It's not only sticks and stones but also words – relentless, harsh and painful – that are hurting our children. According to many authorities, bullying has become an epidemic in America's schools, with 3 of 4 students saying they've been bullied or harassed and one in 10 saying it happens to them every day. Invisible Weapons is an insightful and compelling look at boys and girls who torment other children, featuring interviews with bullies, their victims and bystanders. The half-hour special examines many of the thornier questions facing kids, educators and parents … Do the spectators of bullying fear any responsibilities? Why do bullied children resist talking to adults, particularly parents, and what can parents do to help? How can a school realistically assess the threat of violent students? (In fact, the FBI calls their new protocol for schools “threat assessment.”) And, just as important, are there ways the victims of bullying can stop the bully (in part by changing their silent messages, which say to the bully “pick on me”)?

Sponsored by Wachovia, this special Emmy Award-winning program was produced by the highly skilled television and education team at CWK Network, Inc.
# Character Traits

All Connect with Kids programs address these 26 character traits:

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For more information on Connect with Kids or *Invisible Weapons*, please call (888) 891-6020 or email to sales@cwknetwork.com
Results of a 2002 survey reveal that children in the fifth through twelfth grades fear the emotional violence of bullying more than they do physical violence. A survey of 1,000 children, conducted by the Families and Work Institute, found that two-thirds of students say that peers teased or gossiped about them in a mean way in the past month.

Fourteen-year-old Alex Freed, who is tall and skinny with red hair and glasses, says it happened to him “all day, from morning till the end; from 8 o’clock until 3 o’clock. I sometimes had to lie to mom and tell her I was sick — so I wouldn’t have to go to school.”

Alex’s bullying was not physical. Instead of being beaten up or threatened, some of his classmates teased, laughed at and excluded him. Consider these additional findings from the survey.

- 12% of the students said they had been bullied five times or more in the past month.
- Approximately 23% admitted they had bullied someone else.
- 8% said they had been attacked with a weapon.
- Another 8% said they had been forced to perform sexual acts.

Children report that, oftentimes, bullies will use anything — clothes, hair, body size and even feelings about school — as a springboard for ridiculing others.

Dr. Tim Jordan, a pediatrician who conducts a bullying workshop with students says, “We have a whole building full of kids who feel unsafe — emotionally unsafe.”

In fact, the National School Safety Center cites a 2001 poll of 477 teens and 456 parents that provides further evidence to support that intimidation and physical abuse are typical events of a school day for U.S. students:

- Of the 14- to 17-year-olds surveyed, more than two-thirds report that their school has a group of students who sometimes or frequently intimidate others, often with no or few consequences.
- While many victims respond by isolating themselves, almost a third of respondents said victims usually plan ways to get back at the intimidators.
- Only a third of students believe the school penalizes students who engage in intimidation.
- Only 16% of teens said that other students intercede when a fellow student is being intimidated or embarrassed.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) says that bullying — the act of threatening to hurt or frighten someone — may be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual in nature.

- **Physical bullying** includes punching, poking, strangling, hair pulling, beating and biting.
- **Verbal bullying** includes hurtful name-calling, teasing and gossiping.
- **Emotional bullying** includes rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, rating/ranking of personal characteristics — such as race, disability, ethnicity or perceived sexual orientation — manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing and peer pressure.
- **Sexual bullying** includes many of the actions listed above as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, sexual harassment and physical and sexual abuse.

(continued on next page)
6. Divide the class into groups of three students. Explain to group members that they will devise plans to encourage more students to report their concerns about bullying and other violent acts at school. Provide groups with the following instructions.

- Interview at least three students.
- Use the questions below:
  A. What issue(s) would prevent you from reporting a concern about bullying?
  B. What issue(s) would motivate you to report a concern about bullying?
  C. Does acceptance or approval from your peers influence your decision to report a concern? Explain.

- Using the survey results, work with group members to develop a plan to encourage more students to report their concerns about bullying at school.

7. Allow time for groups to complete their surveys and develop their plans. Once each group completes its plan, allow class time for members to share their ideas.
If you suspect that your child is being bullied, the Committee for Children suggests you help him or her by using the following guidelines.

1. Encourage your child to report bullying incidents to you.
2. Validate your child's feelings by letting him or her know that it is normal to feel hurt, sad, scared, angry, etc. Help your child be specific in describing bullying incidents – who, what, where and when.
3. Ask your child how he or she has tried to stop the bullying.
4. Coach him or her in possible coping methods, including avoidance of the bully and making new friends for support.
5. Treat the school as your ally. Share your child's concerns and specific information about bullying incidents with appropriate school personnel. Work with school staff to protect your child from possible retaliation. Establish a plan with the school for dealing with future acts of bullying.
6. Encourage your child to continue to talk with you about all bullying incidents.
7. Never ignore your child's report. Remember that you should not advise your child to physically fight back. Bullying lasts longer and physical injuries often result. Also, you should not confront the bullying child or his or her parents.

Unlike victims, bullies appear to suffer little anxiety and possess strong self-esteem, according to the National Resource Center for Safe Schools. They often come from homes where physical punishment is used and where children are taught to strike back physically as a way of handling problems. Bullies thus believe that it is all right for stronger children to hit weaker children. They frequently lack parental warmth and involvement and desire power and control.

If you suspect that your child is bullying others, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) suggests you seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional and legal difficulties. Talk to your child's pediatrician, teacher, principal, school counselor or family physician. If the bullying continues, the AACAP advises you to arrange a comprehensive evaluation of your child by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional.

The Coalition for Children says you can also help your child by discussing with him or her these keypoints about bullying.

1. Remind your child that bullying is not acceptable in your family or in society.
2. Provide your child with alternatives to taking frustrations or aggression out on others. You can even role-play different ways to behave in situations where your child would normally bully another.
3. Specify concretely the consequences if the aggression or bullying continue.

**RESOURCES**
Committee for Children
Families and Work Institute
U.S. Department of Education
Grades 3-5 Lesson Plan

Turning Lemons into Lemonade

OBJECTIVES:
Students will be able to:
• Define the term “self-confidence”
• Discuss the importance of self-confidence
• Work independently to compose a friendly letter

MATERIALS: Pens, pencils

PROCEDURE:
1. Open this activity by presenting the following statistic to your students: According to the Families and Work Institute, three out of four children say that they have been bullied.
2. Explain to your students that many times, bullies tease or taunt children who appear vulnerable. One way in which children can protect themselves from bullies is to demonstrate self-confidence.
3. Ask your students to explain what self-confidence means to them. Tell your students that sometimes self-confidence means feeling good about yourself even if you are not perfect.
4. Continue to explain to your students that people often forget just how great they are. They tend to focus on the negative. Instead, they should concentrate on how they can turn a negative into a positive. Share the following example with your students.

Singer Kenny Rogers performs a song about a little boy who is getting ready to practice hitting a baseball. Before he begins to practice, the boy reminds himself that he is the greatest baseball player ever. Then the boy throws the ball into the air, swings his bat and misses. The boy says to himself, “I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn’t know I could pitch like that. I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn’t know I could pitch that good.”

Example: I wish I were more outgoing instead of being so shy. However, being shy and quiet allows me to focus on the people around me and helps me to be a better listener.

7. Review the parts of a friendly letter with your class, and then allow time for students to begin their drafts. After students complete their drafts, allow time for peer editing. Assign students’ final drafts to be completed for homework.

8. On the day you designate, collect students’ letters.

Note: You may consider reviewing the skill of addressing an envelope and have students complete an envelope in which to mail their letters to themselves.

Grades 6-8 Lesson Plan

A Friend in Me

OBJECTIVES:
Students will be able to:
• Define the term “self-confidence”
• Discuss the importance of self-confidence
• Work independently to compose a friendly letter

MATERIALS: Pens, pencils

PROCEDURE:
1. Open this activity by presenting the following statistic to your students: According to the Families and Work Institute, three out of four children say that they have been bullied.
2. Explain to your students that many times, bullies tease or taunt children who appear vulnerable. One way in which children can protect themselves from bullies is to demonstrate self-confidence.
3. Ask your students to explain what self-confidence means to them. Tell your students that sometimes self-confidence means feeling good about yourself even if you are not perfect.
4. Continue to explain to your students that people often forget just how great they are. They tend to focus on the negative. Instead, they should concentrate on how they can turn a negative into a positive. Share the following example with your students.

Singer Kenny Rogers performs a song about a little boy who is getting ready to practice hitting a baseball. Before he begins to practice, the boy reminds himself that he is the greatest baseball player ever. Then the boy throws the ball into the air, swings his bat and misses. That’s strike three. By this time, many people would be disappointed with the failure. The boy, however, has a different perspective. In the last verse of the song, he says, “I am the greatest; that is a fact. But even I didn’t know I could pitch like that. I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn’t know I could pitch that good.”

For the first time, the young baseball player throws the ball into the air, swings his bat and misses. That’s strike three. By this time, many people would have been disappointed. However, the boy says to himself, “I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn’t know I could pitch like that. I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn’t know I could pitch that good.”

Example: I wish I were more outgoing instead of being so shy. However, being shy and quiet allows me to focus on the people around me and helps me to be a better listener.

PROCEDURE:
5. Ask your students to summarize a lesson that people could learn from the song you shared in class.
6. Next, redirect your students’ attention back to the discussion of preventing bullying. Explain that another way in which children can protect themselves from bullies is to demonstrate self-confidence.

Note: Emphasize the importance of selecting a trait or behavior that the friend finds less than perfect and about which he or she has complained. Then, have students compose a poem or song that explains why the trait or behavior is really something very positive.

The poem or song should be at least three reasons why the friend should be proud of the chosen trait.

Students’ letters should offer at least two reasons why the chosen trait is really something of which to be proud.

7. Tell your students that they will write a poem or song and dedicate it to a friend. Before beginning the assignment, instruct them to select one character trait that makes the friend self-conscious and which the friend wishes he or she could change.

Example: I wish I were more outgoing instead of being so shy. However, being shy and quiet allows me to focus on the people around me and helps me to be a better listener.

PROCEDURE:
8. Allow time for students to begin their drafts. After completing their drafts, allow time for peer editing. Assign students’ final drafts to be completed for homework.

9. On the date you specify, set aside time for students to share their songs or poems with the class.

Note: Consider using this time to teach a specific type of poetry or the use of metaphors and similes.