

## Getting The Better Of Bullying

(NAPS)—For many students, learning and school excitement can be stifled by caution and worry about bullying—but it can be alleviated.

### The Problem

Children who are bullied or who bully others may have lasting difficulties. Bullies are more likely to drop out of school, engage in criminal behavior and have difficulty keeping steady jobs. Victims of bullying suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem and depression. Bystanders may feel powerless, fearful or guilty.

The U.S. Department of Education defines bullying as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Direct bullying can include physical assault, damage of property, verbally teasing or making racial or sexual comments and making threatening gestures or messages.

Indirect bullying can include manipulating another to assault someone else, spreading rumors, excluding select individuals from groups or activities and social and cyber harassment.

### Diffusing the Bully's Power

Learning to identify untoward behaviors and working to discourage and rectify them can create better outcomes for both bully and targets. Mahsa Karimi, Manager of Education at Allied Universal, a leading global security and facility services company, works extensively with K-12 and higher education clients to help them create safer learning environments. "Be on the lookout for obvious and subtle signs of distress that contradict what an individual may say—64% of bullying goes unreported," says Ms. Karimi. "Most importantly, following up when bullying is suspected, and responding quickly and consistently, sends a clear message that bullying is not acceptable." Karimi shares the following strategies:

#### Parent

- Ask your children about their school day and be an active listener.
- Encourage conversation about what's happening at school, increasing the likelihood your child will come to you if something is wrong.
- Set a good example by not engaging in bully-like behaviors. Avoid cursing at people. Don't tease or nitpick. Model proper and effective communication in heated discussions.
- Address bully-like behaviors if you see them in your child. Teach respectful interactions between adults and children.

#### Students

- Act confident and present yourself as unaffected by a bully's attempts to



**Going to school doesn't have to cause anxiety about bullying if parents, teachers, students and others work together to stop it.**

hurt you.

- Travel in pairs or groups; there truly is strength in numbers.
- If possible, avoid areas where you know a bully hangs out.
- Do not retaliate. Never seek revenge or attempt to get even with a bully.
- Tell a parent, teacher or other trusted adult if you're bullied or harassed.
- Never join in when someone is being bullied, even as a bystander. Get a teacher immediately to de-escalate the situation.

#### Members of the School Community

- Model respectful, responsible and safe behaviors.
- Report dangerous situations or safety concerns immediately.
- Reinforce positive behavior when you encounter it.
- Be a compassionate listener if a student confides in you. Take it seriously and do not pass judgment. Listen and take it seriously.
- If you witness suspected bully behavior, don't ignore it. Get help from another adult, alert school administrators or authorities as protocol instructs.
- If safe to do so, intervene in a calm and tactful way. Do not exacerbate the situation in any manner.
- Make sure everyone is safe and provide reassurance to those involved and witnesses.

#### Everyone

Contact police or call for medical help immediately if you notice:

- A weapon is involved
- Threats of serious physical injury are being made
- Threats of hate-motivated violence
- Sexual abuse
- Illegal acts such as robbery, extortion or use of force.

Creating and sustaining inclusive campuses is a vital first step toward ensuring the academic success of each child, giving them the opportunity to learn and achieve.