

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

Parents critical to breaking the cycle of bullying and violence

Parents are being urged to be positive role models within their family unit ahead of the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.

Kids Helpline (KHL) Manager Tony FitzGerald said evidence suggests that bullying is a learned behaviour and it is critical that parents role model positive behaviours to break the cycle of bullying.

“The National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence (**Friday March 18**) is an opportunity to share anti-bullying strategies and ‘take a stand together’, beginning with how we behave around our children,” Mr Fitzgerald said.

“Parents should be aware of how their behaviour is being observed by their children, not just at home but when watching their kids on the sporting field or driving them to school.

“Too often we see examples of intimidation between adults, road rage or sadly, physical violence that kids pick up on and mimic in the school yard.”

Mr FitzGerald said KHL receives more than 4,000 counselling contacts each year from children and young people concerned about bullying. There are also close to 29,000 visits to the KHL website’s bullying self-help ‘tip sheets’ for children and young people each year.

“Close to one in five counselling contacts we receive from children aged 5-12 years each year is concerned about bullying,” Mr FitzGerald said.

“We ask that parents not only lead by example by demonstrating respect, but educate themselves about how and where bullying is conducted, including online, and look out for the signs that something might be worrying their child.

“Key to assisting children to grow is to teach them resilience by encouraging them to stand up for themselves when they’re being bullied and most of all, letting them know it’s ok to ask for help when they need it.”

Mr FitzGerald said sharing information between organisations working with children and young people strengthened the resolve to stamp out bullying.

A 2015 Queensland Department of Education and Training report on student bullying in Australia, supports Kids Helpline’s statistics about the importance of parents in providing help with bullying.¹

“The study showed that parents were the most likely adult children in Years 5 and 6 would go to for comfort when they were being bullied,” he said.

“It also showed that 74% of children surveyed said they did not report every instance of bullying they experienced.

“We need to ensure that children do feel they can contact an adult for help, if not their parent then another trusted adult or service like Kids Helpline.”

The KHL website receives more than 42,000 referrals from other websites each year. The Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s website was the top referring website to KHL with over 8,300 cyber-safety referrals

to the KHL website in 2015. Close to 3,000 referrals to the KHL website came from other cyber-safety and anti-bullying websites.

Kids Helpline, Australia's only 24/7 national children's counselling and support service, today also released its top tips to combat bullying ahead of the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.

The organisation wants to send a clear message to the community that bullying and violence is never okay.

KIDS HELPLINE TOP ANTI-BULLYING TIPS

- **As parents, think about your behaviour** and how it impacts on your children.
- **Remind children** - it is **NEVER** your fault.
- **Sometimes it's best to walk away** - if you choose to walk away, speak to someone in authority - a teacher if at school and tell them what happened.
- **Talk to someone** - it is important to tell an adult you trust, e.g. a teacher, parent or counsellor.
- **Keep a record** - It can also be helpful to keep a diary of bullying incidents including who was involved, the time it occurred, what happened and who you told about it. Keep copies of abusive messages that are sent to you because they can be used later as evidence.
- **Take action** - You can block the bullies from sending you messages or emails or stay off line for a while.
- **Talk to the Experts** - including trained counsellors at Kids Helpline or via **esafety.gov.au**

Kids Helpline is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling and support service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. www.kidshelpline.com.au or free call 1800 55 1800. Kids Helpline is a service of yourtown.

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on 1300 30 1300 or parentline.com.au

¹Department of Education and Training (2015). 'A review of literature (2010-2014) on student bullying by Australia's Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group'.

ENDS

INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Tracy Adams, yourtown CEO
- Tony Fitzgerald, Kids Helpline Manager
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre and interviews with counsellors

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