

Bullying requires multiple solutions

UBC expert says having a trusted adult is key for kids

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Regardless of dozens of theories floating around on how to tackle bullying in schools, a University of British Columbia learning and development expert said there is no single guaranteed solution.

Dr. Shelley Hymel told two dozen attendees sitting in the Howe Sound Secondary School library on Tuesday (May 4) that parents and educators have to find methods that work for each particular situation.

"There's many ways to get to the top of the mountain," Hymel told the group of parents, educators and school board trustees.

"If anybody tells you there's one solution that's going to fix all bullying, don't believe them. It's not true. We just don't have it. Every situation is different."

Only one person spoke up after the nearly two-hour presentation, saying she doesn't know what to do about her sixth-grade daughter being bullied.

"Part of me thinks she has to fight her own battles," said the mother.

Hymel said the daughter could figure things out on her own, but the parent should be there with an open line of communication.

The academic encouraged parents and educators to try



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Dr. Shelley Hymel spoke to two dozen local parents and educators about the significant role relationships play in a child's development on Tuesday (May 4) at Howe Sound Secondary School.

everything from active witnessing where anyone who stands by and does nothing is just as guilty as the bully, to emotional literacy where youth are encouraged to identify their feelings and express them in a productive manner.

She said since each method has varying success rates, some worked for school in certain areas while others did not, parents and teachers have to try out a wide variety of solutions.

"There's no magic formula, there's no silver bullet that makes this all work."

If bullying is about power, Hymel said, kids need to be taught more socially appropriate methods for getting what they want.

She said students who have a solid understanding of relationships, feelings, consequences and a good social

emotional education are often happier and more productive students.

The kids at the greatest risk of being victimized are those children without an adult they trust in their life.

"They have nobody to talk to and they're really getting frustrated."

Hymel urged parents and educators to get involved and be there for students to ensure they do not feel alone.

"The bottom line is if you really want to do a successful anti-bullying program," she said.

"It really only takes two things: Awareness – that it's important, that it's valuable for kids. And involvement – teachers rolling up their sleeves, parents contributing, communities contributing and actually getting involved in doing it."

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