



The Benedictine Counselor

Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services

A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

Advent, December 2007

Volume 2 number 1

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Message from the Director:

Blessings to you from Benedictine Counseling Services. We begin the new Church year of 2007-2008 at Advent. The number of counselors has grown this year, for which we are grateful.

The topic of bullying in school setting is of increasing concern. For the next three newsletters our counselors will direct their remarks

to bullying. In December, Mrs. Elsa Perez, at St. James School gives us information on an important subject: bullying on the internet. The increased use of the internet by school children has been accompanied by bullying on the internet. Her article focuses on cyber bullying.

We wish you blessings during this time of waiting for Christ's coming at Christmas.



Mrs. Elsa Perez, M. Ed.

**BCS School Counselor
St. James Catholic School**

Cyber bullying: an overview

Bullying is any physical or verbal aggression that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Traditionally, bullying involves behaviors such as, hitting and punching (physical), teasing, name calling (verbal), intimidation (emotional), spreading rumors, exclusion (social), etc.

Today's technology has given children and youth new ways of bullying each other. Cyber bullying can be defined as the use of technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately upset someone else. It occurs through e-mails, instant messaging

(IM), text or digital images through cell phones, web pages, blogs, chat rooms, and any other information communication technologies. Cyber bullying differs from traditional forms of bullying in many ways. It occurs anytime of day and night, and the messages and images can be distributed quickly to a very wide audience. The cyber bully can be anonymous and even impersonate someone else, making very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to track down the perpetrator (Kowalski, 2005).

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According to a 2004 survey conducted by I Safe, Inc.* with 1,500 children grades 4th to 8th, 42% of kids have been bullied while online; 53% of kids admit having said something mean or hurtful to another person online; and 58% have not told their parents or an adult about something mean or hurtful that happened to them online.

The best way to deal with cyber bullying is prevention at school and at home. Sometimes children are caught up in cyber bullying simply by not thinking about the consequences of their actions. That is why it is very important that parents are aware of the ways their children are using the internet and mobile phones. They should become educated in the proper use of these technologies and learn to use the tools available to protect their children from being targets of, or becoming bullies themselves. Parents should discuss with their children safety measures in the use of technology, and set up boundaries of use and behavior.

There are seven simple tips that would help a child protect himself and others from being caught up in either end of cyber bullying: respect others; do not forward any nasty message or image sent to you about someone else; do not let anyone know your password; block the bully; do not retaliate or reply to the bully;

save the evidence; make sure you tell an adult you trust at home or at school.

Schools should have in place a plan to deal with all types of bullying. There is not a magic formula that will fit every school setting and circumstances, but every plan should include strategies of prevention (education), reaction (response), and follow up. It should involve the whole school community, and should send a loud and clear message that any form of bullying is absolutely intolerable.

Kowalski, R., Limber, S. and others. (2005, August). *Electronic bullying among school-aged children and youth*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. Washington, DC.

* I-SAFE is a non-profit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. <http://www.isafe.org>

Other resources:

Kowalski, Robin M.; Limber, Susan; Agatston, Susan *Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the Digital Age*. Blackwell Publishers. United Kingdom, 2007. (This book is expected to be released on February 2008).

Davis, Stan. *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical strategies for reducing bullying*. Research Press, IL. 2007.

Advent begins our Church year. During Advent we recall the centuries of longing for the coming of the Messiah. King David, Isaiah the prophet and so many of God's people longed for the day when Jesus would be born. We also recall the waiting of Mary and Joseph for the birth of the baby, Jesus. For those of you who have waited for a baby or a baby brother or sister, you know the excitement, the concern that everything go right, and the wishing that the time would go quicker.

As a family it is important to have a spiritual preparation for Christmas, besides all the other preparations. In the midst of all the other "important" things to do, there is one most important Person to prepare for. During Advent the Church reminds us it is Jesus' birthday we prepare for.

Choose one realistic thing you can do to make yourself and your family ready for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

The **Anita Moreland Foundation** was begun to help BCS provide counseling and psychological assistance for people who would otherwise be unable to pay for services.

For more information contact: *Benedictine Counseling Services* below.

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