

4 WAYS PARENTS CAN HELP PROMOTE KINDNESS AND PUT AN END TO BULLYING

Tormenter, oppressor, intimidator, coercer, antagonist, aggressor, bully. Whichever the word, being on the receiving end of such treatment can cause serious emotional anguish. I have shared with you an article written by Nancy Razkalla and published in SOS Safety Magazine on May 17, 2018 (with their permission) to give parents something to consider when talking to children about bullying and kindness. **PINK SHIRT DAY** is February 27. This is a day to not only bring awareness to bullying behavior but to promote kindness to one another.

Many kids are left out, ignored, or actively disliked and mistreated by their peers. Almost every kid has been a witness to some form of bullying, and many will recognize that it's wrong, but they don't always know what to do about it. It's important for kids to stick together so that no one is left out, alone, or bullied. But how do we teach kids to be the kind of people who'll stand up for others?

For parents of bystanders, here are four tips to help your child stick up for others and make the world a better place.

1) Teach Them What Really Matters

It's great to be a strong student, good athlete, standout musician, or respected leader. But what's even more important is character.

It's good to be proud of your kids when they achieve something like a good grade, a personal best, or a teacher's recognition. It's good to encourage them to pursue the things they love and are good at. These things matter.

But it's even more important to help them decide what sort of person they want to be. All of us – kids, teens, and adults – can choose our response to a situation, and our responses show others who we are.

Teach your kids about being the right person, not just doing well.

Encourage your kids by reminding them that you're proud of their achievements, but that character matters more. Treating others with kindness and respect is bigger than straight A's or wearing a C on your jersey. *Being kind is one way to make the world a better place.*

2) Teach Them WHY It Matters

Kids get bullied. Kids get excluded, and almost every kid has seen it happen. But not every kid will necessarily be bullied or excluded. Those who aren't have the power to help those who are.

One way to make bullying stop is to have someone else step in. A bully who sees that the person they've targeted has a friend standing up for them is more likely to walk away.

By being a friend to a bullied or lonely peer, your child can help reduce bullying. Plus, showing someone you care is a great way to boost their self-esteem and remind them that they are worth loving.

Bullied kids are also at greater risk of suicide. *A friend who sticks up for someone being bullied might never know what a difference they've made by showing care and helping decrease bullying.*

3) Set an Example of Character

Kids notice things, and they'll emulate the things they notice. That includes the behaviour of their parents. *It's important to model the kind of character you want to see.*

Bullying among adults may not be as obvious to either you or your kids. Often, it won't consist of intentionally excluding someone in front of others, or physical violence. But when someone is manipulative or making others feel inferior, you can choose how you react. Demonstrate the sort of behaviour you want to see from your kids.

Stand up for the bullied. Defend the truth. Do what's right. It may not always seem like it, but kids pick up on things like this. The ways that you respond to situations will teach them how they should respond.

If you want to see character, show character.

4) Find Practical Ways to be Kind

There are tons of practical ideas that will help a lonely or bullied kid feel included and cared for.

Ask your child what they think they could do to help, and offer your own suggestions.

Some great ways to include others are sitting with a lonely student at lunch, inviting her to play or chat at recess, or asking him to join in when doing a group project. Your child can also make sure to invite a left-out classmate when planning her birthday party or make every effort to accept an invitation from the classmate with few friends.

Remind your child that it's important to listen when making a new friend. Instead of befriending someone out of pity, encourage your child to find out what that person likes, and what they have in common with your child.

Your child might discover an amazing person and a real friendship.

Hope for the Parents of Bystanders

Your child can make a difference in the world simply by being kind.

Some of the best things a parent can teach a child are how to be kind, demonstrate character, and show compassion.

Remember: February 27 is PINK SHIRT DAY! Encourage Kindness!

This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School's Student Support Facilitator. She is a support for schools, students, parents and caregivers to encourage success in school. Tammy advocates for students and provides a link between the student and other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for nearly 20 years and is a mother to 4 children, 3 of which are teenagers.