Bully-Proof Your Kids

Are you worried that your teens will be caught up in the bullying cycle?

BY ELLEN WHYTE

Mother: Suspect used to bully my boy in school

GEORGE TOWN: One of the youths suspected of beating U. Nhatvoon to death may have been trained in handling bullying cases.

"I'm not sure if others may be trained to handle bullying cases," he said after presenting his appeal. "I have beencd by the police in this case, along with other people in the community." The ebl was arrested by the Royal Malaysian Police (RMCP)." However, the following day, the police said they would not arrest the suspect. The suspect's father told the police that he had never had any problems with his son before.

Best friend could only watch in horror

"He that is happy must be.Previous hours or mean detest are the same. George Omar so needed his friend could only watch in horror.

First it was taunts, then they started bashing us, recalls Previn

Viral video shows scuffle taking place in Nilai playground

STAND UP, SPEAK UP, LET'S END BULLYING

NUR ADULRAZAG: MINH .

EVITA 'BEATS' THE BULLIES

She had suffered much during primary school years

WHY? WHY? WHY?

AS NHAVEEN ON TO LIFE, FAMILY HOLDS ON TO HOPE

NHAVEEN has been declared brain dead after being brutally attacked on Saturday by five youths and is on life support. Doctors say there is no hope for the 18-year-old, but his mother and family are praying for a miracle.

There is no question of taking him off life support, says one family member.
avy cadet Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain was tied up and tortured by 30 or more fellow cadets at the army trainee dormitory at the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM) in Sungai Besi. He suffered broken ribs as well as bruises and scald marks over almost 80 per cent of his body. Zulfarhan died on June 1, 2017.

On June 10, 2017 18-year-old T. Nhaveen went out for a burger and a chat with his friend T. Previin. The two boys were attacked by five teenagers aged 16 to 18. Previin escaped after sustaining serious injuries but Nhaveen was beaten so badly that he was left clinically brain dead. Shockingly, there were also burns on his back and he'd been sodomised with an object.

Bullying is on the rise in every country and Malaysia is no exception. One local study found that 82.7 per cent of primary school students and 95.8 per cent of middle school students were psychologically bullied, while 56 per cent of elementary school students and 65.3 per cent of middle school students were physically bullied. Given the magnitude of the issue, what can you do to keep your child safe?

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

Bullying is a power strategy that relies on intimidation, threat of violence and actual violence. It can be physical but it can also take the form of psychological bullying.

Psychological bullying includes:
- Name calling and labelling those who are different like, “soft” or “pondan”,
- Isolating people who don’t fit in, and making sure they know they’re alone,
- Scolding and shaming someone in order to “correct” them,
- Using threats of violence in order to “instill discipline”,
- Ignoring bullying by saying, “boys will be boys”,
- Posting nasty comments on social media like, “go die already”,
- Starting and sharing nasty untrue stories about someone.

In a local study, researchers found that bullying is fuelled by ego, irritability, revenge, fun, the influence of others, and racism.

"Kids sometimes perceive bullying as hitting." Dr Ruhaya Hussin, Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia, points out. “They don’t know that it means threatening, name calling, freezing someone out, spreading rumours and more. As a parent, you have to explain all the aspects of bullying.”

Bullying is a serious threat to child development. Kids who are bullied are more likely to avoid school, fuelling truancy and hurting their overall education. In addition, there are huge psychological costs. These include an increased risk of low self-esteem, depression, stress, anxiety and even eating disorders and suicide.

Studies also show that children who are victims of bullying often become bullies themselves. A victim at primary school may turn to bullying when they go to secondary school, or try and take attention off themselves by helping the bullies pick on someone else.

This is how bullying becomes a vicious cycle.
UNDERSTANDING TEEN SOCIAL GROUPS

Teens tend to socialise in small groups. These groups can have far-reaching effects that range from positive confidence raising and mutual support to peer tutoring. However, group dynamics are complex, and for some, normally nice groups turn nasty.

"Teens are looking for self-identity," Dr Ruhaya says. "They need to explore, make their own friends and decisions about who they are but as they are young, they make mistakes."

"Due to our culture, traditional Malaysian parents have a tendency to control rather than communicate. My advice is, listen and develop constructive ways to deal with their problems. Also, be patient. Becoming an adult is a process. Your child won’t mature overnight, and they will make mistakes."

Kids can be reluctant to talk about problems. If they are being bullied, they may stay silent believing that if they tell, they will be isolated by their peers, or be beaten up by bullies in retaliation.

Also, when the bullying is taking place in their own circle of friends, kids may be ashamed because they have stood by and not helped, or even taken part. While these errors are part of the process of becoming an adult, kids mature enough to recognise this.

TELLTALE SIGNS OF PROBLEM INCLUDE:

- They are emotionally shut down
- Your child is quick to anger
- He or she does not accept or minimize responsibility for their own actions
- Their friends are delinquents
- They use bad or coarse language
- They have things that weren’t bought
- They break school rules

TO KNOW YOUR CHILD, YOU CONNECT

“Practise the Take 15, Take 10, or Take a minute technique every day where you focus on each child alone for those few minutes without their other siblings,” advises Dr Ayu Mat Saat, a psychologist and clinical lecturer at the School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. “Be constant with them, every night before bedtime, talk about the day – what happened, who did the child speak to, who are the child’s friends, did anything funny happen, did anything sad happen? Make it a habit.”

BULLYING IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS

HOSPITALISED. August 2016.

A 14-year-old student in Sungai Petani, Kedah was beaten so badly by Form 3 peers he ended up in intensive care at Sultanah Bahiyah Hospital in Alor Star with internal bleeding in the head.

ASSAULTED ON VIDEO. September 2016.

A video was uploaded to Facebook of a schoolboy in a Sabah religious school viciously beating and choking one of his peers while the rest of the class looked on, some of them laughing.

HOSPITALISED. May 2017

Form 2 students were attacked by Forms 3 and 4 students at MARA Junior Science College (MRSM) in Parit, Perak, which led to one being treated for a broken rib as well as injuries to the head, back and stomach.

SUICIDE. May 2017

Teh Wen Chun, 20, killed himself after being the subject of bullying at his college in George Town, Penang.

RAPED. June 2017

A 19-year-old inmate of a rehabilitation school in Jasin, Melaka was attacked by a group of seniors in the middle of the night. The teen was gagged, stripped and sodomised.

DEAD. June 2017

Navy cadet Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain, 21, died after he was bound, beaten and tortured by his peers at the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM).

DEAD. June 2017

T. Nhaveen, 18, died after being beaten and sexually assaulted by five of his peers in Penang.
WHEN YOUR KID IS THE BULLY

First, get the facts and be prepared for your child to lie. “Kids know when they bring shame to their family,” says Ian James, Manager of Residence and Welfare at Asia Pacific University who deals with scores of college students daily. “As a parent, you must understand that the teacher, the other parties involved or, heaven forbid, the police, may know things that your child has not told you about. Listen and keep calm.”

Dr Loh advises, “Our research shows that in school, good training, experience and student social support systems ensure counsellors are most effective.”

“Bullying is a difficult issue. It’s natural that each party hopes the other will step in and solve it. However, it is essential that counsellors and parents work together to help the kids. This is a collaborative effort. As a parent you need to tell the counsellor about family background, and as a counsellor you need to engage the kids and the family. It’s a three-way interaction.”

Unfortunately, some schools prefer to sweep bullying under the rug. When you are faced with disinterested teachers and counsellors, then you have to step up. “Speak with the principal and lodge a complaint with the school but be diplomatic,” Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim, Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE), advises. “Arm yourself with the circular on discipline, which can be obtained from the Ministry Of Education website. Also take the matter to the Parent-Teacher Association chair and seek for an investigation.”

“Help not just your child but all the kids, get an anti-bully campaign going in the school. There are lots of NGOs, like PS The Children, who will help you for free, so start with getting the principal on board. Then work together for an effective change.”

Second, make sure that your child understands what the problem is. “When your child has been bullying others, focus on empathy. Help your child feel what others feel,” Dr Ruhaya advises. “Then teach your child the skills to speak out against bullying.”

Third, find the source of the issue and address that. “Kids aren’t born bullies; they learn that violence is the way to go,” Alex Lui points out. “Ask yourself, where are they getting that lesson from? Is my child so low on self-worth that putting down others is the only way they can feel significant? Or are they are copying my behaviour?”

It’s not an easy thing to do but once you have discovered what is at the root of the behaviour, only then can you work to make changes.

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HOW TO SHUT DOWN ONGOING BULLYING

“We say it takes a village to raise a child,” says Alex Lui An Lieh, a clinical psychologist at HELP University who has been involved in child welfare services for more than 12 years. “And we are all responsible for sending the right message.”

“First, adults need to show a good example. We have to behave respectfully towards each other. We cannot have people in authority bullying those below them. This includes teachers and parents not taking a bullying attitude towards kids.”

“With many parents being unaware of bullying and students not approaching counsellors, we need to focus on developing trust between all parties,” points out Dr Loh Sau Cheong, Associate Professor from the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University Malaya. “Then when bullying happens, victims will have the confidence to fall back on parents and counsellors for help.”

“At home, parents must teach respect, love, and sharing among siblings, and show an example by giving fair treatment to each child,” Dr Loh advises. “Our research shows that in school, good training, experience and student social support systems ensure counsellors are most effective.”

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