

Common Myths about Bullying

WE DON'T HAVE BULLYING IN OUR SCHOOL

** Bullying is seen as only happening in “other” schools. Bullying occurs in all schools and to a greater degree than most people realize. It also occurs the same amount now that it has in the past, we just hear more about it because of school shootings. Acknowledging a bullying problem at your school is the first step to creating a bully free environment.

IF VICTIMS STAND UP TO BULLIES IT WILL STOP – FIGHT BACK

** This is the most dangerous myth because it gives the message that victims are to blame for the bullying. Part of the process of bullying is the isolation or discrediting of the victim. Their self-esteem is gradually lowered until they feel worthless – giving bullies power over them, such that the victim will not be able to stand up to the bully. Any effort to do so may encourage the bully and make the victim feel weaker.

BULLYING BUILDS CHARACTER

**Bullying is abusive and humiliating behavior – it is neither character forming nor good in any way. Research has shown that being bullied is associated with many negative short term and long term effects including reduction in academic performance and self-esteem, as well as depression and suicide ideation.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS/NO HARM DONE

** This says that it is normal and OK to bully, that it is natural for boys to act tough. Bullying is abuse and should not be fun, it is not harmless and should not be acceptable.

THEY WERE ASKING FOR IT – THEY GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED

** Bystanders often rationalize the fact that they do not intercede by blaming the victim. Bullying is not about justice; it's about victimization.

BULLIES ARE BIG KIDS PUSHING DOWN NERDY KIDS AND STEALING THEIR LUNCH MONEY

**Bullies and victims come in many shapes and sizes and can be boys or girls. Bullying can include a wide array of direct and indirect behaviors and focusing on just the cliché image of the big bully picking on the smaller kid will result in missing subtle behaviors like gossip spreading, exclusion, teasing, and taunting as well as cyberbullying. Bullying does include a power imbalance but it doesn't have to be physical power, it can be social power, emotional power, or power of numbers.