

RESPONDING: It's important to not let bullying go unnoticed

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The Nugget previously.

Sisters Country residents of all ages can help reduce bullying and harassment. Here's how:

If you see bullying or racist behavior

Experts recommend that kids band together as a group. Say forcefully to the bully, "Stop doing that," or "That's not okay."

If there is a racism incident, follow up afterward. Natalie urges kids to help the person through it: "Be a good friend, try to comfort them, make them feel better." Receiving support from friends "feels really good," she said. "It makes you feel like you're not worthless and you can get through anything."

If you're bullied or called names

Know that it's not your fault if you get bullied. Reach out to a trusted adult. Natalie says, "Tell your parents." A relative, teacher, or counselor might be your trusted adult. See "Reach out" below for advice if you're feeling down.

If your child is bullied

Natalie says parents should act immediately. Achea Redd of youth organization On Our Sleeves recommends, "Talk to the teachers, other parents, and administration. Be very vocal."

"The more involved you are, the better. Do not let yourself feel like you're a burden to the school if you sense something is awry," explains Redd. "You need to

be in touch with the school and work together to make sure your child is safe."

Outside of school, talk to summer camp counselors, parents, coaches, and other involved adults.

Hang in there

Reporting an incident won't necessarily stop the problem right away. A person who bullies may have a difficult home life or mental health issues. Intervention can be complicated. Zero tolerance and expulsion are not effective approaches, according to experts.

Escalate

Natalie was harassed for 2.5 months after her family first reported it to the school. Eventually her family contacted the State of Oregon Board of Education, which stepped in.

The federal government recommends starting with the child's teacher when reporting school bullying. If you suspect the school is not adequately addressing harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion, escalate the issue to the school superintendent. Then move on up the chain: Oregon Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice.

If your child bullies others

If a child shows bullying behaviors at home, school, or elsewhere, put a stop to it — but don't spank or use physical violence as a punishment. That can backfire. Guidance is available at StopBullying.gov.

Push for accountability

"Hold the people who are bullying accountable for what they're doing," Natalie

recommends. "Deal with it."

When adults respond quickly and consistently, they send the message that bullying is not acceptable, according to StopBullying. Four essential strategies for reducing bullying in a community are: 1. Talk with children about bullying; 2. Encourage kids to do activities they love; 3. Model kindness and respect; and 4. Show kids how to seek help.

Work to create community-wide bullying prevention strategies. Redd notes that kids need adults to advocate for them, not just against student bullies but against "political systems and school boards who refuse to protect the children they have vowed to serve."

Model positive behavior

When kids see powerful adults abusing positions of power, covering up for bullies, or making light of hate-filled talk, they get the impression that bullying is OK. Create a culture of respect in the community at large to counteract this influence.

Down with violence

Kids can be exposed to violence at home, in video games and movies, and in the media. Reducing exposure can lower the amount of violence kids commit, according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Adults are advised to monitor youth screen time, including gaming and movies (free ratings are available at www.common sense media.org). Child abuse prevention programs also reduce youth violence.

Reach out if you're feeling troubled

No matter your age: if you



PHOTO BY TL BROWN

Natalie Soleim (left) and her mother, Cheryl, learned a lot after a series of bullying incidents at school.

feel sad or angry for a long period of time, or if you're concerned you might hurt yourself or someone else, reach out. Call 1-800-273-8255 English, 1-888-628-9454 Español, or 1-800-799-4889 for the deaf.

The comprehensive website at StopBullying.gov contains a wealth of resources on bullying. For advice on talking with your children about moods and mental health, visit OnOurSleeves.org. Local

resources include the Family Resource Center of Central Oregon (www.frconline.org) and Deschutes County Behavioral Health at 541-322-7500; press 9.

Teens help each other on YouthLine, 4 to 10 p.m. via phone or text; during other hours, adults are on-hand. Call 877-968-8491 or text Teen2teen to 839863. For LGBTQ+ youth, the Trevor Project offers a confidential helpline at 866-488-7386.



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