

# Family Counseling Service: Increased Bullying During COVID-19

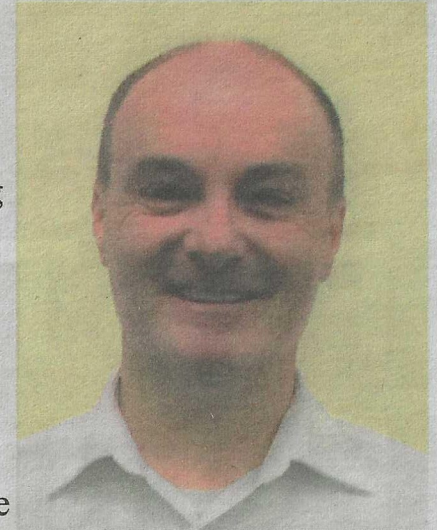
BY LARRY DEAVERS

October is National Anti-Bullying Month. There is some research that shows that bullying has become increasingly more common during the pandemic, as students are more vulnerable to, especially, cyber-bullying. The social isolation has had an effect on the ability of many children to connect with supportive peers and to find positive reinforcement from their social interactions. These interactions are an important part of building the confidence they need to deal with stress, including bullying.

Children of all ages often simply don't know how to handle the offensive words their peers are capable of saying or posting online. One of the best ways parents can address this is to maintain an inviting atmosphere between you and your children. This comes about when parents invest themselves daily into their relationship with their child, communicating care and concern in ways that are meaningful to them, not just what may be easiest for the parent. This may include spending time with them in their activities, doing things that are enjoyable to them, or keeping discussions or questions on topics they want to talk about.

Building trust with your child takes consistent attention, focus and one-on-one time. When this is a normal part of the way your child relates to you, they know they will be accepted and supported when there is something painful going on where they need your help. If they fear being blamed, criticized, or having their concerns dismissed, you may never know that your child is dealing with something that feels overwhelming to them.

Even when there is no apparent issue, when these times are built into your normal weekly schedule, you may be surprised at what conversations will spring from these moments that reveal something that your teen needs guidance or support on. This regular time together also makes it much easier to check with your child about how they are doing, what stresses they are dealing with and what their concerns are on a regular basis. Openness between you and your child may be the best weapon you can both have against bullying.



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