

The Roles Kids Play

What message are kids sending by the people or characters they choose to become for Halloween festivities. With October already upon us, Halloween is quickly approaching. Have you already picked out a Halloween costume for you or helped your kids to select one yet? Some kids like fairies, princesses, or knights while others gravitate toward the scary options like witches or ghosts or zombies. The Family Support Center of Barry County is encouraging you to be purposeful about costume selection and think about what message we are giving our children during this special time. Kids spend time acting out that perceived character they are embracing as they dress up in that costume. How about choosing to be an inspiration or a hero?

October is also Bullying Prevention and Awareness month. Did you know that according to the National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics that 30% of youth admit to bullying; 1 in 3 students were bullied at school and 70% of youth have witnessed bullying as a bystander. According to stopbullying.gov "Bullying is an unwanted, aggressive behavior among children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time." There are three types of bullying: verbal bullying, social bullying, and physical bullying. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things such as teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting or threatening harm. Social bullying is sometimes referred to as relational bullying which involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friend with someone, spreading rumors, or embarrassing someone in public. Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping pushing, taking someone's things, or making mean or rude hand gestures. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. What happens to kids during childhood shape who they become.

Maybe you can relate, maybe you have been bullied or your child has been bullied. Maybe you can remember a time during your youth where you were mean to or bullied another kid. Or maybe you were a witness or bystander to a situation. What did you do? Did you intervene or share with an adult what happened? Maybe you wanted to help but didn't know how. The case is the same for your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, neighbors. Did you know that when bystanders stand up to bullying that the bullying stops with 10 seconds 57% of the time?

Often bystanders don't know what to do. They are afraid of retaliation or fear that their own group will exclude them for helping an outsider. When you are a bystander it is important to know that by doing nothing you are sending a message to the person doing the bullying behavior that their behavior is acceptable. It isn't. Whether you know the victim or not, there are things

that a bystander can safely do to support the person being bullied. Be a upstander instead of a bystander and stand up to bullying.

- Don't encourage the person who has the bullying behaviors in any way
- Don't laugh
- Don't participate
- Stay at a safe distance and help the person who is being bullied get away
- Don't become an audience
- Support the person being bullied in private
- Tell an adult
- Include and invite the person being bullied in some activities
- And there is strength in numbers

Being a upstander takes courage, it takes action, it takes assertiveness, it takes compassion, and it takes leadership. This is a role worth emulating. Stand up for one another and be a hero. For further help and assistance about bullying contact the Family Support Center of Barry County at 269-945-5439 or www.familysupportbarry.com.