

# BULLYING AND ITS LONG TERM LEGACY

"BULLYING.... it's what kids do!" How many times have we heard an adult say, ' I was bullied and I survived'? These comments may be heard all too often in the community yet research shows that bullying can be a precursor for an escalation of further aggressive and criminal behavior. Statistics show that 60% of kids who are identified as bullies by the age of eight will have a criminal conviction by the age of 24. (Reference: *Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance 2005*)

Bullying is a repetitive negative action against another person. It's about an imbalance of power between a bully and their target. It is important to note that bullying is a societal problem and not just a school problem. It is a learned behavior, which is typically passed on through aggressive modeling. Fortunately, what is learned can also be unlearned.

Males are more likely to use physical intimidation to bully, while females tend to

use words. Beginning as early as pre-school, girls express aggression relationally. This means they will use relationships to harm others. Relationally aggressive behaviors include exclusion, malicious gossip, rumor spreading, teasing and name calling, alliance building, covert physical aggression and cyber-bullying. While



these may not be as obvious as physical aggression, all bullying is hurtful and cannot be ignored.

So how do we help our young people deal with bullying? One of the most important things to understand is the value of opening up lines of communication between

children/youth and a caring adult. Bullying **STOPS** when others get involved. To better facilitate this, we need to help our children understand the difference between 'telling' and 'tattling'.

Barbara Coloroso (*"The Bully, The Bullied and The Bystander"*) explains the difference in the following ways: "Telling is reporting to an adult when a person sees something cruel happening to oneself or others. The intention of the reporting is to keep another person, or the teller safe from harm....where as Tattling is telling an adult something someone else has done to get attention or get them in trouble."

For additional information you may want to check out the following web-sites:

- [www.teamheroes.ca](http://www.teamheroes.ca)
- [www.b-free.ca](http://www.b-free.ca)
- [www.bullyfreealberta.ca](http://www.bullyfreealberta.ca)
- [www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca)

Together, we can make a

difference by taking a proactive and preventative approach to bullying as a community.

This article is one of a series by the Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee addressing information about drug and alcohol issues. In the next article:

## ***Behaviour Changes/ Warning Signs.***

For a complete listing of resources available, pick up the *Drug/Alcohol Resource Directory* at the Strathcona County Health Centre located at 2 Brower Drive or at Strathcona County Family and Community Services located at 2755 Broadmoor Boulevard (2nd Floor) in Sherwood Park. Residents with questions about the strategy can call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 464-4044.