

When the Advice is Ineffective

from expert Rosalind Wiseman – Creating Cultures of Dignity

The following information is regularly given out at schools all over the country and specifically when people are in great distress. In such a situation, advice has to be good. As educators on this issue, we owe it to the families we work with to give them our best. We have to look at our standard protocols and advice and ask ourselves a very simple question: Do we give people effective information?

Among the advice I thought was most counterproductive?

“Ignore the bully.” By the time a child reaches out to an adult, the vast majority of kids have been dealing with the bullying and trying to ignore it for a long time. The only thing that happens when you tell a kid to ignore the bully, is that they no longer think you care or are capable of helping them.

“Explain to your child that bullies are weak and insecure.” Who cares? Even if that were true, the bullies themselves don’t believe it, and that fact doesn’t help the target respond effectively to the problem.

“To avoid being bullied develop friendships and remember there is safety in numbers.” This is an example of a tip that is simply not reflective of the reality of people’s lives. Sometimes bullies are your friends and very rarely do bullying prevention tips acknowledge this fact or what to do about it. Equally unhelpful and inadequate is “safety in numbers” because you can’t depend on that being the case. In truth there’s sometimes danger in numbers because people are often encouraged by the group to fight or at the least not back down from a situation.

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