

Bullying and Its Impact on the Mental Health of Our Youth: An Urgent Call for Awareness and Action

Critical information all parents, teachers, and community members should know about bullying.

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-- Bullying is a matter of life and death for many. It's an issue that gets headlines, but few take action about the issue to create change for the better. One man, Kirk Smalley, has made it his mission to take on bullying and make people realize the critical issue that it is. He was called to this after his 11-year-old son committed suicide after he was suspended from school for retaliating against a bully. The mental health impact from bullying is so dire on the nation's youth that it is important everyone be aware and try and address it.



Photo courtesy of Stand For The Silent

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I don't want other parents to go through what I have gone through with losing my son to bullying. Bullying is a serious issue that causes major mental health issues in our youth.”

Kirk Smalley, co-founder of Stand for the Silent

“I don't want other parents to go through what I have gone through with losing my son to bullying,” says Kirk Smalley, co-founder of Stand for the Silent. “Bullying is a serious issue that causes major mental health issues in our youth, who then grow up to become adults who may suffer from mental health issues. We need to get this under control now.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a national survey found that 28% of middle schools, 15% of high schools, and 10% of elementary

schools report the occurrence of bullying at least once per week. Millions of youth are being bullied each week across schools around the country. Add to that all the cyberbullying that takes

place online outside of school hours, and it's easy to see what a sizeable issue this has become.

Bullying takes a toll on the mental health of those involved, including the person being bullied and the ones doing the bullying. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. They report that there has been a significant increase in certain mental health issues in young people, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

Here are crucial things people need to know about how bullying impacts mental health in our youth:

Those who are bullied. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), those who are bullied are at an increased risk for depression, anxiety, fear, and withdrawal from social contact. They are also at an increased risk for anger, aggression, and conduct problems and may engage in more risky behavior.

Those who do the bullying. The NIH also reports that there are mental health consequences for the person who does the bullying. Those who bully are also at greater risk for depression. Specific issues can make it more likely that someone will become a bully. According to research published in the International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education, a number of family characteristics are associated with bullying, including authoritarian parenting styles. This type of parenting style, according to the research, is closely related to bullying. Parents seek to control the child without allowing for discussion. It's a parenting style associated with high levels of behavioral control with strict punishment if the rules are not followed.

"We are all impacted by bullying in one way or another, especially when it impacts our youth's mental health the way it does," added Smalley. "We all need to come together to address this issue and make it a better community and culture for our children to grow up in. We are happy to help make that happen!"

Research published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry shows that children who have greater support for autonomy at ages 4 and 5 are related to reducing bullying. To give younger children more autonomy, parents can give them more control over their lives, including



doing age-appropriate tasks. At ages 4-5, children can help make breakfast, choose their clothes, be offered choices, have their feelings validated, help make decisions, etc.

Stand for the Silent travels the country, giving presentations about bullying to schools, providing bullying prevention, giving out scholarships, offering intervention strategies, and more. Those interested in getting involved can start a chapter of the group in their area, obtain a free [K-2 bullying prevention curriculum](#) or [cyberbullying handbook for parents](#), host a presentation at their school, introduce the How All Started video, and donate to help support the cause. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>

About Stand for the Silent

Started in 2010, Stand for the Silent is an organization on a mission to help eliminate bullying nationwide. Kirk and Laura Smalley founded the group after their child took his own life due to bullying. They offer free resources for parents and educators and travel to schools to host presentations. They have been to over 6,025 schools and spoken with more than 4.15 million students. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>

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