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Loss Arises in Many Forms

The Taos News has committed to implement a bi-weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. You may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.

Dear Ted,

I am a seventh grader in Taos, NM. I often feel like teasing gets out of hand. How can I tell when teasing has crossed the line and become bullying? Thanks, Feeling Small

Dear Feeling Small,

I am so impressed that you wrote in to discuss this very important issue. Bullying in our schools is an enormous issue that has ramifications for people for the rest of their lives. Bullying does not only happen within schools and young people but happens with adults at home, at work, and in the community. In other words, bullying is an enormous problem that needs to be continuously evaluated and discussed at all ages.

Whenever someone is trying to force someone to feel or behave a certain way, there is bullying. Teasing can be a type of bullying as the person who is teasing is trying to embarrass, shame, or make someone else feel smaller. If you are feeling small from someone's teasing it means bullying is happening. If teasing is at the expense of someone, bullying is happening, as there is not mutual enjoyment in what is often thought of as being playful. You may have heard someone being teased who tells the other person to stop and the teaser says, "What? I was just joking." It doesn't mean this is okay if violent communication is happening. The person who is stating the behavior is inappropriate is doing the correct thing by stating that the other person's behavior doesn't feel good and sets a boundary.

At your age especially, this can be difficult due to peer pressure and fear of losing a friends or not being liked by the group. There is a chance that speaking up can change the dynamics of relationships, yet do you really want this type of friend? One who is verbally or psychically bullying by holding the relationship as an ultimatum so you act a certain way and not set healthy boundaries by stating when someone's actions do not feel right to you? Your age is a good time to learn to speak your truth, check where you may be letting people metaphorically or truly push you around and see what action you can take in setting boundaries.

Asking for help from your, parents, teachers or counselor is a great place to go if the teasing/bullying continues. Most bullies are people who are feeling insecure and feel the need to make someone else feel small through avenues such as teasing. By choosing to take action in a safe way will help your unconscious know that you have its back and can help you have a healthy self-esteem with a strength to know you can be your true wonderful self with your friends. Thank you for writing in, this is a great first step of being proactive for you and you are worth it. Take care and I wish you well your path to emotional healing.

Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing and recovery from any type of loss. Direct any questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, Founder of Golden Willow Retreat at (575) 776-2024 or GWR@newmex.com.