

Relationships ... What Really Matters

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Common Myths About Bullying

A number of myths about bullying continue to go around, leading people to believe it's a normal part of childhood. The facts tell us this is simply not the case.

Myth #1 - Bullying is out of control in our schools.

Reality - Many incidents reported as bullying in schools is not actually a true "bullying case", but instead a case of childhood conflict. By naming all of these cases "bullying" we have created an atmosphere of panic and grave concern for our parents and children. In the end what really matters is that if a child is being hurt, then we need to respond. - Michelle McPherson, Social Worker, District 2, New Brunswick

Myth #2 - "Children have got to learn to stand up for themselves."

Reality - Children who get up the courage to complain about being mistreated are saying they've tried and can't cope with the situation on their own. Treat their complaints as a call for help. In addition to offering support, it can be helpful to provide children with problem solving and coping skills to assist them in dealing with difficult situations.

Myth #3 - "Children should hit back - only harder."

Reality - This could cause serious harm. This also gives children the idea that violence is a good way to solve problems. Children learn how to treat others by watching role models in their lives. Adults have the opportunity to set a good example by teaching children how to solve problems in their relationships without aggression.

Myth #4 - "It builds character."

Reality - Children who are mistreated repeatedly, often have low self-esteem and have difficulty trusting others.

Myth #5 - "That's not bullying. They're just teasing."

Reality - Frequent and repeated teasing hurts and should be stopped.

Myth #6 - "Kids will be kids."

Reality - Mistreating others is a learned behaviour. Children may be imitating aggressive behaviour they have seen on television, in movies or at home. Research shows that 93% of video games reward violent behaviour. Additional findings show that 25% of boys aged 12 to 17 regularly visit gore and hate internet sites. It is important for adults to discuss violence in the media with youth to help change attitudes.

Myth #7 - "There have always been bullies and there always will be."

Reality - "By labeling a child a bully it often clouds our judgment. We look more at punishment rather than looking at solutions that will help a child learn what to do in the future. This is not to say that there are no consequences; but remember they are children first and all children make mistakes. Our goal is to help children learn from their mistakes. Punishing only does not teach them anything but to make sure that they do not get caught again!" - Michelle McPherson, Social Worker, District 2, New Brunswick

(Myths adapted from BullyingCanada.ca)