

LOOKING FOR A SUMMER CAMP ?



Six Strategies to Stop Bullying

How Many Kids Have to Die?

by Lucy Rimalower, LMFT



The crisis of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth suicides resulting from bullying has broken our hearts and stirred us to action. Regardless of one's views about sexual orientation and gender identity, we all agree that lethal bullying must be stopped and that its victims must be afforded the dignity, support and compassion that we all deserve.

Although it may be hard to imagine that your child could be subjected to bullying, or be the perpetrator of cruelty, beginning a dialogue about respect for diversity is critical for early intervention. Here are some ideas to start a dialogue with your children to reduce bullying:

1. Tell your children that bullying is not ok. Diversity can be confusing and even overwhelming but it cannot be an excuse for abuse. Tell your children to talk to you if they have questions about differences among their schoolmates.
2. Implement a "no teasing" policy in your home. Does anyone like teasing? No.
3. Establish zero tolerance for homophobic language such as "that's so gay." Help your children understand the painful consequences of this kind of language.
4. Consider sharing an experience from your childhood in which you felt picked on. Invite your child to do the same.
5. If your child tells you or you learn that your child is LGBT or questioning, support your child even though you may feel uncomfortable. Bring your child to an LGBT organization for support or mentorship and get support for yourself.
6. Acknowledge mixed messages in our culture such as "Don't Ask Don't Tell" and Marriage Equality. Regardless of the political debate, everyone deserves to be treated with respect and kindness.

MORE! Kids can help prevent bullying by: Telling an adult that they trust, so they can step in and stop the bullying. Being friendly to the person who was bullied and letting them know it's not their fault. Getting involved with their school's Bullying Prevention program and encouraging everyone to speak up. -from Cartoon Network's "Stop Bullying: Speak Up" program.

Sidebar: Get Help/Learn More The Trevor Project: Crisis and suicide intervention for LGBTQ youth. thetrevorproject.org, 866-4-U-TREVOR Think Before You Speak Campaign: Raises awareness of homophobic bullying and its consequences in America's schools. thinkb4youspeak.com Stop Bullying: Speak Up: Tells kids and parents how to end bullying. cartoonnetwork.com/promos/stopbullying Stomp Out Bullying: Works to reduce and prevent bullying and cyberbullying, educating against homophobia and hatred. stompoutbullying.org Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center: Youth Services provide support, mentorship and shelter. laglc.convio.net National Center for Bullying Prevention: creative resources and education to reduce bullying pacer.org/bullying/ It Gets Better Project: Thousands of people share their personal stories to tell kids who have been bullied that it does, indeed, get better. Itgetsbetterproject.com.

Go to familymagazinegroup.com for more resources.

Bio Lucy Rimalower is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Los Angeles. She works extensively with adolescents and teens dealing with body image and eating disorders. She also works with families with same-sex parents. She has served as a speaker throughout the Los Angeles area and conducts groups on critical adolescent issues. www.lucyrimalower.com