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Opinion

Adults can be bullies too

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By **Richard Paul**, Guest Columnist

Many years ago, after finishing my self-esteem/self-image assembly program at a middle school, I was pushing my equipment cart down the hall toward the door where my car was parked. On the opposite side was a hall monitor screaming to a young man. He was shouting, "You're nothing! A loser! Do you hear me? You're a loser!" I left my equipment by the door and walked over toward them; but when the hall monitor saw that I had witnessed what he said, he quickly motioned to the student to come with him to his office. As they were walking away I commented, "Didn't you listen to anything I shared today?" But the hall monitor just slammed the door in my face. When I reported it to the principal his answer was, "See what I have to deal with every day!"

At many of the conferences I have spoken to, teachers and counselors have shared similar stories of teachers, parents and administrative staff crossing the line when it comes to disciplining a student.

To paraphrase for every minute you are angry toward a child you chip away their self-worth. There is a right way and a wrong way of disciplining a student. Screaming at and/or degrading a child is not only wrong but it may also leave a negative impression that can spread like germs.

Sir Isaac Newton's third law of physics is every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

If we want to reduce bullying and violence in schools adults must be the example of good behavior.

As one of the parents at my Stop the Bullying session at the Michigan PTA Convention shared, "Parents need to be a little more patient and monitor what they're saying to their children. They need to remember they are the person their child looks up to, and the only opinion they value the most."

If we are telling our child they are stupid or worthless the equal and opposite reaction will be lower self-image and lack of confidence creating either a violent or depressed disposition.

The right way to discipline:

- * Make sure the child understands the consequences for their actions
- * Focus on what they did and why it was wrong
- * Make sure the discipline fits the behavior
- * Never let them off with just a warning, follow through
- * Remind them that you love them unconditionally

Richard Paul is a bully prevention speaker for schools, camp counselor associations, parent/teacher conferences and in-service training. He can be contacted at (800) 579-8051, richard@richardpaul.com or richardpaul.com.

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