

For the Season

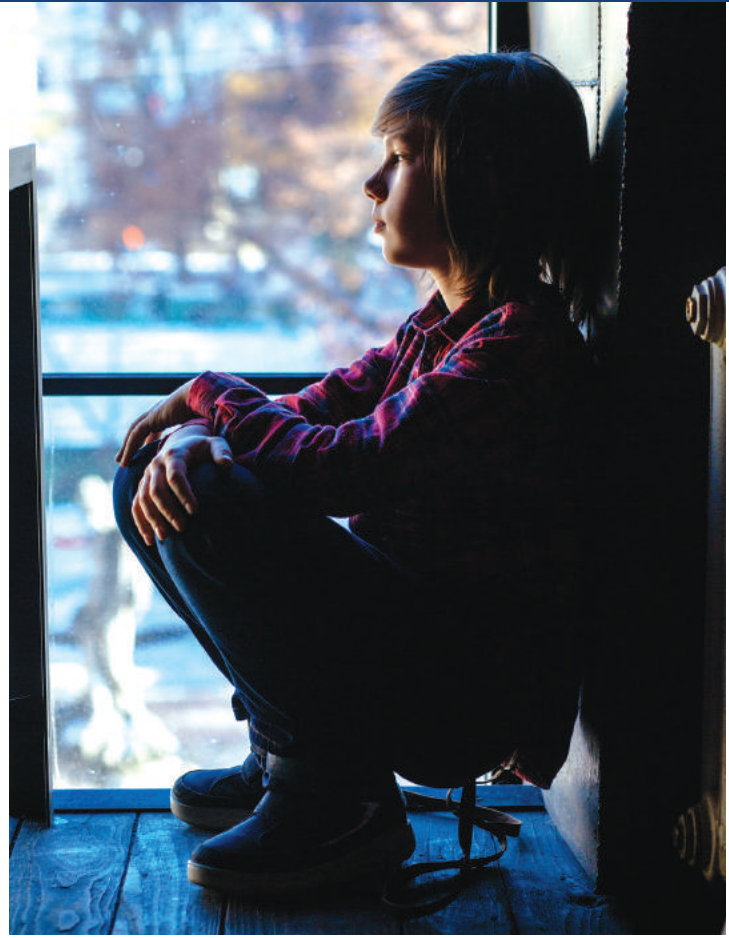
A Parent's Guide to Bullying

How you Handle it Matters

As much as we'd like to believe children are more aware and educated on bullying than in the past it still occurs at an alarming rate. According to Nevada Pep, a local family education resource, verbal and cyber bullying around the country accounts for more than 160,000 students staying home from school on any given day. Worse yet, less than half of kids report bullying incidences, leaving them to deal with the situation without adult knowledge or intervention. Stephanie Mann, a nationally recognized advocate for protecting children and author of several books, including *Empowerment Parenting: How to Raise Resilient Children Who Become Happy, Self-Reliant Adults*, believes the cycle of bullying, whether victim or perpetrator, can best be resolved in the home. She offers tips for parents on both sides of the issue with the goal of changing behaviors that contribute to bullying, while raising children who can stand up for themselves and others.

"Parents are the most important teachers for children," says Mann. "Working towards raising centered children that learn how to protect self and develop self-confidence and self-esteem by way of their own actions, as opposed to false praise or overprotective helicopter parenting, is imperative for kids to function as happy, future adults." She adds, "If adults are patient and calm, they teach children to do the same. What we teach children today will decide their future tomorrow!"

Stephanie agrees that we can't be with our children all the time, but advocates recognizing your own child's behavior and the role it may be playing in the cycle of bullying. "The 'pin cushion' child is often a shy, sensitive, creative child that can be a victim of the bully," says Stephanie. "Parents need to strengthen 'pin cushion' kids by asking questions and listening! Don't let them get isolated. Get them involved in activities, whether family oriented or in the community, so they grow strong and resilient." Conversely, the bully generally feels insecure and looks for a victim they can control by creating fear, giving them a feeling of power and control. Stephanie urges parents whose children are exhibiting this behavior to take action by maintaining appropriate consequences and offering guidance for change. She offers these additional tips for parents to consider:



- When dealing with conflict, stand your ground and have consequences for bad behavior. If you experience conflict with a child or teenager, speak up without anger, but don't give in to children's demands or they will become a much bigger problem in the future.
- A calm, supportive environment teaches children that problems can be worked out peacefully. Designate a "Listening Chair" in the kitchen or family room. When a child sits in the chair, the family has to stop and listen. This gives children a voice to help them solve problems and resolve conflicts between siblings. Children need to know they are heard. If conflicts go unresolved, children can have mental health issues later.
- Don't allow bullying in the family. Be the family peacemaker! Children often learn from parents so if needed, adults should seek counseling or the cycle of abuse can continue as children get older.

For more information on how to keep children and grandchildren safe and healthy, check out Safe Kids Now National Network on www.safekidsnow.com or order *Empowerment Parenting: How to Raise Resilient Children Who Become Happy, Self-Reliant Adults*, available on Amazon.com. ♦