

Bullying Prevention

By Rita Spain

We live in a society where violence, aggression and bullying behaviour are increasingly becoming more common place. Conflict is a normal part of growing up but bullying shouldn't have to be. Bullying behaviour is unacceptable at any time and in any situation.

Did you know

- One in seven boys (14%) between 4 and 11 years of age bully others, one in twenty (5%) is bullied.
- One in eleven girls (9%) between 4 and 11 years of age bully others, one in fourteen (7%) is bullied.
- Among boys, bullying is usually physical and involves hitting.
- Among girls, bullying is more subtle and includes gossiping, or exclusion from certain groups.
- The majority of bullying happens on or close to school buildings.
- Bullies often target children who are alone.
- Bullying usually stops when it is reported and acted upon.
- The emotional scars from bullying can last a lifetime.
- 60% of kids who are identified as bullies by the age of 8 will have a criminal conviction by the age of 24.
- Children who are bullied are usually too scared to ask for adult help.

(Reference: Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance 2005)

Bullying behaviour is an abusive use of power. It is a conscious, willful, deliberate, hostile and repeated behaviour by one or more people, which is intended to harm others. Bullying may take various forms. The most common types of bullying are:

Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours, threatening, making reference to ones culture, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, unwanted comments.

Social –mobbing, scapegoating, excluding others from a group, humiliating others, gestures or graffiti intended to put others down.

Physical –hitting, poking, pinching, chasing, shoving, coercing, destroying, unwanted sexual touching.

Cyber –using the internet or text messaging to intimidate, put down or spread rumours about someone.

(Source: www.bullyfreealberta.ca)

Encourage your children to tell you or other adults about bullying that they see happening to themselves or others.

Children need to be reassured that telling does not make the situation worse but silence does. Teach your children actions to take to keep them safe and practice ways to tell the bully to stop without escalating the aggression. Our children are inundated with wrong messages of aggression and violence through television, movies, music lyrics, and video games. Talk about the violence they witness, teach empathy and role model respectful interactions.

If you wish to learn more about bullying behaviour I encourage you to visit the web sites listed above or contact me, Rita, through the church office for more information. Together we can make a difference for our children!

To help inform Albertans that we all have a role to play in preventing bullying, Alberta Education has partnered with other departments and agencies to launch three websites geared to children, youth and adults.

www.bullyfreealberta.ca is an excellent on-line resource for parents and teens. It provides a helpline for kids to call, tips for parents, tips for teens, resources, events, links and contact information.

www.teamheroes.ca is an interactive online game, suitable for children up to 11 years old. Children learn helpful tips for dealing with bullies and empower them to stop bullying.

www.b-free.ca is a youth focused site. It was developed in cooperation with a group of Alberta youth and through firsthand accounts from people who have been bullied and overcome it, resources, facts, and links to other sites, youth are encouraged to stand up and be free of bullying.

In addition to these websites, a 24-hour seven day a week helpline is available to anyone seeking advice and support on bullying. The number is 1-888-456-2323.

As parents, we can do a lot to teach our children how to deal with bullying behaviour and how to prevent and intervene strong character traits such as selfrespect, assertiveness, self-power, empathy and tolerance will go a long way in eliminating bullying behaviour.

Contact Rita through the Church Office for further information.