

NEWSLETTER FOR OCTOBER, 2015

Dear Parents,

This is the third article in the series on Bullying that we have been presenting over the past few months. Our aim has been to guide you, as parents, towards a better understanding of the phenomenon called “School Bullying” and to enlist your support in our efforts to bring an end to this menace to the psychological well being of students.

We have already focussed on the causes and reasons behind the phenomenon in itself. The question that automatically arises out of these discussions is, “Does Bullying affect the Bully?”. It is a well known fact that the victim or target of the bullying undergoes severe psychological and emotional distress, leading even to suicide and the tragic loss of a young life. However, is the bully completely unaffected by his own actions? Research and our own experiences as counsellors suggest otherwise.

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes, and there is no gender discrimination in the act either. Girls and boys are both bullies. Girls, more often than not, are more likely to be social bullies, spreading rumours, breaking up friendships, being “catty” and encouraging the group to socially isolate the victim. Boys are more physical bullies, hitting, punching, and slapping. Bullies are typically overly concerned about their appearance and the popularity standings. They have an urge to be dominate, or to be in charge of others. Bullies are usually easily pressured by their peers and feel the need to impress them.

Several researches have identified the various types of bullies. The name used for each category describes the type of bully and the behaviour he / she indulge in. Evidently, it also throws light on the thought processes and the underlying needs of the bully. The **confident** bully has a very high opinion of him/herself and feels a sense of superiority over other students. The **social** bully uses rumors, gossip, and verbal taunts to insult others. Social bullies are typically a female who has low self-esteem and therefore tries to bring others down. The **fully armoured** bully shows very little emotion and often bullies when no one will see or stop them. The **hyperactive bully** typically has problems with academics and social skills. This student will often bully someone then place the blame on someone else. A **bullied bully** is usually someone who has been bullied in the past or is bullied by an older sibling. A **bunch of bullies** is a group of friends who gang up on others. A **gang of bullies** is a group of students who are not really friends but are drawn together due to their desire for power. Students become bullies for many reasons such as they want to impress their peers, they were once bullied themselves and now feel big bullying others, etc.

Each of these categories eventually points to a child (or children) who is either insecure, feels unsure, inadequate or inferior, or is suffering from some form of superiority complex, and it is obvious that he or she is not emotionally or socially skilled or mature enough to follow conventional norms in an effort to get out of this mind set. It follows, therefore, that such a child is himself or herself not psychologically well developed, and is in need of urgent help.

There are warning signs for everyone involved in bullying. Whether your child is being bullied, doing the bullying, or witnessing it, there are signs to look for. Parents should always keep the lines of communication open by starting conversations about daily life and feelings with questions like: What was one good thing that happened today? What is your lunch time like at your school? Who do you sit with? Keep the questions open-ended so your child can describe his or her day. Listen for clues as they talk and follow up with further questions if you suspect something is happening to your child. First, you need to help your child understand what bullying is. Kids who know what bullying is can better identify it. Kids need to know what steps to take if they have been bullied or have seen someone else get bullied. You should encourage your child to always report bullying. Let them know that bullying is not acceptable for any reason, and they should report it immediately.

Perceptive adults can pick up signs of a child being a bully by looking for the following :

- Getting into physical or verbal fights
- Getting sent to the principal's office frequently
- Having friends who bully others or are aggressive
- Becoming increasingly aggressive in normal day activities
- Becoming increasingly aggressive with service staff, younger siblings, cousins
- Takes pleasure in the discomfort or pain of someone else, even if it is a character on television
- Sudden increase in aggression in the content of speech

As a parent, there are many things that can be done to address the situation, if you discover that your child might be indulging in bullying behaviour in school or elsewhere. The first step is to overcome denial of the situation- be open minded and accept the fact that your child may not be as well behaved as you want him / her to be. Quite a few parents, when first informed of their child's behaviour in school, choose to believe whatever the child says, and find it very difficult to face facts when confronted with them. This denial further complicates matters, because the unspoken message which then goes to the child is this- "My parents will support me and back me up, no matter what I do" and this is a very dangerous mind set to encourage, especially among young adolescents.

Additionally, do not embark on a journey of self blame either. Be logical and practical, ask your child the reasons for his behaviour and if you feel that he is evading the issue or is not being as open as you expect, please do not hesitate to consult with either the school counsellor or any psychological counsellor or behaviour therapist. This will not only ensure that the child stops bullying but also take care of the insecurities and emotional frailties that led to this kind of behaviour in the first place.

Once again, we will leave you with these thoughts, and will urge you to continue talking to your children about them. As always, dialogue opens a way to positive action and awareness.

Until next time,
With Best Wishes,
The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata

For appointments, interactions and discussions with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls : 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612