

More Causes of Bullying

Last week I wrote about single parent homes and homes with a lack of adult supervision being two causes of bullying by children from those homes. Other causes can also be attributed to the home environment. Studies show that bullying is more prevalent in neighborhoods that are very crowded and highly populated. Public housing units tend to be small, with many apartments/homes wedged into very little space. In these areas, the people (adults and children as well) tend to get frustrated and “act out” because of the overcrowded, too “busy” environment. Also, people who live in these areas are usually there because they live in poverty or near-poverty conditions. The frustrations and tension of not being able to pay bills and provide adequate food, clothing, and other things for the family has to be incredibly depressing—with no way out. Tenants of these areas usually have very low educational levels, thus they cannot get adequate jobs to support their families. Studies also show that people with little or no education who live in public housing often view aggression and violence as a means to solve problems. Do you see a pattern here? No education equals poverty and squalid living conditions which leads to depression and aggression which leads to acting out against those around them—it’s a spiral where one condition builds on another. In many families, this is a generational trend. We are now seeing third and fourth generations of poverty. I think Newt Gingrich was right when he said we have millions of young people who are growing up without having parents who are role models for them, parents who have a job, who get up and go to work, who get to work on time, who know that they have a responsibility to work for a paycheck. What does all of this have to do with bullying? From everything I have read, the majority of teenagers who bully are from these environments. Perhaps I should include a disclaimer here—I am well aware that any teenagers can be bullies, including those from more affluent homes. Having money doesn’t make the children immune from causing hurtful and damaging injuries to others.

Another cause of bullying has to do with values. Those of you who are old enough remember a time when The Ten Commandments hung on the wall of most every classroom. I remember looking at those Commandments hundreds of times. I also remember that we were actually allowed to talk about The Ten Commandments in class. Although I don’t intend this to be a religious statement, we did talk about God. We also talked about the Commandments and what they mean to our everyday lives. Think about those values as they can relate to bullying: don’t lie (and gossip); don’t cheat; don’t steal; don’t be jealous of others. Another Bible verse we were taught and talked about at school—Love thy neighbor as thyself—the Golden Rule; treat others the way you want to be treated. If we only remembered these few things, bullying would not exist. Neither would the majority of crime in the world. Did we cease to teach these things when The Ten Commandments were taken off the walls? Sadly, most schools, including ours, are afraid to teach lessons from the Bible—even if our children need those life lessons to help them develop into responsible adults. Notice I said life lessons rather than religious lessons. Isn’t it sad that politicians, reporters, news analysts, and other

media types are the first to bemoan the state of the world and criticize the schools for everything they perceive we are not doing, but they are the also the first to bash us for trying to teach anything remotely associated with traditional Christian values. Maybe I have strayed a little from the topic and hopped on my soapbox to rant; however, I am sure that our children need to be taught to care for others and care about others (there is a difference); to respect and honor that we all have individual differences; and, foremost, to have respect for themselves. Somehow this is not being done, and this is the heart of the bullying issue.

Next Week—More Causes of Bullying (Honor and Respect)