

How To Stop Bullying

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Do you remember playing the game, “King of the Hill?” It was a rather simple game in which one person would stand at the top of a hill or snow bank and other kids would try to knock him off in order to become “king of the hill.” This process would repeat itself until someone finally said, “Game Over!” and a different game was introduced. The game usually did not last very long and at the end it was understood that the game was indeed over. Today, in many schools “king of the hill” has taken a different form. It now takes the form of a bully trying to be “king of the bus, school yard, classroom, sport, activity and king all the time.”

Bullies choose their targets and intentionally try to harm, humiliate and belittle. Methods of bullying can be direct; such as hitting, threatening, teasing, taunting, name calling, stealing or vandalizing personal property. Bullying can also be indirect; such as spreading rumors, or encouraging others to reject or exclude the target. Whatever the form, without intervention, bullying can have devastating effects. Children who have been the target of bullying often report feeling inadequate, lonely and insecure. If bullying is allowed to continue, the targets of bullying are more likely to become anxious and withdrawn. Targets may try to avoid school or school activities. Dr. Michele Borba, author of “Parents Do Make a Difference,” asserts that 15% of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied. Just as alarming, is the prevalence of bullying. According to the National Association of School Psychologists, 30% of students have either bullied another student or have been the target of bullying.

Children that have become the target of bullying often exhibit behavior or attitude changes. These children may suddenly exhibit one or more of the following:

- Reluctance to go to school or school sponsored activity
- Depression, irritability
- Anxiety, fearfulness
- Difficulty concentrating in school
- Drop in grades
- Unexplained absences from classes or school

If your child has been the target of bullying, the following are some suggestions to address the problem:

- 1) Have a “truth talk” with your child. In a “truth talk” you remind your child what is true of him/her. He/she was fearfully and wonderfully made. He/she was made in the image of God. His/Her value and significance to God is immeasurable. He/she does not deserve to be treated poorly.
- 2) Formulate a plan with your child to address the bullying. The goal is to stop the bullying, not to retaliate or seek revenge against the bully.
- 3) In formulating a plan consider:

- Ignoring the bully: Bullies are looking for a response and will sometimes give up if they do not get what they want.
- Confronting the bully directly: Bullies do not want their targets to defend themselves.
- Inform school personnel: School personnel do not want bullying to happen either. They can be instrumental in addressing the problem, providing supervision, accountability and consequences to the bully.
- Call the parents: Many parents of bullies are unaware of the problem. If they are open, they can also provide guidance, accountability and consequences. Contact the Liaison Officer: Liaison Officers are committed to resolving the problem of bullying.

4) Keep addressing the problem until the bullying has stopped.

When addressed, the effects of bullying do not have to be long lasting. Calling, "Game Over!" to the bully, can help restore your child's confidence, sense of security and belonging. Dr. Chris Dunning, Clinical Psychologist and Trauma Expert says it well: "just because someone goes through a traumatic event, does not mean they have been traumatized." Healing and restoration is possible. God is on your side.

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