

## School Bullies - Is Your Child At Risk?

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What has this world come to when a child that defends himself against a bully ends up with the same punishment? Or a child who breaks-up a school fight ends up with suspension for physically pulling two kids apart and not running for a teacher? Children today have much to fear when they can't even defend themselves from assault, fear punishment for doing the right thing, or worse-get beaten as innocent bystanders do nothing at all.

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A twelve year old boy-never in trouble, practically straight A's, prides himself in staying the path of setting a good example, always tries to be helpful and kind-is verbally picked on for a year by one boy in general. When the parent asks if the boy wants to report it, they boy replies, "No, I don't want to make things worse and besides, they're only words." A year later, while playing a game of football, on school grounds, the boy hits a ball out of interception and in the process the balls hits they bully's friend in the eye. The bully's friend pushes the boy, at which time the bully holds the boys hands behind his back so that the "friend" could punch the boy in the face four times. Then the "friend" pulls the boy's glasses off his head and throws them fiercely on the ground. The boy hurt, upset, humiliated, scared, and feeling as though he has to defend himself fights back by throwing a few punches at the bully's friend, and a swift kick in the stomach. The bully and his friend leave. The boy had enough-being passive didn't keep him safe, but fighting back did not feel right either.

The boy returns home from school that day and tells his parents of the incident. The parents having had enough and fearing for their son's safety go to the school for help. Little did they know that the situation was going to get worse-their son might get suspended from school for defending himself! And the police would have to be called in because their son had a busted lip, which is physical evidence of assault. Should the parents have kept silent? They no longer knew the answer. Doing the right thing didn't seem so right anymore.

Was it right for their son to be bullied or assaulted? No. Was it right for the parents to keep silent for so long? No. Maybe if the school had known that the boy was getting picked-on early on, the physical assault would never have happened. And just maybe having that verbal abuse on record would not have ended this situation in the "possible" suspension of their son. But how does a parent know when a verbal assault-in which the child said wasn't worth even listening to because he knew what was being said was untrue and coming from an angry boy-will stay verbal or end up in physical confrontation?

In today's society it is estimated that 1 in 4 children are bullied-in school and out of school-on a daily basis. We, as parents, fail our children if we do not have an open relationship with our children-knowing that they can come to us in confidence and share their pain, humiliation, and confusion. These parents had the right kind of relationship with their son. He knew he could come to them and voice his concerns without fear of retribution.

Where they failed their son, was in not reporting the verbal assaults. The old saying, "sticks and stone may break my bones but names will never hurt me" may be true. But in a society where violence is showing up in the schools on a more alarming-and daily- basis, it may seem that if the bully cannot get a rise out of the words spoken, he (or she) will resort to physical violence.

Statistics, from the Bureau of Justice - School Crime and Safety, show that a child is bullied on the playground every 7 minutes. And that adults only intervene 4% of the time, while peers intervene 11% of the time, and an astounding 85% of the time there is no intervention at all.

When a child is bullied, it may be hard for the parents to speak up for fear of repercussions from the other child's parents, the law, or even that child, himself. But we, as parents, have to realize that our child did nothing wrong, that we did nothing wrong for taking a stand, and that while we are the victims in this incident, we don't have to stay the victims. By standing up for our child, we are letting our child know that he (or she) is valued, important, and deserves to feel safe in his (or her) own school.

So the next time you see a child being bullied, report it. Call the school and set up a meeting with the children involved-the school counselor will then decide if the parents should be brought in. If this meeting doesn't resolve the situation, don't be afraid to take a legal stand. Children have the God-given right to feel safe and grow-up happy-not beaten and scared.

#### About The Author:

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