

INJJA (It's NOT Just Joking Around!™) Parent Seminar Follow-Up Resources Package
Prepared by The Jodee Blanco Group, Inc.

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A Personal Thank You:

It was an honor spending time with all of you! Thank you for your trust. It means the world to me. Outlined below are notes and highlights from the presentation as well as some additional material integrated throughout that I think you'll find helpful. If anyone has questions or would just like to share something with me, I always love hearing from you. My email is jodee@jodeeblanco.com and cell phone is 312-961-3430. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

A note on the contents of this Additional Resources Package: The order of how everything is presented may not necessarily be in the order of the presentation. At the conclusion, you'll also find links with even more resources, including a video of the anti-bullying parent presentation for those of you who may have missed it during my visit or wish a refresher.

Compassionate Communication Tips:

- **Leading with truth and compassion**

Whenever you're in a situation in which you feel like a deer caught in the headlights, stop, breathe, and process. Ask yourself: what is my truth here? Then, ask yourself: what is the most compassionate way to see that truth? Then, speak your truth. The key is to see it through the most compassionate lens possible, and then communicate it. Also ask yourself: twenty years from now, "when I look back on this moment, how will I wish I would have handled it," and navigate from there.

- **How to Respond Instead of React**

Step One:	Stop	Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Remain silent.
Step Two:	Process	Why am I upset? Is that the REAL reason I'm upset?
Step Three:	Act with Intention	What do I want what I say and do next to achieve specifically and then work backwards from there.

Litmus test that you've completed the above steps correctly: Ask yourself, twenty years from now when I look back on this moment, how will I wish I would have handled it?

- **The Three Tenants of Emotional Credibility in Communication**

The difference between Authority and Emotional Credibility: The first is something you have over your child. The latter must be earned. There are three basic tenants of communication that build Emotional Credibility with children and adults. When practiced, you'll notice deeper, more meaningful outcomes to even the most fraught situations.

The three biggest complaints I receive from kids on my schools tours about the adults in their lives are the following: "Grown-ups make me feel judged all the time." "Adults don't take me seriously enough, they never understand." "Grown-ups are always tired." That last one about being tired impacts communication. They tell me that sometimes when they talk to their parents or teachers, it feels like they're not really listening. The tenets below take that into account.

Specificity

The more specific you are with your child, the more validated they feel. The more general you are, the more dismissed they feel. That's why kids dislike "we'll see." They know it's code for "I don't want to deal with this right now and it's probably going to be a 'no' anyway." Here's a better approach. "I can't give you an answer right now. I need time to process my decision. Can you tell me why this is important to you?" Ask your child to be specific, thank them for that valuable information, and let them know it will play an important role in your final decision. *A gentle reminder, try not to judge whatever they share. Listen with compassionate neutrality.* When you give them your answer, if it's "yes," explain specifically why, how you got there, and if it's "no," do the same thing. This approach allows you the same wiggle room as "we'll see," but makes the child feel validated and not dismissed. It also helps your child to practice the art of prioritization, thinking things through and identifying what's significant, what isn't and why.

Immediacy

When someone is upset, especially a child in crisis, they need to hear words that suggest immediacy, like "right now, today, this afternoon," that acknowledge you get this is urgent for them. Sometimes a child just needs to be heard, to feel they're being taken seriously, even if we the adult, think it's an over-reaction, to the child, whatever is hurting them is big to *them*. Behavior is communication. If your child is

being dramatic, that behavior is trying to tell you something. Listen. Then work backwards from there.

Semantics/Positioning

Present it the way you want it perceived. If you want someone to respond positively to what you're about to say, you have to *present* it positively. Here are some examples of Semantics/Positioning in action:

Turning A Problem Statement into a Challenge Statement—

A problem statement is a statement of what's wrong. A challenge statement is a statement of what we can do together to change the situation. For example, "Brianna how can you be flunking math?!" versus "We need to find a creative way to get you excited about math!"

Word/Phrase Swaps for Positive Positioning--

Problem—Challenge

Solution—Plan of action

But-That being said, at the same time, or simply "and"

Consequence—Result (consequence is negative, results is neutral and empowering)

Discuss—Talk through (many kids tell me that when they hear the word "discuss" it makes them feel as if they're in trouble even when they're not)

- **The Need to Feel Heard**

Sometimes, your child, like you when you're upset, just needs to feel heard without fear that they're disappointing you or will make you angry. Learning to listen with Compassionate Neutrality is a valuable skill. Be aware of your body language when you talk with your child. It's so easy to chuckle or roll our eyes if we hear something from a child that we as adults think is ridiculous. Remember though, there are listening moments and teaching moments with kids. One of the biggest mistakes that adults make is confusing the two. Not every listening moment should be turned into a teaching moment. Our impulse as adults to "fix" things can hinder our ability to listen with patience, genuine curiosity, sans judgment. This is also where being tired comes in. It's harder to listen when we're exhausted. Find that extra energy and focus. Dig deep. It's the greatest gift you could give your child, not just in that moment, but for when they become parents themselves and remember how you always listened and they were never afraid to tell you anything. I realize this is all easier said than done. You'll want to interject and offer advice. Resist that impulse as hard as you can. Remain quiet and just listen. Breathe and remember, this is my time for listening. Lastly, always acknowledge how proud you are of your child for being so open and honest. Celebrate their courage.

- **Ascending Versus Descending Conversations**

Sometimes a kid will try to put an adult on the defensive. It's like they want to argue, they want to pull you down to where they are which is a frustrated, frightened place. Don't give in. Don't feed the negativity. Instead, reach your hand out and pull them up to your level. Acknowledge that you hear them, tell them you want to understand, ask them to help you understand, then listen. Keep listening. Resist the urge to become defensive. Ascend together.

- **Expectation Management**

For any of plan of action to work effectively, both you and your child need to work together in partnership, have mutually agreed upon deadlines, talk through what to expect of each other, who's doing what and a practical system for making adjustments when needed. You may also want to include a "nudge strategy" because we're all human and sometimes need to help one another stay on track. *More on a Three Point Plan of Action Contract later in this resources package.*

- **Communication Tools for Kids That You Can Practice With Them At Home**

Part of my INJJA anti-bullying program includes providing teachers with SEL tools for students to help them communicate better with each other and adults. Below are some of those tools that I encourage you to help your child practice at home. The below tools are appropriate for all ages. You simply adjust them based on the age of your child.

How to Tell Instead of Tattle

Share the following quote with your child:

Tattling hurts, telling helps. If someone bullies you, it's not because that person doesn't like you. It's because something else is going on in their life that's hurting them, and they're bringing all those feelings to school. The bully is hurting on the inside so they hurt others on the outside. When you tattle, it's just about getting that person into trouble. Telling is different. Telling is when you tell an adult because you want to help everyone including the bully get the support they need.

Contemplation Questions:

Have you ever wanted to report an incident of bullying but didn't because you were afraid everyone would call you a tattletale or a snitch?

Here's a Conversation Starter to help kids tell an adult about the behavior of a peer instead of tattle. All they have to do is fill in the blanks.

"I need to tell you something. I'm not sharing this information to get anyone in trouble. I think this person may already be in trouble and hurting on the inside and I want to help them. _____ (fill in the name of the person who was hurtful to you) did/said something that hurt me. This is what they said/did _____ (describe the behavior in one sentence, the facts only). This is how it made me feel _____ (in one sentence explain how it made you feel). This is why it made me feel that way _____ (in one sentence describe why your feelings were hurt). Please can you help this person and let me know how I can help too."

How to Approach a Problem with a Three-Point Plan of Action—Self-Reliance Practice Tool

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| Step One: | Turn the problem statement into a challenge statement. <i>For example, if the problem is, "I'm bored in math class," you would state the challenge as "I need to find a way to see math from a whole new perspective that excites me!"</i> |
| Step Two: | Think of three specific actions you can take to help you conquer this challenge. Write down one sentence for each action. This is your Three-Point Plan of Action. |
| Step Three: | Review your action plan with an adult you trust and set time line. |

Note: You can also do the above as a Three Point Plan of Action Contract with your child in which you participate in the action steps as part of a contract you commit to together.

Parent Communication—How to Tell An Adult with Respect That You're Upset With Him/her—Conversation Starter Card

Contemplation Question:

Have you ever felt a teacher treated you unfairly? What happened? How did you handle it? If you could go back in time, would you handle it differently? Why or why not?

"Could I talk with you for a moment? I'm coming to you with respect. Please it would mean a lot to me if you could listen all the way through before you respond so I can get my thoughts out. When you _____ (describe to the adult what they did or said that was upsetting to you, the facts only), it made me feel _____ (describe how you felt in one sentence). This is why it made me feel that way _____ (describe

why you felt that way in one sentence.) How can we work together in the future to make things better?"

How to Stop Yourself from Getting Caught Up in the Moment and Saying or Doing Something Mean or Hurtful—Truth to Self, Communication Tool

Have your child memorize the following questions as a litmus test.

Is what I'm about to say or do going to make ME feel bad? Is what I'm about to say or do going to make someone else feel bad? If I've answered yes to either of those questions, what can I say or do instead that will lift that person up rather than knock them down?

Tell your child that if they're in a situation in which everyone is "joking around" and they want to join in, before saying or doing anything, they should ask themselves those three questions. Reiterate that something doesn't have to be on purpose in order for it to be mean; but kindness is a choice.

How to Define Bullying and Facilitate Reconciliation—Honesty Practice/Communication Tool

Bullying isn't defined by the intention or lack of intention of the perpetrator; it's defined by the experience of the recipient. If Child-A says Child-B hurt their feelings, ask Child-A to do an I-statement.

"When _____ (name of Child-B) did/said this, it made me feel _____ (describe the feeling in one sentence) and this is why it made me feel that way (describe why it made you feel that way in one sentence)."

Share the I-statement with Child-B (the school principal or parent of Child B ideally does this) and ask Child B questions that gently guide them to self-reflection and a deeper self-awareness, that perhaps, even though they didn't mean to hurt their classmate's feelings, perhaps they need to consider that what they think is funny may not be to the other person.

Then, facilitate reconciliation in which Student-B apologizes to Student-A, and Student-A offers forgiveness. Then both students participate in a "Make a Difference" activity which they agree upon together (for example doing a fund-raiser for an animal shelter or making posters to generate awareness for an issue they care about).

While every bullying situation is different and some are more complex, we as the adults shouldn't judge whether it's bullying or not based on our interpretation of what happened. It can invalidate the feelings of the child who feels hurt and doesn't help the child who hurt their feelings grow or deepen. By approaching it as described above,

the perpetrator has an opportunity to practice self-reflection, self-awareness, apology, remorse, empathy, compassion, tolerance and mindfulness. The recipient gets an opportunity to practice forgiveness, tolerance, compassion, patience and together, they practice reconciliation.

- **Mini-Activities—Appropriate for All Ages**

- Have your child write about an act of kindness they received, its impact, and a way in which they can pass it on by doing something kind for someone else.
- Have your child write on an index card one thing about themselves they like, one thing they feel needs improving, and one thing they're going to do to work on that. Update the cards weekly and celebrate progress.
- App Show and Tell Night—Kids love to be the teachers and for adults to be the students. Do a family night in which you ask your child to share their favorite social media app, how it works, how it can be used for good, for bad, and one specific way in which they are going to use this app to lift someone up or make a difference

- **Tips and Strategies for Handling Inappropriate Adult Behavior Online**

We're all human and can sometimes say things in the heat of the moment that we wished we wouldn't have, especially online. It isn't only kids that can be hurtful to each other online or via digital apps. Sometimes adults aren't always the best versions of themselves either. When we're hurt, we can lash out. It's very human.

How do you respond when things get uncomfortable in a way that inspires dignity, understanding, and motivates everyone to work in partnership with each other and the school? How do you set an example for your child of the person you want them to be both online and in real life?

If someone is being unkind or insensitive on social media, it's usually fear that's motivating it. In most situations where there is bullying behavior, whether among children or adults, the bully is acting out in a cry for help. Perhaps that person is going through a divorce, financial hardship, or family crisis. Whatever their situation may be, if you can keep that in mind, it may help you find some compassion despite your anger, which will give you more control over any impulse to lash out.

Don't engage this person or group publicly on-line as this is only likely to accelerate the issue. Instead, message them privately, acknowledge that you hear how upset they are, and suggest talking things through over the phone or in person. When you do have that conversation, don't interrupt or become defensive. Listen and then

share your honest thoughts. Often, just letting someone talk and know that they're being heard will dissipate enough of the tension to allow for a productive dialogue.

Patience, understanding, empathy and dignity are not qualities that you can discipline into a child or even teach in a classroom. They must be inspired by example. Use this precious time right now to be that inspiration for your children and students online and everywhere.

Bylined Articles/Blog Posts

Triage for the Bullied Child—Guidelines for Parents

Byline: Jodee Blanco (published in multiple outlets)

As a former victim of bullying who travels the nation's schools sharing her story to motivate awareness, I meet many distraught parents who want advice on how to help their bullied, ostracized child.

If you're a parent, here are some guidelines on the two types of bullied students, the signs your child may be hurting, the most common mistake parents sometimes make and how to help your child find hope:

- **The Two Types of Bullied Students—**

The first is the child who's overtly bullied in ways such as teasing, taunting, verbal and physical harassment, intentional exclusion, being laughed at and put down constantly, gossiped about, digitally bullied, among other forms of purposeful unkindness. The second type is what I call the "invisible student," the child who may not be bullied per se, but who's treated as if he/she doesn't exist, who isn't necessarily consciously excluded, but who no one thinks to include in anything either. It's the student who's simply not on their classmates' social radar. This is the child who goes through school feeling unnoticed and lonely. Being an "invisible student" is sometimes more damaging in the long-term because if you're overtly bullied, you can say to yourself, "there's something wrong with *them*," whereas if you feel like you don't exist, you may falsely conclude, "there's something wrong with *me*." For many kids, that conclusion will stick with them their whole lives. That's one of bullying's biggest dangers—its effect on adulthood.

- **The Signs Your Child May Be Hurting from Bullying or Exclusion**

Some are obvious and exactly what you'd probably expect. Others are subtle...and surprising. Outlined below is what you should be alert to:

--Inexplicable bursts of anger--does your child blow up at the least provocation?

--Over-reaction to normal, daily frustrations--does your child over-react to people and situations that never would have bothered him/her before?

--Faking illness to avoid going to school or *making* themselves sick

--Impaired immune system--frequent illness--the constant stress and sadness from bullying and exclusion can weaken your child's immune system. This coupled with a child's *wishing* him/herself sick to get out of school can be a powerful combination.

--Sudden change in weight--has your child started gaining or losing weight at an alarming rate?

--Despondency or depression--is your child sad, lonely, unmotivated?

--Change in grades--has your child's grades gone down, or way up (bullied kids sometimes immerse themselves in academics as an escape, and then when they realize that even with straight A's, they're still lonely, they can spiral into a dark place

--Desperate attempts to win friends--has your child began succumbing to peer pressure, perhaps not including old friends whom they'd always played with before?

--Moodiness--is your child sullen one moment, obstinate the next?

-- Distractedness--is your child unfocused and preoccupied?

The bullied child is bleeding spiritually. A common oversight many parents make is that they become so focused making sure the bullies are punished, that they forget to perform triage on their hurting child first. One of the best ways to help your child combat the sadness of struggling to fit in, is to find a new social outlet for them, someplace where they can engage in an organized activity with other kids the same age and forge meaningful friendships outside of school. It will give your child something to look forward to and boost their confidence. The more confident a child is, the less of a target they'll be. Additionally, bullied students often emit a subtle desperation for friendship that makes their peers uncomfortable. Once your son or daughter begins making some new friends, it can reduce feelings of desperation and lead to positive results with classmates. Park districts, dance studios, community theater programs, local public libraries, and chambers of commerce are good places to start. You can also ask the next closest local parish if your child could join their youth group. The key is that your child experiences a fresh start with a new group of kids.

My next blog post will be on how to handle the bully and work with the school in compassionate, productive partnership. Traditional punishment doesn't work. It only makes an angry child angrier. Bullying is a cry for help. I'll address how to answer that cry in a way that helps everyone, the bully, the bystander and the victims. As loving adults, we need to remember that compassion is our greatest weapon in combatting cruelty. I promise that if there's a child mistreating another child at school, it's not an act of hatred, it's a cry for help. Compassionate forms of discipline that help the bully heal through building their empathy is the secret to transforming hearts. Stay tuned!

About the author: Jodee Blanco is the author of four books on bullying, including the seminal *New York Times* bestseller *Please Stop Laughing At Me...*, required reading in schools across the country. She is also the author of a series of books on bullying for the NCEA (The National Catholic Educational Association). She travels to schools, sharing her story to save lives, and has spoken to over a half-million people worldwide. Her work inside schools is based on core values of compassion, tolerance and forgiveness. For more info, visit: www.jodeeblanco.com.

Blog Post Two—

Compassionate Discipline—Why It Must Supplement Traditional Punishment

I'm a survivor of school bullying who works inside America's schools with students, teachers and parents to motivate change. One of the biggest questions I always get from the adults is "what's the best way to punish the bullies so they'll think twice next time?" When I hear that, I just shake my head in amazement, wondering, how can we expect kids to be more compassionate when a lot of the grown-ups in their lives are struggling with it themselves?

As loving adults, we have a responsibility to inspire compassion and forgiveness in our children by setting an example of it for them at home, not only in how we behave, but how we react to the behavior of others who hurt us.

Traditional punishment doesn't work. It only makes an angry child angrier and an insensitive child more disconnected. There's a better approach—Compassionate Discipline. That means instead of grounding a child or revoking their cell phone privileges, you provide creative opportunities that awaken their empathy and develop it like a muscle.

For example, if your child was disrespectful or bullied another student at school, have your child perform one unexpected act of kindness for a different person each day. Make sure your child writes down the names and phone numbers of each recipient so you can call to verify follow-through. If you discover he or she didn't complete the discipline, there would be a strong result (I prefer the word result to consequence). Another example, let's say you've caught your child saying something unkind or insensitive about their lesser fortunate classmates who may not dress as nicely or have the latest cell phone. Take your child to a soup kitchen and as a family, serve lunch to the residents. Encourage your child to talk with them about their dreams and aspirations and how they got derailed. Let your child see first-hand what it's like to truly have no one or nothing in this world. It will awaken the kindness and goodness that's inside your child already, but simply needed a gentle nudge.

Here are a few more examples of Compassionate Discipline to help you get started:

I'm an animal lover and always encourage adoption. Adopting a homeless pet can be a great way to help a child grasp tolerance and compassion. For example, let's say that you have a daughter who's been hanging out with the popular crowd, and you notice that recently she's been excluding some of her old friends, the ones she used to spend all her time with until this new group started playing a more important role in her life. If you try and force her to include those old friends, it won't be sincere when she does, and they'll feel it. It could cause real hurt even though that wasn't the intention.

In a situation like this, the goal is to motivate your child's heart from the *inside*. This is just an example of how Compassionate Discipline works, but I'm hoping it will help you come up with some of your own creative ideas. Explain to your daughter what happens to shelter animals that no one wants. Then as a family, make a visit to the nearest animal shelter. When you arrive, inform the manager your family would like to adopt the pet that's been there the longest. When the manager says, "Don't you prefer to walk up and down the rows of cages and

pick one?" You say, "No!" because you don't want to reinforce that example of conditional love. You don't want to "pick a pet," the same way your daughter may be picking who's cool enough to sit with her at lunch or be invited to her sleepover. You want to set an example of *unconditional* love. And when that manager brings out that pet, even if it's a fifteen-year old, bald, toothless, three-legged flatulent dog, give that sweet creature love and affection and let your daughter see for herself what happens when a spirit that's been hurt and excluded the same way she may be hurting and excluding others at school without even knowing it, finally receives the love he's been starving for.

If you want your children to show more gratitude, the next time you're at the mall with your child and see one of the custodians bending over to pick up a piece of garbage, walk over to him with your child and thank him for taking such good care of your favorite mall and working hard to keep it clean for everyone.

Switching gears for a moment, I realize if your child is being bullied, as a parent your natural instinct is to want the bullies punished, but bullies need to learn the joy of being kind, not only the consequences of being mean. They also need compassion and forgiveness. I ought to know. I cried myself to sleep from fifth grade through high school, enduring rejection and abuse daily at the hands of my classmates. On that rare occasion when one of them would finally get punished, my parents and all the other adults called it justice. Only thing was, the bullying just got worse after that.

The night of my 20th high school reunion I learned that the kids who tormented me the most were dealing with horrible situations themselves back then and were bringing all that fear and pain to school. Their cruel behavior wasn't an act of hatred towards me or anyone else they were picking on; it was a cry for help.

I can't help but wonder if the grown-ups had taken another approach when I was in school, how things might have turned out differently. What if the girl who tormented me in gym class every day would have been treated with patience and supported emotionally, instead of just getting stuck in detention for a week? Her dad committed suicide that year and no one in administration even knew. No wonder she was angry. Then there's the boy who cornered me after school one day and threw rocks at me until I limped home. He got suspended. Nearly three decades later I ran into a friend of his at a local restaurant. I asked him how his buddy was doing. He said he was doing really well, adding how much he admired him for making something of himself considering his childhood. I asked him what he meant. He said, "nobody knew about it but his dad couldn't hold a job and the family was always hungry....I remember he got a suspension once and he lost six pounds because at least at school there was food." I was the reason for that suspension. Long story, but I still feel sick at heart about it.

Curiosity leads to compassion. BE curious. If there's a bully in the midst, whether it's a typical schoolyard bully, or an "elite tormentor," my term for the unkind members of the cool crowd, more than likely that bully is a frightened kid acting out. The only way you can really stop the bullying is to address it at the source---help the bully, find out what's wrong and intervene with

support, love, and Compassionate Discipline. Work with the school in partnership to find ways to save all the children involved. There's no such thing as a bad kid, just good kids suffering from bad circumstances.

Stay tuned for additional postings!

Videos, Articles and Additional Resources

INJJA Parent Presentation on Bullying Intervention Tips and Strategies

<https://vimeo.com/761204730>

NCEA Momentum Article—How to Successfully Communicate with a Difficult Person

https://read.nxtbook.com/ncea/momentum/2018_spring/how_to_successfully_communica.html

My Books (Scroll down to end of page for complete list)

<https://www.jodeeblanco.com/the-books/please-stop-laughing-at-me/>

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