

Stories abound of bullied children in the LDS church, often ending with the child never coming back. As I am learning, it is usually the bullied child and their parents who are abraided by church leaders for seeking resolution, viewed as disruptive or just another task for an already very busy Bishop. The church has a very serious bullying problem as a result. The church badly needs a cultural change, a new approach in how they handle bullying. So what can be done?

1. A zero tolerance policy- It starts with a well publicized effort coming from leaders of all levels indicating that bullying will not be tolerated in the walls of the church.

2. A new approach in how bullying claims are addressed- Bullying claims are socially much more complicated than other issues Bishops address. The current methods place Bishops and Stake Presidents in very compromising positions while addressing bullying claims. As they are simply imperfect people seeking to live the gospel, they are subject to their judgment being clouded by their close relationships with those involved in the bullying claims they are asked to address. This is an unreasonable burden to Ward/Stake level leaders and does not benefit those they lead. Much like there is a regional "Traveling Bishop" for transient members, there should be a regional 'Bullying Bishop' that doesn't know the parties and who with the proper training can focus on addressing bullying claims in an unbiased manner using facts, not the strength of relationships that might be effected by decisions.

3. Real consequences for bullying- For all other "societal problems" the church addresses with real consequences. With bullying they sweep it under the rug as quickly as possible, while placing it upon the victim to forgive or change Wards as the solution. During a well publicized effort of zero tolerance it should be made known that disfellowship and excommunication are possible results of serious bullying. The 'Bullying Bishop' should be given the task of judging consequences. Even schools will suspend a troubled child once in awhile; does the church settle for a lower standard? Correction is love if done right, many bullies will be helped in the process as well.

4. Training and education- Many leaders don't properly recognize or know what to do in regards to bullying. Some members might not realize they are bullying, or the damage of their words and actions, believing it is just having fun. Ignorance is not an excuse when much harm to real people's lives is occurring. A great talk during General Conference is not enough to make a real cultural difference. A real discussion with professional counsel to produce this training and education is what is needed.

5. Show, not tell the children to love one another- I have presented a "Keeper's Program" as a starting point to do this. If not it, then something, as the status quo is not working.

Serious bullying in the church is an ugly truth that many would rather ignore. There is great hope that something profound and beautiful will come from a serious discussion on bullying, a cultural change in how we treat each other, a world where parents will feel it safe to bring their children to any ward.