

## *How to Help*

### WHEN YOUR STUDENT IS USING **BULLYING BEHAVIOR**

*None of us wants to think that our student is using bullying behavior with other people. The first step is to begin to understand what bullying is and is not. "Bullying is not about anger or conflict; it's about contempt – a powerful feeling of dislike toward somebody considered to be worthless, inferior, and undeserving of respect (Coloroso, 2008, p. 101)." Working together with your student's school and/or with a private counselor, your student can learn appropriate replacement behaviors.*

*Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:*

- **Imbalance of power:** People who bully use their power to control or harm. The people being bullied (the targets) may have a hard time defending themselves.
- **Intent to cause harm:** Accidental actions are not bullying. The person bullying has a goal to cause harm.
- **Repetition:** Bullying happens to the same the target over and over by the same person or group.

*What you can do:*

- ✓ **Intervene immediately with discipline, not punishment.** Discipline involves the student taking ownership of the problem (no excuses) and then working toward solving the problem through restitution, resolution, and/or reconciliation. Restitution involves "fixing" what they did – replacing a broken or stolen item, admitting wrong-doing, apologizing, etc. Resolution is figuring out a way to keep the incident from happening again – what can they change about their behavior. Reconciliation is a process of healing with the person your student has harmed and can involve extending a friendly offer to participate in a fun activity together or helping the person with something.
- ✓ **Create opportunities to "do good."** Provide opportunities for your student to behave in caring and helpful ways - assist a neighbor with yard work, help a sibling with homework, or volunteer at a church activity. Your school may have ideas about how your student can be a positive helper on campus. Be sure to compliment your student when they "do good."
- ✓ **Nurture empathy.** It is important to be able to look at situations from others' perspectives and to understand their feelings. This skill can be developed by asking questions your student how they think someone might be feeling and why. Use books, TV shows, or real life situations to discuss with your student how a person in need might be feeling and how your student could help that person.
- ✓ **Teach friendship skills.** It is important for your student to learn to be respectful and to relate to others in peaceful ways. To have friends, your student needs to be a friend. One of the strongest buffers against being a bully is being a good friend.
- ✓ **Closely monitor your student's TV viewing, video game playing, computer activities, and music.** All forms of media have a powerful effect on the way your student perceives the world in which they live. In addition, too much media involvement and too little "real life" social interaction stifles development of the social skills necessary to relate to others in a caring, responsible way.
- ✓ **Engage in constructive and energizing activities.** Build on your student's talents or help them develop new ones so they feel an earned sense of accomplishment (music, art, clubs, non-violent sports, etc.).

*Coloroso, B. (2008). *The bully, the bullied, and the bystander*. New York: Collins Living.*