

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting Beyond Being a Bystander: Teach Your Child How to be an Upstander



BY KIM DeMARCHI

At some point or another, chances are pretty good that your child will be part of a bullying incident. Traditionally, there are three roles in a bullying incident:

1. The bully or aggressor - and parents hope their child is NOT in that role.
2. The victim or target - and parents REALLY hope their child is not in that role.
3. The bystander or witness - and parents hope that IF their child has to be in one of the three roles, it's this one.

When a bullying incident takes place, you need to help your child identify the role he/she played in that incident and how his/her behavior affects the outcome of the incident.

Ask your child:

What happened?

What role did you play in what happened?

What did you learn from that experience?

What would you do differently next time so the outcome wouldn't be harmful to others?

And if your child is the one who caused the hurtful behavior, ask what he/she can now do to make up for that hurt.

In the past, the focus, to me, has seemed to be on the bully and the victim. I've always been interested in the bystander.... someone who witnesses bullying but doesn't get involved. Bystanders actually contribute to the problem. The silence from standing by and doing nothing is most often misinterpreted by the bully as support for the bullying and interpreted by the victim as betrayal and support for the bully. Good news - there is something beyond being the bystander. Parents can teach their child to be an upstander instead!

An upstander is a person who exhibits courage and speaks up on someone's behalf. They move from silence to action. Upstanders help stop the problem. Research shows that others speaking out or taking action stops bullying behavior over half the time within seconds! Moving from being a bystander to becoming an upstander may not happen overnight. It may start with becoming more aware of the bullying behavior and how it is affecting the lives of the victims through conversations with you.

Becoming an Upstander looks like this:

1. Take action by telling the bully to stop
2. Take action by getting others to stand up with them to the bully
3. Take action by supporting the victim, in public and in private
4. Take action by shifting the focus and redirecting the bully away from the victim
5. Take action by telling an adult who

can help (Parents: assure your child that they are not ratting the bully out by telling an adult. There's a big difference between



tattling and reporting a concern. Tattling is telling to get someone in trouble, reporting is telling to get someone out of trouble.

Becoming an Upstander

1. **Takes courage** - Telling a friend who is bullying to stop is hard. They may be mad at you. But at least you won't feel guilt for being silent and allowing the bullying to continue. And you will be doing your friend a huge favor in the end by helping them stop really hurtful behavior.
2. **Takes action** - Doing something that

does not support the bullying can be a really small intervention with big results! Three words - "That is bullying" - can cause others to recognize the problem.

3. **Takes assertiveness** - Telling a friend how their behavior makes you feel and how it affects others requires being able to use your voice!
4. **Takes compassion** - Upstanders have the gift of compassion. They recognize when someone is hurt and take steps to help.
5. **Takes leadership** - Upstanders are leaders in their social group, helping others to recognize ways to get along and be supportive to others.

Eventually, by learning to STAND UP for what's right, they are not only being kind and helpful, but becoming a person of strong character. And that IS a role we all want our children to play a part in!

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