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What happens when a kid is a bully? Sadly, sometimes nothing. In the movies the bully always gets their comeuppance, but life is not a movie and often what we wish would happen to the bad guys actually happen in reverse. Often the aggressors are rewarded for their behavior. They get what they are seeking by becoming popular or promoted. This is usually evident in the world of athletics where an aggressive person is seen as an asset to the team. Bullies get away with their actions because weaker players will align themselves with the bully to protect themselves from being at risk themselves.

You may think that your kids are not the bullying kind, and maybe thatâ€™s true. But bullying takes on many shapes. Using gossip or spreading rumours to maintain their alliances or to increase their own popularity is still the act of bullying. Also being complacent to do nothing while being aware of something wrong is also a form of bullying.â€œMost teens donâ€™t bully and may not experience it [personally], but theyâ€™re often bystanders or witnesses,â€• says Dr. Sue Limber, PhD, MLS, professor o psychology and associate director of the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University. Other kids might look up to athletes as role models so when a kid in that role doesnâ€™t condone negative behavior, they may not, either. â€œAthletes are often popular and respected by their peers at school. Itâ€™s important that they not abuse their power and are positive role models for speaking out against bullying and helping prevent it,â€• says Dr. Limber.

What do we need to tell our children when they witness or are the intended target of a bully? We usually advise that they go to an adult and report the threat as soon as possible. However, sometimes this can be a recognition to the bully that they are getting through to the target, they are afraid and on the run. I would never tell a child â€œnotâ€• to report a perceived threat, but they need to be aware of the actual threat. Yes, sticks and stones may break bones, and words too can be dangerous, but sometimes acknowledging a bully gives them incentive. Sometimes, itâ€™s best to walk away. However, at some point all bullies should be reported. It is not OK for a child to feel threatened. Ever.

Many times kids understand the message they hear from teachers and counselors when they are told about how terrible bullying is, but they donâ€™t feel that they are doing any bullying. They donâ€™t se that rumors, gossip or making comments online are what they are hearing about. They donâ€™t feel that turning a blind eye is just another form of condoning the aggressive acts. We need to educate our kids that listening to, and spreading gossip is still an abusive act. My son comes home from school and tells me that someone called him â€œstupid.â€• I ask â€œAre you stupid?â€• to which of course he s Then I advise him that he shouldnâ€™t listen to someone elses opinion about him if they donâ€™t know hi The bully is the one with no credibility. Izzy Kalman, certified school psychologist, recommends harnessing your power instead of focusing on being a victim. The next time you hear a rumor about yourself, simply ask the gossip, â€œDo you believe it?â€• Even if the rumor is true, Kalman says it makes no difference. â€œItâ€™s just like with name-calling. The real reason they call you names has nothing to d with the truth. It only has to do with making you the loser.â€•

Kids need strength to overcome the assertiveness of a bully. Next time I will share some thoughts on how sports can help a child avoid being a target, or help if the child feels threatened.

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