

Raising Courageous Kids: Bullying vs. Peer Challenges¹

	Bullying	Peer Challenge ²
Definition	<i>Bullying is a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. (Coloroso, 2003, 13-14)</i> ³	<i>A peer challenge is a constructive confrontation by one person intended to test the strength of the other. For example, a ten-year-old begins to cry on the baseball field. Another player says, "Jason, quit being such a crybaby! C'mon, let's play!"</i>
Intention	Unnatural, unexpected The bully means to inflict emotional and/or physical pain, expects the action to hurt; intimidation	Natural, expected The challenger means to evaluate the other's character. Intention to change the other
Initiator	Humiliation and cruelty Stalk Takes pleasure in witnessing the hurt Threat of further aggression; escalates Desires submission; seeks dominance Cowardice	Encouragement and dignity Avoid (if subject fails), companionship (if subject passes) Expresses disappointment in a failed response to the challenge. Expectation of excellence; deescalates Desires excellence; seeks equality Confidence
Power	Based on an imbalance of power	Based on respect as equals.
Relationship	Outside	Inside
Subject	Contempt Taunted Dreadful Fear Sinister	Caring Teased ("A fun thing you do with friends—with people you care about." (Coloroso, 2003, 32) Playful Determination Prosocial
Metamessage	"I am stronger than you."	"You can be stronger."
Research	Well-researched by professionals	Lacks research by professionals



¹ This chart supplements material in *Raising Courageous Kids: Eight Steps to Practical Heroism* by Charles A. Smith (Sorin Books, 2004). Like other resources at <http://www.raisingcourageouskids.com> created by the author, it is likely to be revised. Send your suggestions and comments to casmith@ksu.edu. This document will be used as a basis for discussion during the *Finding a Mighty Heart: Acquiring the Courage to Stand Up for Oneself and Others* national parenting satellite teleconference originating from Iowa State University. See <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/parent/> for more information.

² Peer challenges are not the same as bullying. Any form of predatory behavior, however, should not be recast and excused as a peer challenge. Similarly, adults should not confuse peer challenges with bullying.

³ Barbara Coloroso (2003). *The bully, the bullied, and the bystander* (New York: HarperCollins).