



*Welcome to the first edition of “Counseling To Go!” Mrs. Fabina, the counselor for the upper level school, and Ms. Schweitzer, the counselor for the elementary school have collaborated to provide information on a variety of counseling related topics. We hope you find the information interesting and useful. Happy reading!*

### **Rude, Mean, Bullying... What is the difference?**

Bullying has been a hot topic for several years now, and justly so. Bullying can interfere with a child’s ability to concentrate and learn, it can interfere with their social adjustment and happiness at school, and in the worst case, it can cause lasting emotional damage. Thus, it is important that parents and school staff recognize bullying and respond appropriately. Especially at the young ages of elementary school, it can be difficult to discern if something should be classified as teasing, fighting or bullying. Young children are still learning socially appropriate behaviors and often act out of impulse and lack of understanding for others. However, it is important to differentiate between rude, mean, or bullying behaviors. In school, we respond to all three of those behaviors as none should be normalized and all should be addressed.

Rudeness can be defined as inadvertently saying or doing something that hurt someone else. For kids, this can be things like laughing at the wrong time, jumping ahead in line, bragging about a higher grade etc. Rudeness is usually unplanned and due to thoughtlessness. When an adult witnesses such rudeness, it is important to immediately address this behavior and to use it as an opportunity to demonstrate a positive alternative. Additionally, this is a good opportunity to highlight empathy. “How would you feel if.....”, “How do you think .... feels when you....”. Stressing how important kindness and respect are will instill those values in children.

Furthermore, if you spot acts of kindness or positive behaviors, praising those out loud will encourage children to demonstrate such behaviors more. At the GISW elementary school we reward those acts with positive feedback and by handing out FROGS.

Being mean can be defined as purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone in isolated incidents. Being mean is sometimes demonstrated as part of a conflict when both, or one, party aims to hurt or depreciate someone. This can be in the form of words spoken in anger or impulsive physical aggression. Naturally, children also need to be held accountable for being mean. They have to learn and understand what effect their words or actions have on others. Conflicts such as these are discussed with the students and mediated with a teacher or the counselor. Once the students have calmed down, it is important that they reflect on their actions and what effect their actions have on others. Young children often simply react to what they are upset about without thinking ahead or thinking of others. One action prompts a reaction and suddenly a minor misunderstanding or disagreement has escalated. Thus, they need guidance and practice to develop strategies that enable them to verbalize their anger and solve their problems without harming others.

Bullying is usually defined as intentionally aggressive behavior, one sided and repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power. Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful to others and they keep doing it, with little regret or remorse, even when targets of bullying show or express their hurt or tell the aggressors to stop. When we suspect bullying at school or it is reported to us, our first step is to investigate. We speak to the victim and alleged perpetrator separately and possibly address witnesses as well. Once we have established facts and spoken to the bully about their behavior, we inform both sets of parents of our findings. We may also reiterate the topic of bullying again in the class as a whole. If bullying is repeated despite these interventions, more consequences will be put into action, ranging from immediate consequences like talking to the counselor or principal, or recess being taken, to more serious consequences like getting sent home from school or being suspended. Our experience has been that all incidents are quite different and various dynamics and backgrounds come into play, especially at younger ages. Thus, we approach the issue from all angles and cooperate with parents, the class teacher, the counselor, other staff, and other students.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, or you are alerted to the fact that your child may be the one doing the bullying it is most helpful to communicate quickly and openly with your child's teacher. Our goal is to extinguish bullying by showing the bully consequences and teaching them alternative behaviors and language to express themselves, by empowering the victim to stand up for themselves and giving them tools to handle a bully, and by encouraging bystanders not to participate or tolerate bullying behaviors. At home, parents also play a role in preventing and responding to bullying. Parents can be aware of some of the signs that their child may be being bullied, which can include changes in eating habits, loss of friends, nightmares, unexplainable injuries,

or self-destructive behavior. Some signs that a child may be bullying others can include increasing aggressive behaviors, having friends who are bullying other children, getting into physical or verbal fights or blaming others for their problems. Parents should review with their children, what bullying is, and what it is not. Understanding bullying, is the first step in coming up with a plan to prevent or respond appropriately to bullying.

Here are some children's books that are related to this topic.

### **Bullying**

*Crysanthemum – Kevin Henkes*

*Being Bullied – Kate Petty and Charlotte Firmin*

*Lucy and the Bully – Claire Alexander*

*My Secret Bully – Trudy Ludwig*

*Sorry! – Trudy Ludwig*

*Just Kidding – Trudy Ludwig*

*Nobody Knew What To Do – Becky Ray McCain*

*Tease Monsters (A Book About Teasing vs. Bullying) – Julia Cook*

*Crickwing – Janell Cannon*

### **Dealing with Conflict:**

*Geschichten vom Nein-Sagen – Petra Bartoli y Eckert*

*Sometimes I like to Fight, But I Don't Do it Much Anymore – Lawrence Shapiro*

*Words Are not for Hurting – Elizabeth Verdick*

*Sorry! – Trudy Ludwig*

*Just Kidding – Trudy Ludwig*

*Tease Monsters (A Book About Teasing vs. Bullying) – Julia Cook*

*Rulers of the Playground – Joseph Kuefler*

*Crickwing – Janell Cannon*