

Six Ways to Help Your Child (and Yourself) Build a Positive Mindset



It's easy to get caught up in the stress of everyday life. Here's a few tips to keep a positive mindset.

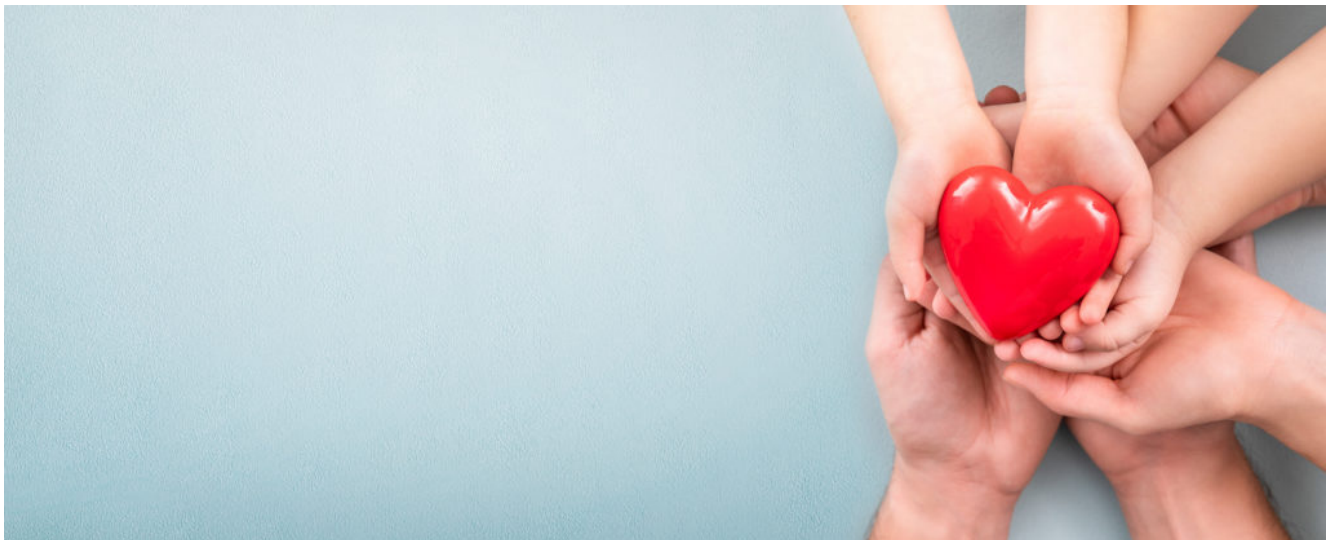
1. Be Grateful – at some point during your day (perhaps at dinner) ask each member of your family to say three things that they are grateful for today. Ask them to make their answers specific to today. For example, saying “I’m grateful for my family,” isn’t specific to today. Saying, “I’m grateful that I have a dad who read with me today,” is specific.
2. Journaling – ask your child to spend five minutes journaling about something they are thankful for from that day. Journaling about a positive experience allows us to relive the experience, which helps us build a positive mindset (while also working on writing skills).
3. Exercise – studies show that exercise helps our brains feel more positive.
4. Meditation – simple meditation exercises help our brains

de-clutter and focus. Apps like Headspace can help you get started with meditation.

5. Random Acts of Kindness – we can always do nice things for others – either in our family or community.
6. Connection– reach out to friends and family via text, phone, video chat, or even old-fashioned letters.

Learn more about character education.

Four Secrets to Raising a Compassionate Child



From guest contributor Dr. Michele Borba

Empathy is the trait that helps make the world a kinder and gentler place, and empathy can be developed and improved. Wherever your children fit on the “caring about others” scale, there is always room for improvement. But what are proven ways parents can increase their children’s capacity to be kind and care? I’ve sought that answer for over a decade and interviewed dozens of leading experts to find it.

Ironically, it was at the site of unimaginable horrors, the

Auschwitz concentration camp, where I found a key discovery. At the Auschwitz bookstore, I happened to pick up a book called *The Altruistic Personality*. My copy is now filled with notes and dozens of tabs: it is a fascinating read. And there among those pages, I learned that the answer to evil is empathy. That finding was the catalyst to my writing, *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All About Me World*. So, if you ever wonder whether you can instill caring in a child, *you do*.

Seeds of Empathy Are Planted by Parents

The Altruistic Personality describes the results of a now-infamous study that showed just how much parents can influence the development of the traits of humanness like caring, compassion, empathy, social responsibility, and kindness. And it was conducted by two social psychologists named Samuel and Pearl Oliner.

Nazis killed Samuel Oliner's family, but a Polish peasant woman named Balwina saved him when he was twelve. "Balwina Piecuch's act of kindness and caring not only saved my life, it formed my life," he later said.

Sam Oliner and Pearl Oliner, his wife, spent the next three decades interviewing more than 1,500 Christians-both non-rescuers and rescuers-who had lived during Nazi-occupied Europe. Their goal was to determine why some, like Balwina, put themselves at great personal risk without external rewards while so many others did not. It is one of the most extensive studies of people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust and why some people care so deeply. The Oliners found several distinctions in rescuers.

First, most rescuers were deeply empathetic: they simply could not stand by and watch others suffer.

Many also had a strong sense of self-efficacy and believed

they could make a difference and help others.

The majority had internalized a strong identity based on caring values and an ethic of social responsibility.

Four Parenting Practices Raise a Compassionate Child

But how did those rescuers acquire those beliefs? “It was how I was parented” was a recurrent response.

There were four practices the rescuers’ parents did that helped instill their caring values.

First: The rescuers’ parents strongly emphasized kindness, and expected their children to apply the value to *all* people.

Second: The rescuers’ parents administered little physical punishment in disciplining their children. They used moral reasoning instead.

Third: The rescuers’ parents tended to have closer relationships with their children than did the bystanders’ parents, and were felt to be warmer and more supportive.

Fourth: The rescuers’ parents modeled caring behavior in their interaction with people outside the family.

In contrast, non-rescuers were far more centered on their own needs or felt obliged to help only a small circle of others. Their parents were also more likely to stress monetary values (“Be thrifty,” “Get a good job”) than caring, moral concerns.

Are You Modeling What You Want Your Child to Catch?

When it comes to raising compassionate children, parenting does matter. But it’s not buying apps, paying for fancy tutors, giving long lectures, or sending kids to pricey camps

that cultivate children's hearts. The Oliners would tell us that who we are and what we stand for counts far more than all our long, endless parenting "to do" lists.

"Moral behavior is the consequence of empathy, caring for others, a strong attachment to the moral community, and an ethical obligation to all life. Reaching out to others at considerable personal risk, as Balwina Piecuch did, and as many, many others have done, has been the force behind much that is good in the world. It has saved innumerable lives and inspired new acts of generosity and heroism." – Samuel Oliner

For our children's sake, may we stand for kindness and model empathy.

Six Ways to Stay Responsible on Social Media



With seemingly endless streams of tweets, Instagram photos and Facebook feeds society can seem glued to their cell phones. Social media is ingrained in our everyday lives from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep. In 2019, 42% of the population, or 3.2 billion people used social media daily. That translates to millions of posts and photos being shared and re-shared every day. Social media is most prevalent in the lives of younger generations, with 90.4% of Millennials reporting to use social media compared to 77.5% of Gen X and 48.2% of Baby Boomers.

We consume news and entertainment, connect with friends and family and share our opinions through our many social channels. However, It can be easy to get caught up or lost in all of the information out there. Sometimes it's difficult to decipher what's true or untrue, or what's real or fabricated. It's important that we connect, share and learn with social media, but it's also important that we do these things responsibly. Here are some practices to follow in order to remain responsible with your social media use.

Think about future implications of what you post. What we post never truly goes away on the internet, so it's important to take a second look at why we are posting something. Many times we snap a picture, write a clever caption and then click "post" without thinking of the future implications of what we post. When looking for jobs, employers can search a potential employee and find many things about their life (good or bad), or when tensions are high, it's easy to post something hurtful or harmful to someone. Really consider why you are posting something and the future effects it could have on your life or the life of someone else.

Make sure you're following reputable news sources. In the age of "fake news" we are bombarded with hundreds of news stories every day, some accurate some not so accurate. Make sure the news sources you're following are either verified or have reliable and fact-checking journalists with good reputations. Don't take everything you read at face value, and make sure you have all of the facts straight before you share or comment on a story.

Be mindful of the time you're spending on social media. On average, we spend 2 hours and 22 minutes on social media every day. Logging the time we spend on each of our social media apps can be a helpful way to breakdown and better understand how much time we are spending staring at our devices. If you feel that you're spending too much time scrolling through Facebook or Instagram, consider setting limits for yourself.

Understand you're often seeing highlight reels. Many people share their accomplishments and milestones on social media, and that's a great thing! Sharing our successes because we're proud and want to show that to the world can make us feel good and validated. However, it's also important to understand that no one's life is as perfect as it may seem on social media. Social media tends to be a reel of our life's highlights as we don't share the difficult times. It's easy to compare ourselves to others, especially when we are going through

tough times. But remember everyone goes through ups and downs and social media doesn't always accurately represent that.

Follow the THINK Model before you post.

T- is it Truthful?

H- does it Help?

I- does it Inspire?

N- is it Nice or Necessary?

K- is it Kind?

Keep a close eye on your child's social media. Decide with your child when it is ok for them to make a social media profile and sit down to help them create it. Monitor who they follow and who is following them, as well as who they may be chatting with. Turning on strict privacy settings will allow you to control who can see your child's information or posts. Keep an eye on what they are posting, making sure that they don't share too much and are following the THINK model.

Learn more about character education.

Teaching Kids How to Be Upstanders



From our guest contributor, Dr. Michele Borba

Studies show that active bystanders can do far more than just watch. In fact, student bystanders may be our last, best hope in reducing bullying.

Active student bystanders can:

- Reduce the audience that a bully craves
- Mobilize the compassion of witnesses to step in and stop the bullying
- Support the victim and reduce the trauma
- Be a positive influence in curbing a bullying episode
- Encourage other students to support a school climate of caring
- Report a bullying incident since 85 percent of time bullying occurs an adult is *not* present. Students are usually the witnesses

When bystanders intervene correctly, studies find they can cut bullying more than half the time and within 10 seconds. [Pepler and Craig]

Borba's Six "Be a Bully B.U.S.T.E.R." Skills

There are parameters to activate student bystanders, so get educated! Here are a few facts to ensure success:

- To ensure success you must first mobilize students to be active bystanders.
- You must give students permission to step in.

- You must also teach specific strategies so they can step in.
- Each strategy must be rehearsed or role-played, until kids can use it alone. (I've had schools have students role-play these in assemblies, make them into chart-reminders that are posted around the school, and even have students create mini-videos of each strategy to share with peers).
- Not every strategy will work for every student, so you must provide a range of strategies.
- Ideally you must enlist your peer leaders – those students on the highest popularity tier who other students look up to – to mobilize other peers.
- Adults *must* be onboard with the approach and understand what bullying is and how to respond. Adults *must* listen to student reports on bullying and back students up. The biggest reason kids say they don't report: "The adult didn't listen or do anything to help." Step up adults!

The best news is that child advocates and parents can teach kids these same bystander skills. Doing so empowers children with tools to stop cruelty, help victims, feel safer and reduce bullying. Here are the three steps:

STEP ONE: Teach Students Tattling vs. Reporting

Kids must realize that safety is *always* the primary goal, so stress to students:

"If someone could get hurt, REPORT!"

"It's always better to be safe than sorry."

Teach students the crucial difference between "Tattling" and "Reporting" so they will know when they *should* step in because a child is bullied or when to step back and let two kids handle things for themselves because it's just friendly teasing. Also identify specific trusted adults children can go to and report bullying incidents if they do identify bullying.

Here is the crucial difference:

Tattling is when you trying to get kids **IN** trouble when they aren't hurting themselves or other.

Reporting is when you're trying to help keep kids **OUT** of trouble because they may get hurt (or they are). Report bullying to an adult you trust. If the adult doesn't listen, keep reporting until you find an adult who does listen.

STEP TWO: Teach What Bullying Looks and Sounds Like

The next step is to teach students what bullying behaviors look like so they will know when they should step in and not when the behavior is mere teasing.

1. Explain 3 parts of bullying:

1. Bullying is a cruel or aggressive act that is done on purpose. The bully has more power (strength, status, or size) than the targeted child who cannot hold his own.
2. The hurtful bullying behavior is not an accident, but done on purpose.
3. The bully usually seems to enjoy seeing the victim in distress and rarely accepts responsibility and often says the target "deserved" the hurtful treatment."

2. Teach: "Five Bullying Types": Depending on the child's age, bullying can take on difference forms including and children need to know what those forms. Bullying can be:

1. **Physical:** Punching, hitting, slamming, socking, spitting, slapping;
2. **Verbal:** Saying put downs, nasty statements, name calling, taunting, racial slurs, or hurtful comments, threatening;
3. **Emotional:** Shunning, excluding, spreading rumors or mean gossip, ruining your reputation;

4. **Electronic or cyber-bullying:** Using the Internet, cell phone, camera, text messaging, photos to say mean or embarrassing things;
5. **Sexual:** Saying or doing things that are lewd or disrespectful in a sexual way

3. Mobilize Student Compassion Students could make posters, power-point presentations, skits, or projects about bullying. The key is for students to understand the real definition of bullying. *And they must know that the staff is serious about supporting them and will back them up and respond.*

4. Use Literature or Videos: You might also use literature or video clips to help students understand the definition of bullying. Here are a few literature favorites: *Confessions of a Former Bully* by Trudy Ludwig; *Say Something* by Peggy Moss Gardiner; *Teammates* by Peter Golenbock; *The Bully Blockers Club*, by Teresa Bateman.

STEP THREE: Teach “Bully BUSTER Bystander” Skills

I teach the acronym **BUSTER** as a mnemonic to help kids remember the skills more easily. Each letter in the word represents one of the six bystander skills.

Not all strategies work for all kids. The trick is to match the techniques with what works best with the child’s temperament and comfort level and the particular situation.

Don’t forget to ask students for their input and additional ideas. Their creativity never ceases to amaze me!

1. B-Befriend the Victim

Bystanders often don’t intervene because they don’t want to make things worse or assume the victim doesn’t want help. But research shows that if witnesses know a victim feels upset or wants help they are more likely to step in. Also, if a

bystander befriends a victim, the act is more likely to get others to join the cause and stand up to the bully. A few ways bystanders can befriend victims:

- **Show comfort:** Stand closer to the victim.
- **Wave other peers over:** "Come help!"
- **Ask if the victim wants support:** "Do you need help?"
- **Empathize:** "I bet he feels sad."
- **Clarify feelings:** "She looks upset."

You can also encourage students to befriend a bullied *after the episode*. "That must have felt so bad." "I'm with you. Sorry I didn't speak out." "That happened to me, too." "Do you want me to help you find a teacher to talk to?" Though after the episode won't reduce the bullying at the moment, it will help reduce the pain of both the targeted child and the witness. It may also help other children recognize there are safe ways to defend and support a targeted child.

2. U-Use a Distraction

The right diversion can draw peers from the scene, make them focus elsewhere, give the target a chance to get away, and may get the bully to move on. Remember, a bully wants an audience, so bystanders can reduce it with a distraction.

One of the best distractions I've ever seen was a teen who saw bullying but did not feel safe stepping in to help (and most children as well as adults do not). So he got crafty. He unzipped his backpack and then walked nearby the scene and threw the backpack to the ground. Of course, he made it appear as though it was an accident, but it was a deliberate and brilliant act. "Oh no," he said. "All my stuff is on the ground and the bell is going to ring. My grade will get dinged. Can anyone help?" And the teen drew the audience from the bully to help him pick up his papers. The target also had a chance to sneak to safety.

Ploys include:

- **Ask a question:** "What are you all doing here?"
- **Use diversion:** "There's a great volleyball game going on! Come on!"
- **Make up false excuse to disperse a crowd:** "A teacher is coming!"
- **Feigning interruption:** "I can't find my bus."

3. S-Speak Out and Stand Up!

Speaking out can get others to lend a hand and join you. You must stay cool, and *never* boo, clap, laugh, or insult, which could egg the bully on even more. Students also must learn how to assert themselves and say that speaking up to a bully is the hardest of the six Bully Buster Strategies. The students in the photo are learning my "CALM Approach" when speaking up to a bully. Best yet, older students are teaching the skill to younger students. Stress that directly confronting a bully is intimidating and it's a rare kid who can, but there are ways to still stand up to cruelty. Here are a few possibilities:

- **Show disapproval:** Give a cold, silent stare.
- **Name it:** "That's bullying!"
- **Label it:** "That's mean!"
- **State disapproval:** "This isn't cool!" "Don't do that!" "Cut it out!"
- **Ask for support:** "Are you with me?"

4. T-Tell or Text For Help

Bystanders often don't report bullying for fear of retaliation, so make sure they know which adults will support them, and ensure confidentiality. You *must* give students the option of anonymous reporting. An active bystander could:

- **Find an adult** you trust to tell. Keep going until you find someone who believes you
- **Call for help** from your cell.
- **Send a text** to someone who can get help. Many schools now have a text service.

- **Call 911** if someone could be injured.

5. E-Exit Alone or With Others

Stress that bullies love audiences. Bystanders can drain a bully's power by reducing the group size a few ways. Students bystanders could:

- **Encourage:** "You coming?"
- **Ask:** "What are you all doing here?"
- **Direct:** "Let's go!"
- **Suggest:** "Let's leave."
- **Exit:** If you can't get others to leave with you, then walk away. If you stay, you're part of the cruelty. Leaving means you refuse to be part. Just quietly leave the scene.

6. R-Give a Reason or Offer a Remedy

Research finds that bystanders are more likely to help when told *why* the action is wrong or *what* to do. Students could:

- **Review why it's wrong:** "This isn't right!" "This is mean!" "You'll get suspended." "You'll hurt him."
- **Offer a remedy:** "Go get help!" "Let's work this out with Coach."

Final Thoughts

The right comments and behaviors can make peers stop, think, consider the consequences, and even move on. Those seconds are crucial and enough to stop the bullying or mobilize other students to step in and help.

Bystanders can make a difference. They can be mobilized to step in and reduce bullying-that is *if* they are taught how.

But it's up to adults to show students safe ways to do so, help them practice those strategies so they are comfortable using them in the real world, and then support and believe

them and acknowledge their courageous efforts.

Hundreds of students today skipped school because of peer intimidation and bullying. It's time to rethink our strategies and teach bystanders how to step in safely and speak out against peer cruelty.

For specific ways educators can create a caring, inclusive schools refer to my book, **End Peer Cruelty, Build Empathy: The Proven 6Rs of Bullying Prevention That Create Inclusive, Safe and Caring Schools** (from Free Spirit Press, on sale in February 2018).

Michele Borba, Ed.D. is an internationally renowned consultant, educational psychologist and recipient of the National Educator Award who has presented workshops to over a million participants worldwide. She is a recognized expert in parenting, bullying, youth violence, and character development and author of 22 books including UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About Me World, The 6Rs of Bullying Prevention: Best Proven Practices to Combat Cruelty and Build Respect, The Big Book of Parenting Solutions, and Building Moral Intelligence. She has appeared over 130 times on the TODAY show and is a frequent expert on national media including Dateline, The View, Dr. Oz, Anderson Cooper, CNN, Dr. Drew, and Dr. Phil. To book her for speaking or media even refer to her website: www.micheleborba.com. Follow her on twitter @MicheleBorba.



Learn more about character education.

Nine Ways to Cultivate Courage in Kids



From our guest contributor, Dr. Michele Borba.

Here are nine ways to stretch kids' risk-taking muscles in our bubble-wrapped world, so they can face adversity and do the right thing:

1. Model courage. Kids who watch their parents stick their necks out to do the right thing are more likely to do the same. Let your child see you step out of your comfort zone, whether it's tackling your fear of heights or speaking up to your boss. Then express how good it feels when you conquer your fear instead of taking a shortcut. Kids learn how to take on the tough challenges they face from witnessing how you

tackle your own fears.

2. Talk about values and courage. Research finds that kids are more likely to be courageous if they believe that their parents expect them to support those in need. Discuss bravery with your kids: Tell them, "Courage is making the choice to do what you know is right even if you are afraid." Some parents develop a family courage mantra like "We find courage to do what's right, even if it's hard." Or you might tell your child, "Our family speaks up and helps others."

3. Stop bubble-wrapping and rescuing your kids. Always "fixing" children's problems only makes them more dependent and reduces their ability to bravely seek their own solutions. It also sends a disturbing message: "I'll help because you can't do it alone." If you're "over-helping," start building your child's courage muscles by putting him in the driver's seat. He – not you – tells his coach he can't make practice. She apologizes to her pal without your assistance.

4. Encourage your kids to share their acts of bravery. Learning to be brave takes practice, so encourage your children to do something courageous every day, like introducing themselves to someone new, inviting a new classmate to play or standing up for a peer. Then take time to focus on their courageous breakthroughs. One dad I spoke with had his kids list their "brave successes" on paper strips, then stapled the strips together to make "courage chains." A mom I talked to had her kids share their brave deeds at dinner time.

5. Dispel the "Superman myth." Many kids assume they need to look like a superhero to be courageous. Share stories of those who changed the world with their quiet, nonphysical brave acts. Jackie Robinson, the first Major League baseball black player, was heckled because of his skin color, and showed great bravery by preserving and conducting himself in a professional manner on the field (where he excelled) as well

as off it. Mahatma Gandhi – who would go on to be the leader of nonviolent civil disobedience – ran home after school every day, as a child, because he was too shy to talk to anyone. Rosa Parks, the African American Civil Rights activist who refused to give up her seat to white passengers, was described as “soft-spoken ... timid and shy.”

6. Read about courageous kids. Share inspiring news and stories about children who stick their necks out for others. A couple of my favorite books for younger kids are “*Courage*” by Bernard Waber and “*Brave Irene*” by William Steig. Check out these titles for older kids: “*Wringer*,” by Jerry Spinelli and “*Stand Up for Yourself and Your Friends*” by Patti Kelley Criswell and Angela Martini.

7. Encourage young kids take brave baby steps. Instead of picking her daughter up, a friend of mine helped her 3-year old find courage to cross a small bridge by empowering her. “Be brave, Clara,” she told her daughter. “You can do it.” Clara continued, repeating to herself, “Be brave, Clara!” And she learned something when she crossed the bridge: “I’m brave, Mommy! I’m brave!”

8. Teach kids to prioritize safety. Even as we teach our children to be brave, it’s still important to temper risk-taking. Certainly, we want our children to be safe. So tell your child that safety is always the first priority. If someone could get hurt and the risk is too great, teach your kids to always get adult help or call 911 if needed. Encourage children to trust their instincts, when they have concerns that something is unsafe.

9. Teach your kids how to reduce their fears. If not kept in check, fear can be overwhelming. Teach your child simple strategies to be brave. You might encourage positive self-talk, such as saying, “I can handle this” or “I have courage to do this.” Or teach your child to take slow, deep breaths to find courage. Research finds younger children are more likely

to share their fears with another child. Though you want them to be open with you, let them know it's also OK to share their worries with a friend. Choose a fear reducer that works best for your child and then help her practice that until it becomes a habit.

For kids to thrive in today's uncertain world, they will need courage and confidence. Let's help them find their hero within and learn to be brave!

Learn more about character education.

Teaching Problem Solving Can Prevent Bullying



From guest contributor, Dr. Michele Borba

Researchers have always recognized the benefits of kids learning to work together to solve their problems. After all,

using problem-solving skills is one of the best ways to help kids and teens curb playground battles, deal with friendship tiffs, manage teammate squabbles and handle the social jungle, as well as boost resilience, empathy, academic performance, self-esteem, peacemaking skills, and character. New research by the American Psychological Association reveals another huge plus: Teaching problem solving may prevent bullying and reduce the odds of victimization.

Researchers from Louisiana State University-Baton Rouge and the University of California-Riverside began the study as a quest to see what individual or environmental characteristics might predict the likelihood of a child becoming a bully or victim. The team, lead by Clayton R. Cook, analyzed 153 studies on bullying that were published in the USA and Europe over the past 30 years and involved kids from ages three to eighteen. The results, published by the American Psychological Association and entitled, "Predictors of Bullying and Victimization in Childhood and Adolescence: A Meta-Analytic Investigation," found crucial information to help prevent bullying and aggressive behaviors.

Kids, especially boys, who have trouble solving social problems are more at risk of becoming bullies, coming targets of bullying, or both.

"A typical bully has trouble resolving problems with others," Cook states, "and also has trouble academically." But so too does the typical victim who "is likely to be aggressive, lack social skills, think negative thoughts, experience difficulties in solving social problems." That applies to the child who is bullied *and* who bullies.

This is why problem-solving strategies should be an integral part of every school's bullying prevention program and school climate initiative.

Most bullying programs aim at merely changing student's

knowledge or perceptions or implementing a school-wide approach such as posting “anti-bullying rules” or a peer-reporting system. Such approaches alone do not change the bullying behavior, and so the bullying or victimization continues. Aggressive habits are learned and and they can become entrenched.

Cook’s findings are different because they provide insight into not only how to predict who will be more likely to be bullied or victimized, but also how to reduce—even prevent—the bullying cycle.

Of course, this is just part of the bullying solution, but finally we’re discovering not only greater predictors, but also concrete and teachable strategies for parents and teachers alike.

A critical key to success in reducing bullying is to ensure that *all* students learn crucial skills for solving social conflicts, and the sooner the better. Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving should be an integral part of every school’s bully-prevention program and safe and caring climate initiative as well in every parent’s tool chest. But there are caveats.

Warning: Though problem solving is a valuable social skill that all kids must learn, researchers warn that using Peer Mediation to reconcile bullying could increase bully victimization. Keep in mind that the target does not have a conflict with the bully. And the bully’s intention is to usurp power over his or her victim by intentionally causing pain. What’s more, kids who are targeted generally cannot hold their own, and there is no equality in Peer Mediation.

So decide carefully if Conflict Resolution or Peer Mediation is the right approach. Always ask permission of the targeted child. Do they want to be in the conflict resolution process

and face their tormentors? Even if they do, be sensitive, tread lightly, preserve confidentiality.

Teaching Kids to Take a STAND

Use the following as a guide to help children learn to solve problems peacefully. Each letter in the acronym, "STAND" represents one of the five steps in conflict resolution and helps kids recall the process. I developed the acronym for my special education students and have since taught hundreds of kids (and teachers) the STAND approach.

The complete steps to problem solving (and dozens of more research-based strategies) are from *End Peer Cruelty, Build Empathy: The Proven 6Rs That Create Inclusive, Safe and Caring Schools*. Each step takes time to teach and lots of practice to master. Use the "Baby step model" to help kids learn the STAND skill: Teach one step at a time adding the next part when previous was mastered and kids can use it in the real world without adult guidance

- **Stop, look and listen to your feelings.** The first step to solving problems is teaching kids to calm down. The reason is simple: it's impossible to think about how solve a problem if you're upset. Once in control, you can begin to rationally figure out why you're upset and then find an answer to your dilemma.
Teach kids to take slow deep breaths to calm down or walk away until calm. If emotions are high amongst kids, intervene: "I see two angry kids who need to calm down so they can figure out how to solve their problem." You might need to separate the kids until their anger is under control.
- **Take turns telling the problem.** The trick here is to enforce these critical rules: No put downs or name-calling: you must listen to each other respectfully. No interrupting: each person gets a chance to talk. You

might ask each kid to say what happened, summarize each view, and then end with, "What can you do now to solve this problem?" Make suggestions only when your kids really seem stuck.

Tell kids to start their explanations with the word "I" instead of "You" then describe the problem and how they want it resolved. Doing so helps the speaker focus on the conflict without putting the other kid down. For instance: "I'm ticked because you never give me a turn. I want to use the computer, too."

If emotions are high, give kids the option of writing or drawing their view of the problem instead of saying it to each other. It's particularly helpful for younger or less verbal kids. The goal should be to help each kid try and feel what it's like to be in the other kid's shoes. One way to do this is by having each kid put into their own words what the other kid has told them.

- **List alternatives.** Next, kids need think of alternatives so they have ways to finding a resolution. Whether preschooler or adolescent, the basic rules of thinking of solutions are the same: Say the first thing that comes into your mind. Don't put down anyone else's ideas. Change or add onto anyone's idea. Try to come up with ideas that work mutually for both sides.

Don't offer your help unless they really seem stuck! To keep kids focused, say they must come up with five different solutions before you return. Then leave for a few minutes. Setting an oven timer for just three minutes can be a goldmine for kids with short attention spans. Stretch the time depending on the children's age and problem solving skills.

- **Narrow choices.** Narrow the options down to a few choice. To help kids get closer to resolve the problem teach two

rules. Eliminate any solutions that are unacceptable to either kid because they don't satisfy their needs. Eliminate any solutions that aren't safe or wise.

- **Decide the best choice and do it!** The final step helps kids learn how to make the best decision by thinking through the consequences of their choices. You can teach kids to think about the consequence of their remaining choices by asking: "What might happen if you tried that?"

Another way to help kids decide on the best choice is by helping them weigh the pros and cons of each remaining possibility: "What are all the good and bad things that might happen if you chose that?" "What is the one last change that would make this work better for both of us." Once students decide, the two shake on the agreement or take turns saying, "I agree."

5 Take Aways from the APA Findings

1. DON'T rescue. If you want kids to be able to learn to work things out, then step back and give him the opportunity to solve their own problems. Do make gentle suggestions, but *don't* offer solutions or rush too quickly to fix things or create remedies. Doing so robs kids of learning to solve problems.

2. DON'T wait. The sooner we teach children how to solve conflicts, the less we'll have to intervene. Problem solving can be taught to preschoolers but do teach the skills at a developmentally appropriate level.

3. DON'T teach skills in isolation. Real life practice is the best way for kids to learn skills. So *do* look for day to day opportunities: a tiff during a play date, a sibling battle over who gets the remote or who gets first pick at a game.

4. DON'T overlook real examples. Kids learn skills best by seeing them. Bickering with your partner? *DO* show your kids

that you can fight fair. Dispute with the boss? Explain to your kids how you're trying to work things through. Family feud? Use Family Meetings (or Class Meetings) to teach problem solving.

5. DON'T assume kids know how to problem solve. A big mistake is assuming that kids acquire these skills on their own. *Don't* make that assumption. *Do* deliberately and intentionally teach problem solving.

End Peer Cruelty, Build Empathy: The Proven 6Rs of Bullying Prevention That Create Inclusive, Safe, and Caring Schools offers the strong elements of best practices and bullying prevention programs to form the 6Rs of bullying prevention: rules, recognize, report, respond, refuse and replace. More than a program, the 6Rs are a comprehensive process for reducing bullying from the inside out, involving the entire school community. Used on its own or to supplement an existing anti-bullying program or positive school climate initiative, this guide will help you see real progress in your bullying prevention efforts...and a more peaceful future for your students and school.

Michele Borba, Ed.D. is an internationally renowned consultant, educational psychologist and recipient of the National Educator Award who has presented workshops to over a million participants worldwide. She is a recognized expert in parenting, bullying, youth violence, and character development and author of 22 books including UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About Me World, The 6Rs of Bullying Prevention: Best Proven Practices to Combat Cruelty and Build Respect, The Big Book of Parenting Solutions, and Building Moral Intelligence. She has appeared over 130 times on the TODAY show and is a frequent expert on national media including Dateline, The View, Dr. Oz, Anderson Cooper, CNN, Dr. Drew, and Dr. Phil. To book her for speaking or media even refer to her website: www.micheleborba.com. Follow her on twitter @MicheleBorba.



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