

Bonus: Verbal Judo: How to Deal With Verbal Bullies

There are different types of verbal bullying and we will see more examples during the course.

This lesson is specific to direct forms of verbal bullying.

Techniques to Handle Verbal Attacks

Here are some of the most effective techniques to beat verbal attacks:

#1. Throw It Right Back

The simplest form.

When you can't think of anything, just use what they used against you and mirror it.

Example:

Him: *What's wrong with you!*

You: *No, what's wrong with you dude*

Or you can go a bit meta to avoid looking like a kid in the schoolyard:

Him: *What are you stupid?*

You: *What's truly stupid here is to call others stupid (please don't do that again)*

#2. Throw Him Off Guard

A great way to control the frame and lead the interaction is to take your opponent off guard.

In NLP this is called “pattern interrupt”.

You execute it by saying something so off-color and absurd that it will throw him off and make him lose both confidence and control of the interaction.

Here is a good example from A Fistful of Dollars:

<https://youtu.be/aAAkNCxKaJ8>

The moment the bad guy says “uh” he is asking for clarification, abandons his frame, buys into Eastwood’s frame and becomes the follower.

Of course you are not going to shoot anyone right after, but the concept is the same: saying something off color that will steal their thunder.

Don’t be afraid if you don’t know what to do and say next: your goal is not to be “cool” like in a movie, and anything better than being totally passiveness at someone’s mercy is a step forward.

Another way of doing it is by exaggerating their behavior.

For example if someone is screaming at you on the phone, you can start barking. That will take them by surprise, after which you can say “that’s how you’re sounding, now my question is: can we discuss this like civilized human beings instead?”.

Boom, you just wrestled control of the interaction in perfect leader fashion.

And [Tony Robbins here](#) uses this same technique to help a kid snap out of suicidal thoughts.

So simple and yet so powerful.

#3. Shake Your Head While They Attack

When you shake your head while they speak you take the judge position over them.

If your opponent is not well versed in social dynamics you will also rattle him and, often, cause them to stop speaking, which gives you even more power.

Here is an example with Tom Cruise:

<https://youtu.be/tFgF1JPNR5E>

#4. Smile Sarcastically While They Speak

Same as before, but nastier.

Not only you look highly critical, which is good, but you make them look “laughable”, too.

It’s super powerful to get under people’s skin, but you can look very haughty and lose people’s support if you are too sarcastic.

Do it like Peterson does it instead, with a sincere and warm, yet derisive, smile:

<https://youtu.be/LNuZiEH0ldQ>

#5. Give Them A Silent Stare

When someone says something off-color, just look at them with a silent stare.

If they make a nasty joke and expect you to self-mutilate yourself by laughing at it, just stare at them instead.

Then hold the pause.

Then let them crack or add “that’s rude”.

#6. “Lemme Tell You The Truth“

Whatever you are going to say next, it will sound so much more powerful when you preface it like that.

For example, you could say:

***Him:** You always order shit you don’t like, what the hell, can’t you get your order straight for once*

(Pause. Look at him)

***You:** Let me tell you the truth. And I’m sorry you are forcing me to say it in front of everyone.*

(boom. Now everyone’s hanging on your every word.)

Maybe you think it’s OK to talk to people like that. And it might be OK with your friends, but please make sure this is the first and last time you address me with that tone

#7. Go Wacko On Them

Bully and “yellers” are used to people who just take their abuse.

And they are not used to people... Exploding right back at them.

Going ape can carry you to victory more times than most would expect.

[This example from Goodfellas](#) is more on the physical end of the spectrum.

But the same concept applies to verbal assaults.

For example, if your girlfriend is verbally assaulting you, she will probably keep going for a while... Unless you explode.

***Her:** (...) and then you come back and don't even call me, what do you think I am, your servant whore that you can..*

***You:** (standing up and raising voice) Look, now I'm fucking tired of all this shit. Do you know why I came back late?? Do you wanna know why I came back late???*

(PRO Tip: repeating sentences is a great way to give you some time to think of what to say next)

Because I am busting my ass all day working for this family, that's why!! And this is what I get in return? You know what you're doing? You're destroying this relationship.

Is that what you want? Do you want to destroy our relationship? Because that's what your behavior is doing.

This technique shakes people off from their righteous state of assault.

The more people keep on going, the more they think they are right and the more you look like you're wrong. That's why sometimes you need to explore right back.

Exploding right-back will, more often than, give you control over the interaction.

After you have exploded and taken control though I highly recommend you lead the interaction back to civilization.

Rein in the screaming and move the conversation towards a more constructive -or more lovely- path.

#8. “This Is Unacceptable“

Simple and yet so powerful.

It draws a line in the sand while slotting you as the judge and decision-maker on what's acceptable and unacceptable.
Best combined with the walk-away or kick-them-out resolution.

4 Types of Verbal Assaults

These are some of the worst types of verbal attacks you will ever deal with in your life:

1. Shaming Sarcasm

Shaming sarcasm is a highly spiteful form of verbal attack.

It's often so mean that most people never see it coming, leaving them blindsided.

For most "normal" people who would never resort to this style communication, shaming criticism can also leave an emotional mark, making you wonder how on earth can anyone be so spiteful.

Here is an example of shaming criticism:

***You:** we went out for a couple of dates but there was no spark*

***Spiteful:** that girl went on a couple dates with.. you?*

The accent is on "you", and imagine her making a face that is between incredulous and disgusted.

Basically the attacker is implying "how would a girl ever go with (such a disgusting person) as you?"

How do you answer to these situations?

Let's keep using the example above, let's start with what you should not do:

1.1. Do Not Defend From The Attack

You defend yourself when you reply with *"yeah, why not, we were similar in many ways"*. Or *"yes, I don't do too bad with women my age"*.

Whenever you defend yourself in the face of shaming sarcasm, you give the attack power and credibility.

1.2. Do Not Prove The Attacker Wrong

You try to prove the attacker wrong saying something like *"I'm rich, of course women want to see me again, do you wanna see my texts?"*. Or *"of course, you idiot, I'm a handsome man, you wish you had a man like me"*.

This is a normal knee-jerk answer and sometimes it's exactly what the attacker wanted to provoke in you.

They can sit back and enjoy the sight of you getting so worked up trying to prove yourself to them. Because that's what you're doing when you try to prove them wrong: you're proving yourself to them - and jumping through their hoops-.

Here is how you do it instead:

1.3. Do Ignore The Attacker

Ignoring is a powerful, powerful social weapon.

Miss Spite in the dialogue example above is trying to get under your skin.

But when you ignore her attack you devalue her as not good enough to deserve your reply.

If you do it well, for example by keeping on telling your story as if it were the most natural thing in the world, her attack will only register weakly in people's mind or it won't register at all.

1.4. Do Hang Them With Their Own Rope: Make Their Spite Obvious

Here is the thing about shaming sarcasm: everyone knows it's spiteful and plain ugly.

And **when meanness is uncalled for it's demeaning first and foremost towards the *perpetrator*.**

At least, as long as you avoid overreacting to it.

That's why making their move even more obvious is a great strategy: you want them to *wallow* in their own spite for everyone to see.

Here's how you do it:

***Spiteful:** that girl went on a couple dates with.. you?*

(pause for 2 seconds)

***You:** Why are you saying that?*

***Spiteful:** I can't believe that girl was interested in you*

***You:** (pause for 2 seconds, looking at her incredulous as you shake your head) Why are you saying that*

***Spiteful:** You don't seem like the kind of guy any woman would be interested in / I certainly wouldn't wanna see you for any date*

That's it!

Now that *is* mean, but you don't want to avoid meanness, you want to show her for who she really is for everyone to see. And at that point, you have done 80% of the work.

You can reply in several different ways or even not replying at all. Here are a couple of ideas:

***You:** Honestly, I don't see the point of all your meanness and spite. Nobody has done you anything wrong, but you seem to have some bottled up rage against the world.*

Don't say "I didn't do anything wrong to you" or it looks like you VS her.

Avoid "1 VS 1 frames" in favor of "them VS everyone else frames".

This is not very difficult to do because the most natural frame is "spiteful person VS all (civilized) others".

And if they get angry here, great: that's even better for you. The uglier their side you can show, the more you win.

Or:

***You:** that sounds really mean. But coming from you also not surprising at all. Luckily not everyone's like you (said while looking to the rest of the group). Anyway...*

Again here you go for a frame as "you, spiteful one" VS "most other good people".

Then keep telling the story while addressing the group that she's now excluded from.

2. The Mean Nuclear Attack

Some verbal abuse can be so harsh and mean that it leaves us at a loss of words.

How do you respond to someone calling you a "fat-ass" when you're weight-conscious and people around you are already laughing?

When they call you “shorty” and it stings because you’re self-conscious about your height?

“Nigger” and it feels like you have no recourse other than violence?

An example of mean nuclear from the movie Election:

<https://youtu.be/jA0RnDQiFbQ>

And here is one example from the movie Mean Girls:

https://youtu.be/W8_POt2KIfQ

These situations are very difficult and there is no silver bullet as they all depend on the specific scenario.

Well, actually, there *is* a silver bullet, which we will call “annihilation response”.

Physical Annihilation Response

The annihilation response consists in attacking back one level above or attacking back with such force and power that you go from victim to victimizer.

Since the nuclear attack is already vicious, going from victim to victimizer might lead to a heated verbal warfare or physical violence.

And going “one level above” from an already nasty verbal exchange means getting physical or violent.

This is an extreme example [from the movie Casino](#) (note: it’s quite graphic, Casino is rated 9/10 in violence & gore), and [this one from Jackie Brown](#) shoots the female bully.

I don’t recommend this method, and the violence is only one reason. The second one is that most people get violent to defend their ego

and status. But the problem is that, often, you can get the opposite effect.

Take Jim Everett, [who got violent in live TV](#) for being mocked with a female tennis player name: Chris Evert. Before the event, few knew about that joke. But after that everyone caught wind, and everyone will associate Jim with Chris.

Furthermore, everyone will know that Jim was really pained by the joke, possibly underlying a deep-running insecurity.

Jim might win the battle there, but he might have lost the war. And that's a constant risk with getting physical.

Verbal Annihilation Response

With non-violent annihilation methods, you want to go for their thumbscrews.

And when you don't know them well enough, using their race or background is always a good fallback. For example, hinting at their low IQ because of their race, their small penis because of their race. Sexual orientation, lack of femininity or lack of masculinity are also always good targets for the annihilation method.

Some other techniques:

2.1. Hit & Run

With this technique the teacher would have said something like:

Tracy: ... Who can't even get their wives pregnant

Teacher: says the homewrecker with daddy's issues. Shame on you. Now, done with the dissing, let's go back to our issue...

Notice that the "run" part is here so to avoid further escalations.

Hit back so that you can even the scores, but then move on to avoid a nasty fight.

In the example of Mean Girls:

***Girl:** watch where you're going fat ass!*

***Regina:** (disgusted look) Get an escort vehicle, you're more dangerous than a drunk truck driver
(then keeps on walking)*

The “running” here is more literal, with actually moving away. Staying put signals you might be readying for a fight, while moving away ends the exchange.

When the attacker has already moved, you can hit “in absence”. Such as Regina could have put her hand on her forehead to clean imaginary sweat for her scare, then added: “God, I’m glad I’m alive”, and then moved on right away.

Of course, it might still sting if you haven’t worked yourself into an anti-fragile ego, but by hitting back you don’t stay stuck with the victim role. The good thing about this strategy is that people will think twice in the future before picking on you.

2.2. One Up Them

Only go for this option if you are ready to end the relationship for good.

Because one-upping when someone has gone nuclear means delivering a remark that will either stick with them for their whole life or that it will make it impossible for the two of you to be as close as you were.

Here is one example from Forgetting Sarah Marshall:

<https://youtu.be/RvNuTuiKylo>

She's going nuclear with deep criticism to his whole persona. He goes one up parading his cheating and thus ending the relationship.

2.3. Tell them to leave (especially good in intimate relationships)

Intimate relationships are sadly the most likely battleground for nuclear attacks.

I remember for example an ex GF of mine who started mocking the way I walked in a very, very nasty way with the only intention of hurting me.

When that's the case, I would invite you not to escalate but to tell your GF/BF to leave your place because they crossed a line.

If you are their place, leave yourself.

If you are in the street, tell them you are done for the day and you are each going your way.

When you do it, you show strong resolve, superior mold, and great leadership. Chances are they will call you right back scared shitless of losing you.

If you are OK with taking them back, here you need to deliver your "relationship speech" to make sure your relationship will be nuclear-free and built on basic mutual respect (you will see this one in the relationship module).

2.4. Work on yourself

I am of the opinion that, in many situations, it's best to hit back on any mean criticism.

But you want to hit back on the *principle* that you do not accept abuse. And *not* hitting back because they destroyed your self-esteem and you can't help but getting worked up.

Remember what we said in an earlier lesson?
Where there is a deep hurt, there is something you need to work on.
When verbal abuse deeply pains you, it might be the sign you need to work on yourself.

Another option is to use that rage as fuel. It can be your wake up call to start getting serious on your self-development and work even harder.

I personally happily saved up a lot of painful memories to use them as motivation (and part of this work I do is motivated by anger to help the underdogs of this world).

3. The Cover & Hit Abuse

Some of the sneakiest abusers will recruit your own help in covering their ass from retaliation.

How do they do it?

Just think of the following setups:

Can I say something

Will you take it personally if I give you a feedback..

I hope you don't get offended for me saying this...

... I hope you understand

When most people hear those words they jump in to reassure the other party that no, they won't take it personally.
And then they are left de-clawed when the harsh criticism hits them.

I recommend you never jump in to tell people you won't get offended. You simply don't know that yet, and when you jump in you look defensive and you relinquishing all your power.

Instead, say that "you're generally very open-minded, but it ultimately depends on what they have to say".

4. Testing Criticism

Trump in "[The Art of The Deal](#)" candidly admits of using off-color and offensive expressions to test people.

For example, he knew of a lawyer with a reputation of being a tough guy. Trump was looking for a tough lawyer. Instead of asking him if he was a tough guy, Trump tests him by saying:

Trump: *I don't like lawyers. All they do is delay deals. They're always looking to settle instead of fight.*

If some high flyers offend you to test your mettle, the same rule applies: don't defend yourself.

Especially, don't defend yourself with something like "that's not true, I am certainly not the settling type".

When you do that, you are proving yourself to him.

A good way to answer is by being completely nonreactive and ignoring the challenge, for example:

Trump: *I don't like lawyers. All they do is delay deals. They're always looking to settle instead of fight.*

Lawyer: *I'm not sure that's true, but what makes you say that, have you had some bad experience recently*

This answer is a subtle power move.
It avoids escalations while cutting straight to the crux of the matter. It implies *he* might have had some issues. And if he answers about his gripes, he will be complying to you.

Mistakes to Avoid

Here is what I recommend you stay away from:

1. Threatening people's livelihoods

Example of threatening people's livelihood are:

That's it, you're done, you will never work in this industry ever again

I will ruin you

I will sue you for everything you've got... And I'm gonna make sure to take it

Only threaten livelihoods in private, if you can follow up on your threat and/or if your enemy has really done some terrible stuff.

Threats without the ability to act on the threat will only impress the losers.

Otherwise, you'll look like a [yapping dog behind a fence](#) to any powerful man -or anyone with a modicum understanding of power dynamics-.

If you really want to scare them it's much better to let them *fear* your move, without telling what you're going to do.

For example:

Ohhh, big mistake there buddy.... Big fucking mistake

And then let their imagination do the rest.

2. Attacking their whole crew

A popular fascist slogan said “many enemies, lots of honor”.

I don’t know about honor, but it certainly ain’t true when it comes to power.

Lots of enemies means lots of troubles and little power.

If someone is attacking you, take it on *him*, NOT on his whole group. As a matter of fact, try to *isolate* him from his group.

Railing against whole groups also makes you look [desperate and out of your wits](#).

But the real pinnacle of stupidity is attacking someone, making no damage to him but galvanizing his whole crew against you.

Case in point, the famous “basket of deplorable” of Hillary Clinton:

<https://youtu.be/PCHJVE9trSM>

That sentence sought to attack not just Trump, but his whole “crew” of voters.

Not only made no harm to Trump, but it also rallied his supporters - and some neutrals too- against Hillary.

Hillary also failed to realize that some people were leaning towards Trump because they couldn’t stand her. And those people were also emboldened by that haughty-sounding remark.

Exception: as for most rules, there are exceptions here.

Painting as dangerous enemies groups that were *already* your enemies can help you rally your troops to support your cause (it’s called ingroup-outgroup phenomenon in sociology).

3. Lame-Ass Attacks (le.: “You’re Such an Asshole”)

Some attacks are so weak that will make you look weaker just for engaging in them.

Here are a couple of examples:

***Him:** Not too bad... For a woman*

***Her:** Oh you’re such an asshole*

Never insult with “you’re such an asshole”. Especially when someone was an asshole.

These days “assholes” is a badge of honor almost.

“Dick” is the same.

In that example, much better to go high and one up him:

***Him:** Not too bad... For a woman*

***Her:** There is a theory saying that boys who can get no women become very spiteful towards women. Case in point.*

Or less personal:

***Him:** Not too bad... For a woman*

***Her:** The idea that there is any gap between male and female intellect has long been set to rest and a giant mount of evidence shows men and women are quite similar. But most of all, that was really low of you Jim, I really didn’t expect it from you*

This is, again, the “shaming” technique and sets you up as the judge. Chances are they will be U-turning and apologizing very quickly.

4. Answering With Logic to Emotional Attack

The debate of “logic VS emotion” is a long-standing one.

[As Elliot Aronson points out](#), it depends on the situation which one is more effective than the other. But, overall emotional messages seem to have the edge.

Logic by itself is particularly ineffective when it’s used alone against emotions.

But it’s highly effective when mixed *together* with emotions to form what is often referred to as “witty comeback”.

[Don Lemon support of LeBron against Trump](#) is a great example of backing up an emotional appeal with some logic:



“Cage” is the emotionally charged attack.
And the “logic” is to compare both men’s actions side by side.
The result is a type of “makes you think” irony which is very effective.

5. Threatening Without Being Ready to Hit

Some people say it was [Sun Tzu](#) who said it.
Others say it was [Machiavelli](#).
But the most famous source is most often attributed to [The Godfather](#):

Keep your friends close and your enemies even closer.

Keeping your enemy closer means that **you never want to warn your enemies of impending assaults**. You keep close... Until you are ready to make your move.

Keep this in mind: threats are either a negotiation tactic or signs of mental weakness.

The real killers say little and plot in silence. And when they hit, you never saw them coming.