

Making Choices: Bullying in schools

One of the single most talked about subjects and the biggest problem in the school system today is bullying. I never realized the full extent to which physical and verbal abuse goes on in schools until I started speaking to high school students about peer pressure and bullying.

I feel that the best way to approach the subject of bullying during each presentation I make is to interact with teens at a personal level. I prefer to give the students a chance to participate along with their peers and get involved with each other, rather than just giving them "the facts."

First I ask them to demonstrate for me what they feel is bullying by acting out a scenario on stage. As they laugh and joke about with their friends, I immediately take control and take the situation into a more serious matter by showing video clips of bullying in action. At this time, I glance around the room and watch the expressions change on almost every face. You can almost hear a pin drop as I tell them my own story of being physically and verbally abused while trying out for the football team in ninth grade.

At this time I wasn't physically fit and was smaller than the other boys. That led to months of physical and verbal abuse; taunts, heckles, shoving, pushing which made school life hell. I started to dread going to school and developed self-confidence issues that drove me away from making friends. I also started to hate life and had absolutely no passion for anything. I immediately quit the football team after realizing there was a problem and never got involved with any other school activities.

Many people don't realize how much bullying goes on in their own communities. It can happen to anyone. Victims are afraid to tell someone about the problem because they feel that it will only make matters worse. Some people see "Bullying" as being only an act of physical abuse. However there are many people who are victims of verbal abuse as well. Bruises heal, but the emotional damage inflicted by malicious words can create scars for life.

So the next time that you see someone becoming a victim to the act of bullying, tell a person in authority or try helping that individual.

We are all here as equals. Let's make Saskatoon a safer and more enjoyable place to live by treating each other with the dignity and respect we all deserve.