

# Back to School Challenges for Students

Going back to school brings the excitement of new clothes, school supplies and the promise of new experiences and new friends. But it can also mean new stresses like being left out, being bullied and feeling that you just don't measure up. These are issues that most of us have dealt with at one time or another, but it is still something that we need to look at as our children return to the classroom.

*"Being bullied at school is one of the leading stressors that teens are dealing with"*

Dealing with stresses that we seem to have no control over can lead to harmful behaviors that can be avoided. Teenagers these days seem to be dealing with outside stressors by suppressing their anxieties, real or fictional, with drugs and or alcohol. Being bullied at school is one of the leading stressors that teens are dealing with, and we need to recognize the danger that this poses for them.

When we examine this coping behavior it becomes apparent that many parents tend to do the same thing. Think

about this... you have a bad day at work, the boss is on your case and the workload seems unmanageable.

How do we often deal with these issues? Perhaps with a stiff drink just to calm the nerves and relax. Not that having a drink if you are over eighteen is a bad thing, but sometimes it can become a habit and sometimes it takes more than one drink to feel relaxed. Our teens will mirror our behaviors and our coping mechanisms.

They may find similar, but even more harmful ways to cope with the pressures that they face.

How can you help your teens? Talking to them certainly helps to find out what is going on at school and what problems they might be facing. What do you do if your teen tells you that a person at their school is bullying them? It's important to take this information seriously.

Although it might not seem like a big deal to you, to your teen it could seem like the end of their world. Parents need to involve the school, keep a written record of the teen's experiences and provide all the necessary information to the schools. It is also important to find out what the anti-bullying policies are in your teen's school. Also find out how the school plans to deal with the problem and what your involvement as a parent should be.



We forget bad hair days, bad skin and awkward moments but we never seem to forget being left out, picked on and the humiliation of being the victim of a bully.

Step out Safely is an anti-bullying program now being offered in the local schools for students from age twelve to eighteen. This program is designed to bring bullying to the forefront and teach our teens how to deal with the problem. Information on this program can be obtained from the local McMan office in Sherwood Park. Phone: 780-417-9760.

**There are many agencies in Sherwood Park that can assist parents in dealing with problems in this area:**

- Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County—780-416-1500
- Sherwood Park Mental Health Clinic 780.467.6562
- ADDAC - 780-417-7221
- School Counsellors
- Strathcona County Family and Community Services—780-464-4044

Start this school year off right. Have a heart-to-heart talk with your teens about bullying. You may be surprised to learn that they are exposed to it, and you may be able to help them survive it in a very positive way.

This article is one in a series written by the Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee providing information about drug and alcohol issues. In the next article: **Seniors and Prescription Drug Abuse.**

A directory has been developed to help people become more aware of the services and resources available to deal with drug/alcohol issues. It's a comprehensive list of all services available for prevention, early intervention, and treatment. The Drug/Alcohol Resource Directory is available at the Strathcona County Health Centre located at 2 Brower Drive or at Strathcona County Family and Community Services 276, 2755 Broadmoor Boulevard (above Smitty's restaurant) in Sherwood Park. The directory is also available on the internet at [www.strathcona.ab.ca](http://www.strathcona.ab.ca).

Residents with questions about the strategy can call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044.