

Living With Children

By **John Rosemond**
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Q: We homeschooled our son through the sixth grade. This past fall, per his wishes, we sent him to a public school for the seventh grade. Last week, he was attacked by the class bully. This other child pushed our son to the ground, called him vile names, and threatened him with further bullying. The principal has decided that both boys were equally at fault and suspended our son, along with the bully, for three days. Everyone knows this other boy is a bully and has been since he started school. When we pointed this out to the principal, it was like he was unwilling to even consider that our son was the victim and should not be suspended. Our son is very upset and we are considering legal action. We’ve followed your advice for a long time and are hoping you have some for us concerning this situation.

A: You obviously didn’t get the memo. In the new and glorious millennium, here are no bullies. Every altercation, despite facts to the contrary, involves two equally responsible kids. And so, as happened to your son, public schools punish both victims and bullies, and bullies live to be bullies again, and again, and again.

According to this completely irrational (and yes, irrational and insane are synonyms) policy, Germany didn’t invade Poland to start World War II. As every public-school principal knows, Poland was equally culpable. A Pole made faces at a German from across the border or something. In any event, Poland learned its lesson.

All sarcasm aside, you have learned, first-hand, that public school anti-bullying programs (and to be fair, the following comments apply to many if not most private schools as well) are a farce. A counselor talks to a class about healthy ways of resolving conflict and expressing anger as if bullies are only expressing anger inappropriately and any “conflict” is a two-way street.

I was always the youngest kid in my class and usually the smallest of the boys. I was also a nerd and a geek rolled into one – a neek, or something along those lines. It was like wearing a bright red bullseye on my back and sure enough, the neighborhood bully picked up on the signal. For several years, George (his real name) chased me home from school nearly every day. If he caught me, which was nearly always, he delighted in sitting on my chest and tickling me. Yes, tickling me. Forget waterboarding. I guarantee tickling works much more effectively and may even be legal to use on terrorists. My school could do nothing because the incidents always took place off school grounds. It would have been useless, furthermore, to talk to George’s parents. They believed that George – who

was sent to juvenile prison at age sixteen – was never in the wrong about anything. Trust me on this: I was not equally responsible for George’s relentless attacks. I wasn’t traumatized for life, but I guarantee you, some victims are.

As was the case with George’s parents, nearly every bully has parents who refuse to acknowledge that their kid is a sociopath. That, I suspect, is what drives public school “student conflict” policy. School administrators absolutely know that if they pin blame on the bully, his parents will rise to his defense and the school may end up with a lawsuit on their hands. As one public school principal told me, “My primary job, John, is to keep the lawyers at bay.” And so, when the bully does his thing, both he and his victim have a meaningless talk with the counselor and get suspended. Neutrality must be maintained, at whatever cost to the victim.

This travesty of justice will continue until the parents of a victim file a high-profile lawsuit against a school system. I encourage you to do so. Make a lot of noise. Cause a scandal. There are plenty of lawyers out there who will take such as case on a fee-contingent basis. Just like employers, school should be held accountable for creating unsafe environments. If you and your lawyer so desire, I will gladly testify.

The Georges of this world need to be stopped, and public schools will not stop them.

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