



02 *How to prevent and face bullying ?*

Dear Editor/Madam,

Hello! My son is a secondary junior one student this year. He has been unhappy since the school year started in September last year. When I asked him why, he replied that some students excluded him and bullied him whenever they could. They said that he was "chocolate" and told other students not to play with him. Sometimes when my son did not listen to them, they threatened to beat him. Although they did not really do it, it frightened my son. Recently my son always excused that he was sick and did not want to go to school. I do not know how to handle it. I hope that you may offer me some recommendations. Thank you!

Maria

Dear Parent Mary,
Hello!

We thank you for your letter. You are actively seeking help to address the situation that your son was being excluded, hoping to solve problem which he encountered. This is the right attitude.

According to Hong Kong and Macao's survey on youth bullying in recent years, 60% of local (59.7% of Hong Kong and 61.8% of Macao) adolescents being visited revealed that they had been bullied in the past three months (data from web page of Union of Neighbors Association of Macao). This showed that bullying should not be ignored. If we disregard bullying in campus, it may have long term adverse effect for the bullied.

Macao is a multicultural society. It advocates harmony and integration. If we can manage the situation appropriately, your son's problem can be solved easily. The writer has engaged in educational work for many years, with experiences in solving bullying problems and cooperating with schools. Now some directions are provided for handling problems for your references:

1. In regards to the problem that your son did not want to go to school and always claimed that he was sick, I understand your concern. You need to talk with him and to understand his situation. Perhaps you have asked him, but there are some techniques which you need to pay attention to, for example to let him know that you care about him and are not blaming him. You must be patient when he is expressing himself.
2. Before you talk with him, you must stabilize your emotions and stay calm. Do not make unnecessary assumption that you are being discriminated, which could affect your emotion.
3. Do not hurry to notify school. Your son is a secondary junior one student. You can discuss with him. If he does not want to tell the school, you have to listen to his reason, to analyse and discuss with him to resolve his worry.
4. The best way is to solve the problem with the cooperation of school. School may like to communicate with you on your son's situation. If you do not know how to speak Cantonese, do not worry and do not give up contacting with class teacher, because school must have arrangements.

5. I recommend you to hold the attitude of mutual cooperation when talking with school, to address the bad behavior of bully and do not force school to impose severe punishments on the bully.
6. In order to manage the dispute between students ideally, it is recommended to recover mediation through intermediary. We can correct students who make nickname, calling other student "chocolate", through the intervention of teacher or counselor.
7. For secondary junior one student who comes from primary schools other than the affiliated one, they need more time to know each other. You may propose to school teachers to strengthen anti-discrimination education, thus reducing exclusion and bullying.
8. In the process of dealing with this incident, do not forget your son's role. He should think through it and learn. This is a lesson of his life. He has to go through self-study in order to conclude experiences. We have to tell our children not to escape but face the problem positively; tell him that we together face the challenge with him and do not give them too much instructions; we need to discuss with our children more in order to strengthen their confidence, encourage them to believe that they have ability to walk away from bullying situation and finally resolve interpersonal dispute.
9. It is worthy of your attention that the bullied usually has some interpersonal problems that need to be addressed, for example, poor interpersonal relationships or lack of self-affirmation, and which need improvement in long term. Parents need to assist children to build up positive self-concept, allowing them to believe that they are people of value.
10. We suggest you to strengthen parent-child relationship with children, accompanying them to grow up, allowing them to learn a sense of trust in a secure environment, so that you have a more intimate relationship with them.
11. In addition to your personal efforts, we suggest you try your best to play a positive role in your family, allowing children to get support from other family members.

School bullying needs power of common concern from family, school and society. We should take a zero tolerance attitude. If we can prevent and rectify the situation, our children can grow up healthily.

Wishing you
Good health and happiness!

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