



KANE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

making a difference ...together

Message of the Month September, 2010

www.kanecountymentalhealth.org

Kane County Mental Health Council

- The Association for Individual Development
630-966-4000
- Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
630-859-6562
- Delnor Community Hospital
630-208-3000
- Ecker Center for Mental Health Services
847-695-0484
- Family Counseling Service of Aurora
630-844-2662
- Family Service Association of Greater Elgin Area
847-695-3680
- Gateway Foundation/Aurora
630-966-7400
- Greater Elgin Family Care Center 847-608-1344
- Kane County Health Department 630-208-3801
- Larkin Center 847-695-5656
- League of Women Voters
630-365-2138
- Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services, Inc.
630-892-5456
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, DeKalb, Kane-South, Kendall Counties, Inc.
630-896-6264
- National Alliance on Mental Illness-Kane County
847-931-4715
- Provena Mercy Medical Center
630-801-2657
- Provena St. Joseph Hospital
847-931-5521
- Senior Services Association
847-741-0404
- Suicide Prevention Services 630-482-9696
- TriCity Family Services
630-232-1070
- Visiting Nurse Association of Fox Valley 630-978-9835

Bullying - You Can Help Stop It!

Would you be insulted if someone said, "You have purple hair and green ears!?" No, probably not. You might say the teaser was ineffective. Actually, you *chose* not to become hurt nor angry in this example because you accepted the statement as harmless.

If someone called you stupid, fat, or a loser, you would probably start to feel insulted. What's different? Most of us partially or fully believe these accusations and feel sad, hurt, or angry when hearing someone else point out our potential imperfections. If the teasing is in front of others who laugh at us, our emotions may intensify due to embarrassment. If the teased person shows that she or he is upset in the moment of being teased, the teaser will probably continue with growing laughter from those gathered around. We can choose not to interpret people's opinions of us as devastating. To stop being teased, one useful response is to stay calm in the moment and say, "You can think that if you want to." This response helps against rumors, too.

How can we show calm in the moment? We can remember there is truth in the opposite of the teasing statements, so we can put teasing statements in perspective. We can remind ourselves that we don't always make mistakes, we do have knowledge, and healthy weight loss takes time. We might even laugh at the humor in our mistakes. We can be prepared for bullying to briefly get worse before it gets better, especially if the bullying has been long-standing, because bullies test to see if their "victims" are going to stay firm in their calm responses. To prepare ourselves, we can role play repeatedly staying calm. We can feel proud when our calm reactions stop the bullying. Later, we can share our "un-calm" feelings with someone we trust to receive the comfort and support of empathy. These resiliency skills can empower children to independently stop bullying.

When children are truly physically injured or have items stolen from them, they ought to tell adults who will take appropriate disciplinary action. Most bullies are not trying to do actual harm. Instead, they are trying to have fun or improve their social status by showing how they can get an upset reaction from people they bully. Dwelling on the actions of bullies can lead victims to dangerous thoughts of revenge and to feeling justified to do serious harm. Adults can listen with empathy to children who report being victims of bullying, discourage revenge, and encourage those children to respond in resilient ways that discourage future bullying.

INFO CORNER: Israel (Izzy) C. Kalman, MS Nationally Certified School Psychologist has a website, www.bullies2buddies.com, that offers many free resources on stopping persistent teasing and other forms of bullying such as shoving in a school line, threats to take things, the spread of rumors, and cyberbullying.

Rosalind Wiseman's August 10, 2010 article, "5 Ways to Prevent and Stop Cyberbullying," at <http://rosalindwiseman.com/2010/08/10/5-ways-to-prevent-and-stop-cyberbullying/> helps parents teach their children that the use of technology is a privilege that requires responsible behavior.

The Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use also has on-line articles on cyberbullying and cyberthreats written for parents and children at <http://csriu.org/cyberbully/>.