderful little comebacks you can do to help that.
MORALES: All right. Let's get to those, because you suggest some lines that kids can even use themselves. Question it, you say. Agree with it. Use manners, ignore it, express displeasure. Can you give me some examples of when to use these, and when some are more age-appropriate than others?
Ms. BORBA: Sure. Well--well, for--number one is you give your children a repertoire of possibilities. You go through them with you, and you say, `Now, which one do you feel more comfortable doing it?'
For instance, if somebody says an insult to you, `question it' would be, `Well, now, why would you say
that?"
MORALES: Mm-hmm.
Ms. BORBA: Turn around and say it back. Using manners is great because it diffuses the kid right away. Using manners would be 'Well, thanks for noticing. It's been a problem my whole life. I appreciate that.'
MORALES: Mm-hmm. Agreeing with it. 'Yeah? So? So what's it to you?'
Ms. BORBA: Yeah. Yeah. Bingo, you got it. What you're doing is putting the teaser off guard, because children who are--look a little more vulnerable are more likely to be continued to be teased, or to be taken to the next step, which is bullying.
MORALES: Mm-hmm. And--and on the flip side of that, though, what do you do if it is your child, in fact, who's doing the teasing or the bullying?
Ms. BORBA: Number one is be aware of it. Tune into it, because there are some real danger signs here. A bully at age eight has a one-in-chance--a-four chance by the age of 24 to have a jail record. It becomes an entrenched habit. You can turn it around. This child needs the other skill-builder in "Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me," which is how to boost insensitivity. How do you boost empathy? The goal is that there are dozens of things our kids need to be happy, healthy human beings, not only now, but for the rest of their life. But friendship is always just a compilation of skills, and they're teachable.
MORALES: What about peer rejection? I mean, that is something that is so hard to teach your kids, I think. And to give them the right weapons.
Ms. BORBA: Yes. A couple little tips on rejection. Number one is teach your child how to be rejected gracefully. That sounds absurd in life. But really children who walk off and whine and pout and cry are more likely to be picked on. Number two, teach them how to make a friend, to watch a little closer from the side, don't budge in too carefully. But how to watch for one child who looks a little more friendly. Walk up, introduce yourself. The key is role-play it with your child. There's no...
MORALES: Be an involved parent.
Ms. BORBA: Be an involved one. Because a new skill like these isn't going to happen overnight. You need to role-play it, rehearse it until your child feels comfortably doing it without you.
MORALES: All right, Michele Borba, great advice. Thank you so much.
Ms. BORBA: Thank you. You're welcome.
MORALES: Such an important issue.