

Schoolyard bully can often be detrimental to both victim, self

Dr. Glenn DiPasquale, a local school board psychologist, had some stern warnings about school violence last week.

His message was that violence, which often begins as young as age 7, can have long-term effects on both abuser and victim.

"The little guy who's bullying your friends is the same guy who'll scare you to death in the subway some night years later." "Being a bully," he says, "is not a good start in life."

In later life, bullies have a higher rate of job loss, violent family behaviour and substance abuse. Research shows that kids who started out as bullies eventually have a 60 per cent criminal conviction rate; 40 per cent of them have more than three convictions.

And what of the victims? Being a victim is a painful problem that sometimes con-

tinues for years.

Not surprisingly, victims don't fare well in adult life either. They often experience problems with self-concept, which in turn affects the way they relate to their own sons.

The problem is often related to boys, but, according to American research, the problem is growing among girls. Girls are more likely to use isolation and harassment than they are to use physical violence. But this, too, is changing.

Is this a growing problem? DiPasquale is quick to point out that violence is believed to involve about 15 per cent of the school population.

And it's hard to tell if it's any worse than it used to be; there isn't much good research data from years ago. In a study done by York Region of three randomly selected schools, they found that 18 per cent of the children were involved in

some sort of violence - either as abuser or victim. They have developed a "safe schools policy", which means that aggression will not be tolerated.

However, the abuser's success depends on the secrecy of the acts.

Teachers are taught to encourage children to report to them any acts of violence or bullying that they see, and as a group the children are encouraged to use peer pressure against abusers. Bullies respond to being unmasked and told that their behaviour will be watched. They need consequences - not just negative ones, but also positive feedback on improvements in behaviour. Victims often collaborate with their abusers to cover up the abuse, fearing the consequences if they don't. That's why it's so important for parents and teachers to be aware of the signs that a child may be victimized.

"Parents," says DiPasquale, "should be a little suspicious about anything unusual - bruises and scrapes, torn clothing, missing possessions." Often when a parent figures out the situation, the child will beg him to interfere, fearing retribution. The parent, counsels DiPasquale, has to take a firm stand, saying, "you'll have to trust me on this." It's often up to the parent to make the first contact with the school.

DiPasquale spends a lot of his time talking to teachers and parent groups because he believes fervently that his problem can, and must, be turned around. He has newspaper clippings, he says, "two feet high" about stories that ended tragically. Quoting Pearl S. Buck, he emphasizes that "...the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members."

~ Carol Gardner

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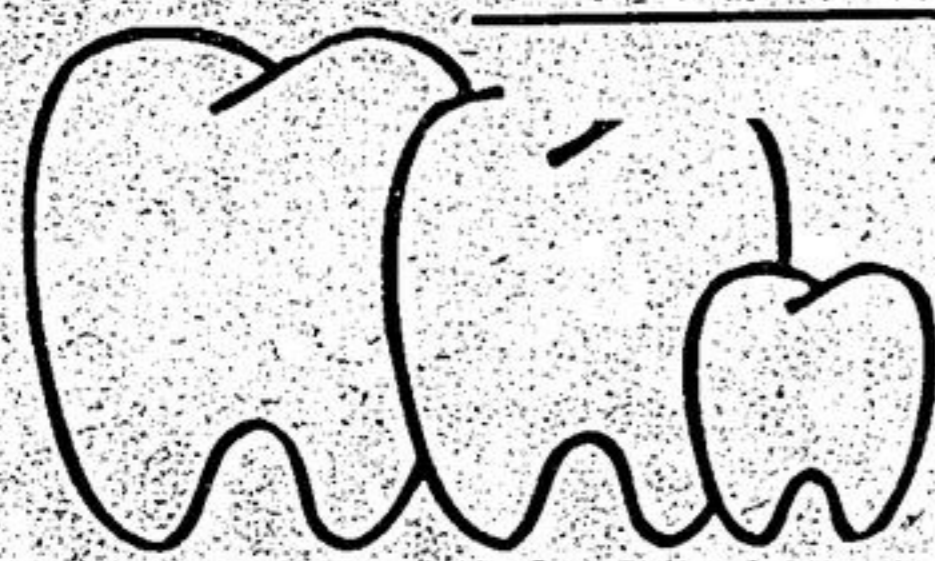
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CORRECTION NOTICE

The Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Department Fall/Winter Activity Guide incorrectly advertised Ice Rental Rates of \$130.00/prime time and \$70.00/non prime time. Ice Rental Rates for the upcoming 1997/1998 September to April ice season are \$125.00/hr. prime time for Minor Organizations, \$130.00/hr. prime time for Adult Organizations, and \$70.00/hr. all users for non prime time. The 1998 Spring and Summer Ice Rental Rates will be announced in early 1998. The Parks, Facilities and Recreation Department regrets any inconvenience caused by this error.