



WINGS FOR LIFE

Emotional Wellness for Families

This is an informational fact sheet. The purpose of the publication is to provide basic information. It is not intended to be used for assessment or treatment of mental health. If you suspect your child or teen needs help in the emotional wellness and mental health areas, please contact a mental health professional immediately.

An online directory of mental health services in South Dakota, searchable by town, is available at www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org. Other mental health resources are at this site as well. Information can also be obtained by calling 211 in Rapid City or Sioux Falls or calling toll-free 1-877-377-0941 from other areas of South Dakota.

We would appreciate your feedback on this "Wing For Life" newsletter. Please take three minutes to complete the on-line survey: www.seuw.org/wings.aspx

These messages are intended to frighten, embarrass, harass, or otherwise target another minor. Most cyberbullying typically involves preteens and young teens. It usually ends around 14 years of age. After 14, it tends to become sexual harassment or hacking attacks.

It is widely known that face-to-face bullying can result in long-term psychological harm to its victims. This harm can include low self-esteem, depression, anger, school failure and avoidance, and, in some cases, school violence or suicide. Harm done by cyberbullying may be even greater than traditional bullying because online communications can be extremely vicious due to their anonymity. Because of this anonymity, cyberbullies can solicit the involvement of unknown "friends." Cyberbullying material can be distributed worldwide and is often irretrievable. In many cases, youth are reluctant to tell adults what is happening online or through their cell phone because they are emotionally traumatized, think it is their fault, fear greater retribution, or fear their online activities or use of cell phone will be restricted.

You need to make it your business to know what your child is doing online. To stay involved:

- Keep computers with Internet access in the shared spaces in your home, not in your child's bedroom.
- Educate your child about potential dangers of online communication and help her to role-play effective ways to respond to online cyberbullying. Remind your child to be polite to others online just as she would be offline. If someone treats your child rudely or in a mean way, don't respond. Online bullies are just like offline ones...they want others to respond.
- Encourage your child to report incidents of online cyberbullying to adults and reinforce her beliefs that action will be taken in response to the event.
- Set a family Internet policy. Define the ground rules for use such as scheduled times, permissible websites, and limiting online communication to familiar peers.
- Consider involving your child in face-to-face activities as alternatives to interaction on the Internet. Youth who are vulnerable, lonely, and have low self-esteem are most likely candidates for excessive Internet use, increasing the risk of exposure to cyberbullying.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

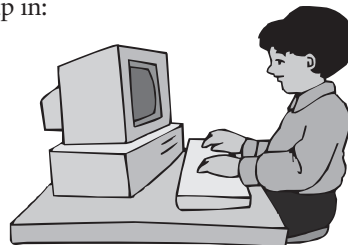
- Internet Bullying
- Building Character: Integrity
- Service Learning Benefits Youth and the Community
- Talking About Traumatic Times

Internet Bullying

Cyberbullying or bullying over the Internet is emerging as a very challenging issue. More and more young people are using the Internet and other mobile communication technologies. While adults see the Internet as a resource or place that they can go to for information, many young people think of it as a normal and natural part of their world.

Cyberbullying can show up in:

- Instant messenger
- E-mail
- Diary site
- Online profile site
- Interactive game
- Hand-held device
- Cell phone
- Other interactive devices



These parenting guides are a gift to you from the Sioux Empire United Way. They were adapted and written by the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service. We hope the information is helpful and gives you additional resources to assist in your efforts to raise healthy and successful children.

For additional resources on children's mental health, visit www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org.

This is a United Way partner program that connects you to all available services for your family.



- Remind your child to never give out or share personal information including name, names of friends and family, address, phone number, or any other personal information such as photos.
- Get access to parental blocking-type software that protects your child from exploring websites that you find inappropriate.
- Periodically check your child's computer use history including viewing files, browser history, and Internet use history.

If the cyberbullying appears to be a crime, contact the police. Cyberbullying that involves threats of violence, coercion, obscene or harassing text messages, harassment or stalking, hate or bias crimes, creating or sending sexually explicit pictures, sexual exploitation, or taking a picture of someone in a private place is now against the law in many states.

Service Learning Benefits Youth and the Community

"By teaching young people the joys of service to others, we make good citizenship a vital, transforming and continuing aspect of our national character."

—Secretary of State - Colin Powell

What is Service Learning?

Service learning means learning through good deeds. It is a way of teaching youth by linking community service to formal and informal education. Service learning creates an opportunity to meet community needs while helping youth grow and learn in meaningful ways. In service-learning projects, youth take on real issues, such as pollution control, hunger, and prejudice. For example, a service-learning project may involve youth helping to build a playground in an underserved community, gathering food or clothing for homeless children, or creating a nature preserve in an eroded waterway.

Why is Service Learning Important?

Youth benefit greatly from their involvement in service-learning projects. Youth who take part in service learning tend to improve in their school work and learn good citizenship. Service learning also gives youth a chance to develop personal, social, and vocational skills.

School Achievement

Research shows that elementary and middle school students involved with service-learning projects improved their problem-solving skills. Service learning is linked to higher scores on the state test of basic skills and increased student achievement in language and reading. Students

BUILDING CHARACTER:

Integrity

Being a person of integrity means you are principled and true to yourself. It means you "walk your talk" by living up to your highest ethical values. It means you always try to do what's right even in tough situations, and you don't let temptation compromise your values. Isn't this what you want to instill in your child?

As a parent, it is important to encourage in your child the traits of integrity. To help instill these traits, you need to demonstrate the traits. According Peggy Adkins (2002), of CHARACTER COUNTS!, integrity is doing the right thing and standing up for your beliefs even when it is hard to do so. Here is a list of dos and don'ts for teaching and modeling integrity.

Dos

- Share your values and beliefs with your children.
- Discuss people who have stood up for their convictions, even when it has cost them money, security, or position.
- Share stories, news articles, or magazine articles about people who show moral courage.
- Walk your talk.
- Talk your walk.
- Praise your child for doing what is right, even when it's difficult.

Don'ts

- Don't say one thing and mean another.
- Don't say one thing and do another.
- Don't lie to avoid difficult situations.
- Don't give in to pressure. Make honorable decisions and carry them out.

Your child will be presented with several opportunities in school, the community, and at home to practice being a person with integrity. Consider these four situations and then visit with your child about how he would display integrity when in these situations.

1. Your friends are talking about how smoking is cool and everyone is doing it. You think smoking is bad for your health and very uncool.
2. Nathan never plays with anyone at the park because his classmates always tease him about being a klutz. You feel sorry for Nathan and know it's wrong to make fun of others, but you're afraid to play with Nathan for fear of being teased too.
3. Your best friend asks you to help her cheat on a test. You know that cheating is wrong.
4. Greg grabs Liz's hat, and won't give it back. When Liz tries to get it back, he throws it to another friend. They play Keep Away. Liz begins to cry. Your friends start laughing. You know it's wrong to treat Liz this way.

who engage in service learning also tend to display an increased sense of accomplishment in their school work.

Citizenship

A recent study shows that elementary and middle school students who take part in service learning develop a strong sense of ethics and civic responsibility and increase their understanding of how government works.

Career Exploration

Service-learning students gain important career skills including communication, decision making, and leadership. They can learn more about possible careers. Studies also show that they tend to develop a better attitude toward work.

Personal Development

Research shows that students who engage in service learning rank responsibility as an important character trait and report a higher sense of responsibility to their school. Another study found that they were more likely to treat others kindly, help each other, and care about doing their best. Service involvement often leads to a higher level of self-esteem.

GETTING YOUTH INVOLVED IN SERVICE LEARNING

Tips for Parents, Teachers, and Community Advocates

For half a century, the service-learning concept has spread across America. In the last decade, it was spurred to new growth by funding from Congress and presidential

actions. The following are essential guidelines for successful service-learning projects:

- Involve youth throughout the planning process.
- Make a link between learning and service.
- Focus on the new skills to be learned.
- Let youth experiment and test new roles.
- Make a meaningful contribution to the community.
- Connect school, community organizations, and families in new, positive ways.
- Build unity among participants to help them function better as a team.
- View young people as a resource.
- Include an evaluation system with youth having an opportunity for reflection on their experiences.

Reflection

Service learning should involve a time to purposefully think about the experience. This reflection brings meaning to the process and creates a link to other types of learning. Reflection can involve asking the following questions:

- What exactly was accomplished?
- How did you think the project went?
- What were some of your thoughts and feelings as you carried out the project?
- Did you learn anything that supported you? If so, what?
- Did you change your attitudes about anything? If so, explain how you changed.
- How can you use what you learned in other settings such as in your home, school, or community?

TODAY'S ISSUE

Talking About Traumatic Times

Children experience many changes as they grow and move through the different stages of childhood. This can often be challenging. It can be confusing for some children in learning how to take on growing responsibilities and roles. Often, youth will face these challenges with skill and confidence. However, some events may be more traumatic and require additional guidance and assistance to help youth address the more difficult events in life.

Adults and children alike sometimes respond to traumatic events with shock and denial. These are normal reactions to significant events. During the process of healing and understanding, no two people will deal with issues and heal in exactly the same way. Some individuals need or appreciate time alone on occasion, while others need support throughout the healing process. Some individuals require more time to heal than others. The healing time and process may be affected by other events preceding, during, or after the traumatic event. A person's natural ability to adjust to stressful situations affects the amount of healing time, as does the seriousness of the situation.

The American Psychological Association (2004) and the University of Minnesota Extension Service (2003, GTTT-

15) have suggestions on how parents can help children deal with traumatic events. To help your child heal, first you need to be aware of how the event has affected you. It is important to acknowledge your feelings associated with trauma.

Parents should consider the following steps in coping with the trauma.

- Give yourself as well as your child time to heal.
- Ask for support from people.
- Communicate your experience in whatever ways feel comfortable to you, such as talking or writing in a diary.
- Find out about local support groups.
- Engage in healthy behaviors to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress. Eat well and get plenty of rest and exercise.
- Establish or reestablish routines, including hobbies and enjoyable activities.
- Avoid major life decisions.
- Meet challenges head-on.
- Remember, the crisis is not insurmountable.

You will need to address your child's emotional needs at the same time that you are coping with your own emotional health.

WINGS FOR LIFE

- Be aware of behavior regression. Your child may demonstrate behaviors that were common when he was younger, such as nightmares, fear of sleeping alone, and withdrawal.
- Although you may not be able to spend a great deal of time with your child during this period, be aware of his needs and allow him to be more dependent on you as time allows during the trauma and healing period.
- Provide social experiences to help relieve tension. Let your child know that it is still OK to laugh and have fun.
- Encourage your child to speak to you or others about personal thoughts and feelings.
- If your child struggles talking about feelings, keep art supplies available so there is a means of expression other than talking.
- Keep regular schedules for activities to help create a sense of normalcy and security.
- Help your child eat a healthy diet and get adequate rest and exercise.
- **Focus on the positive!**

If you are worried about your child during this time or feel your child is overly anxious or depressed, please contact your physician, school counselor, or local mental health professional.

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For information on children's mental health services in South Dakota, www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org.

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The term “parent” is used throughout this newsletter. It is intended to encompass guardians and primary caregivers as well.