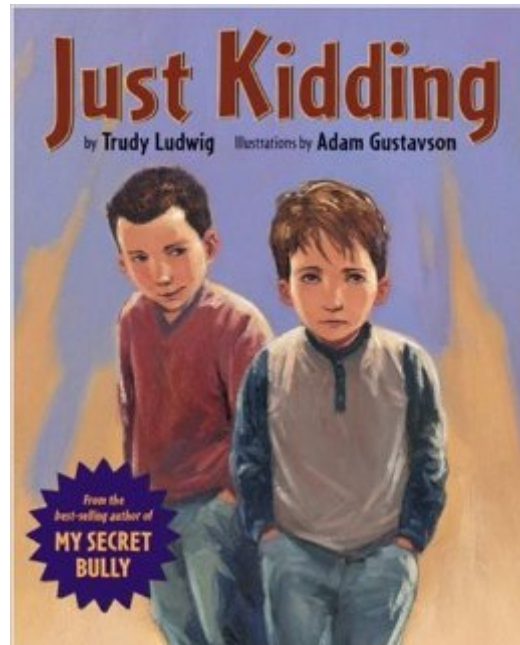


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Just Kidding



Synopsis

A rare look at emotional bullying among boys from the best-selling author of *My Secret Bully*. D.J.'s friend Vince has a habit of teasing D.J. and then saying, "Just kidding!" as if it will make everything okay. It doesn't, but D.J. is afraid that if he protests, his friends will think he can't take a joke. With the help of his father, brother, and an understanding teacher, D.J. progresses from feeling helpless to taking positive action, undermining the power of two seemingly harmless words. Trudy Ludwig takes another look at relational aggression, the use of relationships to manipulate and hurt others, this time from the boy's point of view. Back matter includes discussion questions, a "dos and don'ts of teasing" list, and a resource guide for parents and teachers. Endorsed by Full Esteem Ahead, The Hands & Words Are Not For Hurting Project, and The Ophelia Project.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Trudy Ludwig is a genius and understands the deleterious effect of teasing and peer cruelty and bullying. Bullying is not limited to children. In some cases, teachers, bosses and co-workers have also been involved in bullying tactics. Many companies provide handbooks of unacceptable behavior, among which is often included "blocking somebody's path; verbal or physical coercion of any person on these premises or during the usual course of business...zero tolerance policy." D.J., a tween (8-12 years) faces his nemesis Vince, who hounds, heckles and harasses him. Whenever

D.J. complains that Vince is verbally drawing blood, the latter gives him the stock comment of he's just kidding and can't D.J. take a joke. I have known adults do this to children and believe me, that does NOT engender good feelings nor teach humor. When adults do this to children, it makes children feel like they have no recourse and that "sense of humor" means endure somebody having fun at their expense. It teaches deceit, e.g. going along and pretending to find it funny; avoiding dressing downs and questioning the existence of their OWN senses of humor when all the while resentment and erosion of esteem is building. However, peer teasing escalates to physical violence as is shown in this story. Vince steps up his verbal abuse of D.J. and humiliates him in front of their teammates. That is bad enough, but when he starts hitting D.J. on the bus, D.J. knows he has to take his concerns to someone who can help. D.J.'s dad gives him bad advice when he says D.J. can't fight back verbally or physically to Vince. We all know that ignoring bullies often steps up their harassment campaign. Luckily, the boy's father takes D.J.'s concerns to his teacher, who wisely includes the school counselor.

In *Just Kidding*, author Trudy Ludwig addresses the painful topic of teasing and peer exclusion. How does a child handle teasing when the laughter stops and hurt feelings begin? This is exactly what D.J. must face when his friend Vince takes teasing too far. First it begins with Vince calling D.J. a loser, but then escalates the teasing by making fun of D.J. in front of their soccer teammates. The final straw comes when Vince moves from verbal taunting to physical harassment on the school bus. Feeling angry and frustrated, D.J. turns to his dad for help. With coaching from his dad and brother, D.J. learns to diffuse Vince's attacks with humor and non-rebuttal. His dad reminds him that, "You can't say or do anything mean back to the teaser." But when those skills don't work, D.J.'s dad addresses the problem with his teacher, which ultimately causes Vince to meet with the school counselor in order to address the problem of bullying his classmates. As a mother I've seen and heard the taunts that children use against one another. Too many times I've heard parents tell their crying child to "deal with it" or to "just ignore whoever is bothering you", but that advice doesn't lend itself to resolving the issue at hand. In fact, more times than not, children who tease, only increase their taunts when they're ignored. As parents and educators, it is important that we listen to the children in our lives and step in to protect them when others are abusive and purposefully hurtful. There is never an excuse for bullying and our children should not be taught to ignore or tolerate this behavior from others. If you want an excellent book that addresses this sticky topic, I highly recommend *Just Kidding*.

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