

Why is Assertiveness Training Important for Kids?

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With increased awareness and information provided on issues like bullying in schools, we may be tempted to think that our kids know what bullying is and how to stop it. However, this may not be true.

What is Bullying?

The reality is that not all difficult interactions between children involve bullying. This statement may come as a bit of a surprise to some of you because we tend to use the word bullying as a description for any situation in which our child's feelings get really hurt. In order for an exchange between two children to accurately be called bullying, it must contain a specific set of characteristics including:

- An imbalance in power between the two children
- Differing emotional tones (the bully is calm and controlled; the target is upset or fearful)
- The absence of compassion (hurtful behaviour continues despite the target's distress)

What are Schools Doing About Bullying?

Some schools have attempted to deal with the issue of bullying by taking a "zero tolerance" approach which labels all undesirable childhood interactions as bullying incidents. While this may make parents feel better and allow them to see school as a safer place for their children, taking a "zero tolerance" approach can actually rob both children of the opportunity to develop the conflict resolution skills they need. The good news is that research is pointing the way toward a new path.

Why Is Assertiveness Training Necessary?

Although as parents we would like to think that it is the school's responsibility to prevent our child from being bullied, the unfortunate reality is that most bullying incidents between children take place when adults are not looking. So, although schools still have a responsibility to do their part, this means that our children need to have the skills to handle a bullying encounter on their own. This is no small task. As you can imagine, many children freeze when they are in this situation. Research shows that the answer to this is repeated practice/role playing of an assertive (not passive or aggressive) response in a safe, low stress environment. This practice increases the chance that under the stress of a bullying encounter your child will be able to respond appropriately.

Don't wait until bullying becomes a problem. For more information about assertiveness training, bullying and other difficult encounters between children please register for our Raising an Assertive Child seminar Oct.27 at the Cardel theatre. This workshop is a prerequisite for our bully proofing camp starting Nov.3, 2010. www.bearentingpro.com or 403 230-2959.