

## **Are you raising a caring child?**

Not so long ago, I attend my high school reunion. While most of people I had hoped to see attended, there were some notable absences. When I asked the organizing committee where certain people were, they reported that some of my classmates refused to come to the reunion because of the bullying they had experienced. To imagine that even after 30 years a person are still impacted by the actions of bullies, is troubling and should be a wakeup call to every parent.

Are you raising a bully or a caring child? Like other life lessons, children need to learn to care about the feelings of others and how to look after other children who are being mistreated. Parents should model behaviours which are consistent with a zero tolerance for bullying and which help their child to become a strong minded caring individual.

While there are many ways to reinforce your child's caring for others and themselves, you need to look at your own behaviour and develop a plan for giving guidance to your child and their friends. Here are some strategies which may help:

- Set the ground rules at home and in the community that you care about others and that you do not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards anyone. Describe to your child the kind of family you are.
- Model appropriate behaviour by not making jokes at other people's expense.
- As a family, plan activities to help out those people in your extended family or in your neighbourhood, who need a helping hand from time to time. Do not give a child a reward for doing what any caring person should do. Explain that everyone needs help.
- Talk about respect and what it means. Give your child examples of respectful behaviour and model it yourself by listening to your son or daughter's opinions.
- It is never too late to stop a bully. If your child is accused of teasing or putting down other children, pay attention. Most kids who bully have little respect for themselves or others. Teenagers report that cyber-bullying is more common than any other type of intimidation. So pay attention to what your child is doing on the computer.
- Spend time with your child getting to know how they think and what is important to them. Showing you care about them is the best lesson they can be taught.

Positive values like other behaviours need to be taught and encouraged by parents and relatives to help children figure out what is important in their world. Starting when a child is a pre-schooler, you need to teach them how to play or interact with a sibling or playmates.

Letting a child know that they have the right not to be hit, teased or pushed to do something that they do not want to do, is a lesson in self respect. This lesson will provide your child with a skill which is fundamental to their success later in life.

So, in the good old days, we called bullying, name calling. It was acceptable because people naively thought it had no impact. Well my former class mates would disagree. We can do better and every child deserves our best effort.

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