

Bullying

Queensway Parents Club ❖ April 5, 2016

What Educators Want You to Know

- Be careful about labeling it “bullying”
 - Rude vs. mean vs. bullying: intent and frequency
 - Reverse bullying / scapegoating – uncommon, but happens
 - Fact vs. perception – some have different tolerances
 - There are always 2 sides to every story
- Communication is key (parent-child, and parent-teacher)
 - Teachers and principals want to talk to you about this (face to face)
 - “Let’s keep small problems small”
 - Keep open communication around dinner table
- Dealing with it will not make it worse 90% of the time
 - Educators can only deal with what they see and have reported to them
 - Adults being involved frequently A) helps it stop and B) gives the bully him/herself the support they need to figure out why they are bullying
- Bullying is usually a bigger problem in grades 5-8 than for grades 9-12
 - Middle schoolers have spent *years* together
 - High schools are big enough that they can get a fresh start and find their own niche
 - Many grade 9s report their bullying problems ceasing once they get to high school
- Addressing bullying is not easy or cut-and-dry
 - They are limited in what they can say to you about how they are dealing with it
 - So much happens outside of their view (older youth are very good at hiding it)

What Youth Want You to Know

- “A lot occurs on social media and some people have more than one account sometimes dedicated to it to hide their identity” (Grade 11)
- “Kids especially as they get older, we think we can solve problems on our own even when we can't. Sometimes we don't tell our parents what is going on because we want to fix it ourselves and not be that kid who gets their mommy and daddy to fix all of their problems.” (Grade 9)
 - *What do you think a parent should know about kids who feel this way?*
 - “Encourage them to be open and tell them what is going on even if they won't let their parents help. It's always great to tell someone how you're feeling.”
- “Bullying is very easily done over social media. [Tell your kids] be careful as to who you share things with because you never know who might turn on you and stab you in the back, and to always tell someone that the bullying is occurring because it takes some of the weight off the shoulders of the one being bullied.” (Grade 12)
- “I think that support definitely helps and not only from adults but from people your own age. Parents should try to help kids to not be isolated from community.” (Grade 7)
 - *Do you see a lot of kids isolated from the community?*

- "Yes I do see many kids isolated. Technology plays a big part of it making them feel like they are not isolated but they actually are. For example, I see people at recess on their phones and not with people and that leaves them to be with no one."
- *Do you find kids get bullied a lot *over* the phone, even in your grade?*
- Yes. I have seen it with my friends texting and on social media all the time. It is a big problem.
- *If you could set the rules about phones, and about when, where, and who used them, what do you think you would make them?*
- I think texting should only be for family. And social media should not be allowed until they are old enough to handle bullying better.

Cyberbullying

- Before:
 - You left your bullies when you left school
 - Your bullies were usually only a group of kids that you could usually try to avoid
- Now:
 - Someone can harass you over social media or text – always able to be bullied
 - A "small beef" you have with someone can reach the entire school in 5-6 minutes
 - Sensitive and embarrassing images can be shared and stay on the Internet forever
 - More opportunity for people to talk about you "behind your back" - so it can weigh on you all day
 - More access – you don't have to be "bigger", you don't have to be present, you don't even have to use your own name (anonymity); anyone can be a bully
 - Often hidden from adult eyes
- Suggestions:
 - COMMUNICATE!!! Watch for the signs (see "A Parents' Guide to Cyberbullying")
 - Thoughtfully and prayerfully consider when your child gets a communication device – not all children even in your own household will be ready at the same age
 - Don't just give them a device. Teach them the power they have, both to harm and prevent harm (if they can't understand, maybe they're not ready).
 - Have the passwords to your child's devices (not that you have to always check, but you have a recourse if you suspect a problem)

Key resource:



Free download from
 DigitalKidsInitiative.com (from the
 Center for Parent Youth
 Understanding)

http://www.digitalkidsinitiative.com/files/2012/01/Cyberbully_handout.pdf

Depression & Mental Health

- Possible signs of depression (over a period of 2 or more weeks):
 - Look sad, dejected, or anxious
 - Speak slowly, in monotones
 - Look unkempt
 - Have slowed thinking and body movements or be agitated, unable to sit still, pacing, or hand-wringing
 - Have decreased energy, tiredness, and fatigue
 - Have irritability unrelated to the situation
 - Increased clinginess or need for comfort from parents
 - May revert back to childhood play (e.g.: playing with old toys)
 - May not find joy in the things that used to give them joy (such as being with friends)
 - Deteriorating school performance
 - Cutting or other self-injury
- May say things like:
 - "I'm a failure"
 - "Nothing good ever happens to me"
 - "I am so along"
 - "I'm worthless"
- Suicide: take any mention of suicide seriously!!!!!!
- Get help: St. Leonard's Community Services (24-hour crisis line: 519-759-7188)

Get Help! (If needed)

- Use your best judgment as to when to get involved
 - Not every rude or mean act warrants parental involvement – they do need to learn how to handle this stuff (coach them through the situations)
 - Get involved if it is repeated and causing harm
- Even if they ask you to not be involved, get involved!
 - Kids think getting help will make it worse
 - Reality: adult involvement almost always helps
- Talk to their teacher/principal early
- In extreme cases where your child is suffering, you might consider switching schools/environments
- Even more extreme cases might need to be communicated to the police (however, the teacher/principal involved can help make that determination)
- NEVER be afraid to seek professional mental health services (counseling) if you see signs of depression
- If you need a go-to person, talk to me (Pastor Ryan), and I can help you think through solutions or direct you to the right professionals

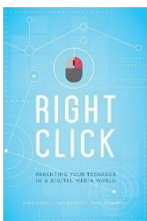
The Spiritual Side

- Christian community
 - Social capital: the people invested in your life who do not have a self-serving agenda
 - This is not just “adults who know you” – kids are authenticity radars – they know when an adult is interested in them for them (since most adults they meet have an agenda)
 - Kids with higher social capital will have more ability to deflect the negative messages from bullies (and other sources - this is why Christian community is so essential in the life of a child)
 - The new 5-1 ratio: every child should have 5 non-parental “fans” who will invest in them and love them (should be the goal of the church)
- Prayer
 - Pray for your child regularly, but especially when there is something like bullying weighing on them
- Remind them about how God views them
 - Have some “go-to” scripture verses prepared to read to them
 - Better yet, post them on a wall somewhere (family art project?)
 - Suggestions: Romans 8:28-39, Psalm 29, Deuteronomy 31:6
- Understand that it will still be hard
 - Remind your children that even people in the Bible had to face immense struggles
 - Don't think that scripture and Christian platitudes will “fix it”

Resources

Resources that were helpful for today's session

- “A Parent’s Guide to Cyberbullying” by Walt Mueller, Center for Parent Youth Understanding (http://www.digitalkidsinitiative.com/files/2012/01/Cyberbully_handout.pdf)
- “Rude vs. Mean vs. Bullying: Defining the Differences” by Signe Whitson, Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/signe-whitson/bullying_b_2188819.html)
- “Bullying Prevention” from the Grand Erie District School Board (http://www.granderie.ca/programsandservices/Safe_Schools/Bullying%20Prevention/Pages/default.aspx)
- Pink Shirt Day (<http://pinkshirtday.ca/>)



“Right Click” by Kara Powell, Art Bamford, and Brad M. Griffin

Other recommended parenting books

