

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

Tips On Dealing With Bullying

(NAPSA)—According to the experts at the National Education Association (NEA), one caring adult can make all the difference in the life of a child who's being bullied.

It's crucial for bullied students to know which adults in their school or community they can go to in their time of distress—adults who will really listen to them and then act on their behalf. Bullied students who go it alone because they don't know to whom to turn are far more likely to fall behind in their studies, get sick, miss school and drop out—even commit suicide.

Whether you're a parent, a teacher or a friend of the family, there are six steps you can take to help the children in your life.

1. Take complaints seriously. Don't dismiss it as "just teasing." Listen to the problem and tell the child you'll take appropriate action. No allegation about bullying should be ignored because the charge seems improbable or because the behavior seems unlikely to recur or is perceived as a "harmless rite of passage."

2. Report the alleged bullying. Tell the principal about a school bullying case, especially if the bullying seems to be based on the student's race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

3. Reassure, don't judge. If a bullied kid comes to you for help, reassure him or her that you will do what you can. Don't, however, ask why the child is being bullied. It's the behavior of the bully that matters. If the child volunteers personal information, keep it confidential.

4. Get the appropriate professional help. If a young person seems to be in emotional or psy-



When it comes to bullying, adults can stop it, fix it and prevent it from happening again.

chological distress, offer to get in touch with a counselor, social worker or school psychologist. Don't give advice beyond your expertise, however.

5. Stand up and speak out for children in need. Learn about bullying. Share what you've learned and advocate for bullied children.

6. Do something. If you witness someone being harassed and humiliated, intervene—but get additional support if necessary. Everyone involved—the victim, the perpetrator and the witnesses—needs to know this is unacceptable behavior.

As one of the world's foremost anti-bullying experts, Psychology Professor Don Olweus notes, "It now all boils down to a matter of will and involvement on the part of adults in deciding how much bullying will take place."

To that end, the NEA has come up with the Bully Free: It Starts With Me campaign. This aims to identify caring adults who will pledge to help bullied students. The NEA will provide the resources they need to support the bullied student, ask the right questions and take the appropriate actions.

You can learn more and sign The One Caring Adult Pledge at www.nea.org/bullyfree.