

PEACEFUL PARENTS

a free e-newsletter from Naomi Drew, author of the award-winning book,
The Kids' Guide to Working Out Conflicts: How to Keep Cool, Stay Safe, and Get Along

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone for whom it can make a difference. You can e-mail Naomi directly at win47win@aol.com

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Dear Friends,

I hope the end of summer and the start of school brings you and your children a sense of excitement and new beginnings.

Now more than ever technology has become a major factor in our children's lives. Computers, cell phones, iPods, and more are constants in our children's lives. With the advent of so much technology, and our kids' comfort with all things technical, come some distinct challenges. One of the most pressing is cyberbullying. Hopefully this disturbing trend hasn't impacted your children's lives. Nevertheless, it's important to be aware of how young people are using technology to bully their peers and what your child can do if he or she is the subject of cyberbullying.

As always, I hope this issue of Peaceful Parents is helpful to you. I'll be re-starting our Parent Sharing section in the next issue. Please send me your good ideas, questions, and comments at win47win@aol.com. I love hearing from you!

In peace, Naomi

What You Need to Know About Cyberbullying

It started off with taunts and jeers. Every time Steven walked by a particular group of his 7th grade peers, he'd hear snickers, whispers, and digs. Then, like a cancer, the bullying spread. Steven felt the full strength of its metastasis the day a fellow student approached him with a picture of himself in boxer shorts and tube socks downloaded from a website -- a website, he discovered later, created with the sole intent of ridiculing him. A fellow student had secretly used his cell phone to photograph Steven getting changed in gym class. The picture was posted on the homepage of the site along with jokes and stories at his expense.

**“I still can’t figure out why they hated me so much,” said Steven.
“Maybe it’s ‘cause I’m in special ed.”**

Tracy’s case wasn’t as extreme but was equally hurtful. A friend in her 6th grade class became annoyed about something Tracy had said. After school the girl sent a group e-mail badmouthing Tracy to five friends. The girls, in turn, circulated the e-mail to other friends, one of whom downloaded it and circulated it in class the next day. Almost instantly what started as a simple conflict between two friends became a hot topic of gossip, with Tracy on the outs, and everyone else in.

These two incidents are part of a growing epidemic of cyberbullying that’s taken hold in schools across the US. Through chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mails, websites, blogs, and text messages, tech savvy kids are going after their victims with a vengeance. What’s so sad about this trend is the “Lord of the Flies” mentality at its core. The mindset goes something like this: If I don’t join in the “dissing,” I may be the next one out.

Cyberbullying has become a self-proliferating plague among kids as young as 8 years old. Dr. Parry Aftab who runs WiredSafty.org, shared the following data on her website:

- Most cyberbullying occurs within 9-14 years of age.**
- 75% of kids polled had visited a website bashing.**
- 65% of students surveyed between 8-14 have been involved directly or indirectly in a cyberbullying incident as the cyber bully, victim or friend.**
- 40% had their password stolen and changed by a bully (locking them out of their own account) or sent communications posing as them.**

A 2005 research study on cyberbullying conducted by criminal justice specialists, Dr. Justin W. Patchin of University of Wisconsin and Dr. Sameer Hinduja of Florida Atlantic University, looked at 1,500 internet-using adolescents. Here’s what they found:

- 33% of the youth studied had been victimized through cyberbullying**
- 41% of the kids who were cyberbullied did not tell anyone**
- 56% of cyberbullying occurs in chatrooms**

- **49% of cyberbullying takes place via instant messages**
- **28% of cyberbullying occurs through e-mail**

The Patchin/Hinduja study revealed the following justifications cyberbullies gave for bullying:

- **50% said it was done in fun**
- **22% said it was to teach the victim a lesson**
- **13% said it was to make the victim stronger**

Sadly, role models kids see on TV and in video games often have a might makes right mentality and a disdain for weakness. The aggressive guy who kicks sand in the weaker person's face seems to have all the social capital. Popular video games like Grand Theft Auto glorify aggression and violence, and kids learn primarily through imitation

What can we do to protect our kids against cyberbullying? Here are some Cyberbullying Tips offered by I-SAFE, a non-profit foundation dedicated educating kids on internet safety (isafe.org):

- * **Tell a trusted adult about the bullying, and keep telling until the adult takes action.**
- * **Don't open or read messages by cyberbullies.**
- * **Tell your school if it is school related. Schools have a bullying solution in place.**
- * **Don't erase the messages. They may be needed to take action.**
- * **Protect yourself. Never agree to meet with the person or with anyone you meet online.**
- * **If bullied through chat or instant messaging, the "bully" can often be blocked.**
- * **If you are threatened with harm, inform the local police.**

Spread the word. Help educate parents, teachers, and kids in your community. Change starts with awareness.

NEW SEMINAR OFFERING FOR EDUCATORS

(My other love in life, writing, prompted me to offer this workshop. Booking now for fall. E-mail me at win47win@aol.com to get on the list.)

Differentiating Writing Instruction for Elementary Educators

This idea-packed workshop provides an amazing range of innovative activities for differentiating writing instruction. Teachers will gain enough materials and ideas to easily set up a writing center that engages students and provides a plethora of independent activities that can be used throughout the year. Participants are guaranteed to have fun, be inspired, and experience a creative spark -- even if they've never been comfortable teaching writing before.

BRING THE SKILLS OF PEACEMAKING TO YOUR SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY

If you would like to schedule a workshop or keynote for your school, parent group, workplace, or place of worship, you can reach me at win47win@aol.com. The following topics are currently available:

- Peaceful Parents, Peaceful Kids
- Building Resilience in Children
- Creating Bully-Free Schools
- Helping Middle Schoolers Handle Conflict
- Building Good Character in Children
- Resolving Conflicts and Managing Anger
- Fostering Good Listening in Children
- Helping Kids Deal with Bullying
- Strategies for De-Stressing and Calming - Fostering Diversity
- Raising Compassionate Kids
- Creating Peaceful Schools
- Peaceful Parent Series (6 weeks)
- Classroom Management for New Teachers

CORPORATE SEMINARS:

Mastering the Art of Dealing with Conflict - Are conflicts cutting into valuable work-time and negatively affecting productivity? This seminar teaches powerful yet practical strategies for preventing and resolving conflicts at all levels, including with clients.

Anger Management Strategies - This seminar provides tested methods for getting a handle on anger and reclaiming one's grounding when tempers spark.

Participants learn how to manage their own anger and deal with angry colleagues, employees, and clients.

Peaceful Parenting for Professionals - What to do when the workday's over: this seminar helps busy professionals maximize time with their kids, handle conflict in the home, foster closeness, and improve communication.

Stress-Relief for Busy People - Stress can lower productivity and drain creativity. This seminar provides hands-on strategies for de-stressing that increase calmness, focus, and productivity and better relationships in the workplace.

Making Your Teams Work - Corporate teams often start off with a bang then fizzle when personalities and competing needs collide. What can you do to put your teams on the path to success and help them navigate the rough spots? This workshop addresses this question and provides practical strategies for helping teams function more effectively.

Naomi Drew is a registered provider with the New Jersey State Department of Education and the NJ Character Education Network. She is the author of six books, all available through LearningPeace.com and Amazon.com.

Peaceful Parents, Peaceful Kids (Kensington Publishers)

Learning the Skills of Peacemaking (Pro-Ed Inc.)

The Peaceful Classroom in Action (Pro-Ed Inc.)

Hope and Healing: Peaceful Parenting in an Uncertain World (Kensington Publishers)

The Kids Guide to Working Out Conflicts: How to Stay Calm, Cool, and Safe, (Free Spirit Publishing)

A Leaders' Guide to The Kids Guide to Working Out Conflicts (Free Spirit)

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Love and Peace to All of You.

