

## Remember It Is A Crime

Shunsuke Nakao  
Keio Univ. ESS

When my sister came home with a muddy skirt, my mother feared that she had been bullied and asked her many questions. But she had her mouth shut. My father said to her, "If you can solve the problem yourself, you need not say anything to me. But if you cannot tell me of any problems because you fear revenge, trust me. I will never let anyone take revenge on you."

Today I'd like to tell you how to solve bullying effectively.

Bullying in schools is still a great problem in Japan. According to a 1997 Ministry of Education study, the number of recorded cases of bullying in elementary and junior high schools increased to 60,096 in 1996. What is worse, more than 10 children committed suicide in 1996.

I once wondered why we can't eliminate bullying. Now I think it's because bullies don't think they are doing anything wrong, so they don't think they'll be punished. However bullying is a crime and those who bully someone must be punished. How, then, can we do away with bullying?

First, we have to discover any bullying. When your son is bullied brutally, it's easy to discover the fact if you pay careful attention. For example, your son may not want to go to school. He may come home in dirty or torn clothes, or may be injured. You may find that money is missing. If you witness any of these symptoms, the first thing is to find any unusual physical injuries. If necessary, take a bath with your child to do so.

Second, tell your child that bullying is a crime and if bullies continue their bullying they will be punished heavily. Mr. Yuji Tanaka who studies bullying says that 86% of children admit that they were bullied when parents tell them that they can never be bullied again if they file a lawsuit.

Third, collect evidence to fight against bullies. Take down notes about when, how and why your children were bullied and who bullied them. Take a picture of the injuries and get medical certification. Pictures

can be important evidence. Record bullying secretly using a Walkman or similar recording device. The tape can prove who bullied your child. Submit all evidence to the teacher. Documented evidence will force teachers to take any bullying seriously. If your child distrusts the teacher, submit the evidence to the principal, too. Then, the teacher cannot help investigating the facts.

Finally, give the teacher two weeks to cope with the bullying. In the usual case the bullies apologize in front of the teacher, but they start bullying more mercilessly behind the teacher's back in two weeks. If such is the case, go to the juvenile section of the police station. Some may think my suggestion is too severe, but remember bullying is a crime.

There are many boys and girls who think children cannot be charged with a crime. True, juvenile law is more lenient, but it does not ignore crimes such as bullying. Nobody can completely escape from the crimes they committed. It's not until bullies are ordered to come to the police station that they understand the seriousness of their actions.

Because teachers are specialists in education, cunning bullies may make an excuse or apologize to their teacher to escape punishment, but the police will never accept clumsy excuses. In my sister's case, the boy struck her back with a mop and threw her bag into a pool. The bully told the teacher that he was only joking, and the teacher only said to him, "You are carrying the joke too far." But the policeman ordered him to go to the Juvenile Crime Office to take a personality test. The police are stricter than bullies think.

If such action is taken, it's rare but sometimes bullying continues. If such is the case, collect all possible evidence and go to the police station again. The bullies will be sent to a family court and their punishment will be heavier. In some cases the bullies will be ordered to go to reform school.

It is time to make bullies understand the seriousness of their actions. By doing so, we future fathers and mothers can protect our children. At the same time, we can also save bullies from becoming people who don't know other people's pain. Two years ago, the boy who bullied my sister sent a letter to my father saying he appreciated my father's actions and they had helped to make him a more thoughtful person.

After my father took the necessary action, my sister was no longer bullied and she spent a happy school life. In addition, there was no more bullying in her school because potential bullies understood the consequences. This fact shows if necessary action is taken, we can exterminate bullying. Remember, bullying is a crime and there are punishments to fit all crimes.