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## ***Ladies Who Launch: Bullies and Bystanders Beware***

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As anyone with kids knows, bullies are becoming a bigger problem at school than drugs (imagine.) They don't lurk in dark corners of the schoolyard like they used to though. They're now out in bold daylight, making kids feel bad, inadequate, small, unimportant, left out and generally pretty icky -- all to the administration's chagrin and bewilderment. We write articles all the time on [www.ladieswholaunch.com](http://www.ladieswholaunch.com) about how to grow your business, how to lose the last ten pounds, how to build and grow a project without breaking the bank; but where's the resource for parents whose kid is getting emotionally (or worse) knocked around? Ladies Who Launch member Lisa Finan dives into the deep end on violence and lays down a good argument for bringing social skills into the curriculum, classroom and principles office.

Amy Swift, Editor in Chief, [Ladies Who Launch](#)

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Unless you've been living in a cave the last few weeks, you have no doubt been bombarded with the horrific images of the recent rash of violent school-based incidents. Teens luring a cheerleader classmate to a home and beating her repeatedly while the video camera rolls; a teacher being assaulted in her classroom by students; a high-schooler throwing a metal chair at another in class knocking the victim unconscious; a 13-year middle schooler who admits that he planned to shoot up his school because he was being bullied.

Even more appalling than these animalistic acts themselves seems to be the general lack of outrage about them! A few choice "oh my GOSH-es" and we seem to be done for the day. The media is more interested in post-game quarterbacking, trying to decide if these children should be tried as juveniles or adults, or whether a well-known comedian's mother's book would be the answer to these ills, than it is in actually analyzing the root cause and investigating solutions.

What's WRONG with this picture?

We as a country spend billions of dollars annually on anti-bullying programs in our schools, yet the incidents not only continue, they appear to be getting worse in severity and frequency, and occur in increasingly-younger students. Today, our kids stand a one-in-four chance of becoming victims of some form of school-based violence before they reach high school. NEWS FLASH: what we're doing isn't working!

So, the knee-jerk reaction is to play the blame game: it's YouTube, it's the Internet, it's broken homes, it's our global lifestyle. But, blaming isn't fixing. We have to accept that instead of trying to minimize or manage the existing problem of bullying and school-based violence, we have to focus on preventing it in the first place. Today's children are just not coming into school - into life - equipped with adequate social skills and character development that helps them understand that this kind of behavior is simply NOT OK. They are not taught to respect and value differences among people, in opinions, in actions. "It's all about me!" is the mantra of many of our youth today, and the behavior we see splattered all over the 'net is the result.

People may argue that social skills education belongs in the home, not in the schools, and I'd be the first to agree. But, our schools have become a war zone, where teachers spend more time disciplining students and trying to keep order than they do teaching! Is it any wonder our schools under-perform? If you were losing 20/30/50% of your average educational time because of behavior issues, how effective do you think you could be?

The good news is that there is a better way. Social skills education works, when properly implemented. Bullying is not just reduced - it's eliminated. Not because there are more "enforcers" around, in the form of extra administrators, counselors, or police, but because the students won't stand for it. A comprehensive social skills program, integrated into the core curriculum, can restore order, sanity, and productivity to the schools. It raises student and teacher morale - it even contributes to better test scores. It helps produce not only good students, but good people.

How many more of our kids must be intimidated, hurt, or killed before it becomes important enough to DO something about instead of just talk about it around the water cooler the next morning? Our children deserve to feel safe, to feel valued when they leave our homes to go to school. We as parents and as taxpayers must insist that the increasing cycle of school violence be stopped.

Instead of just shaking our heads and saying what a shame it all is, let's ask ourselves the tough questions about why it happened, and actually be willing to be honest with the answer. Then we can start doing something to fix it.

*This post was written by Corinne Gregory, Founder of [SocialSmarts](#)™ with Lisa Finan, Director Business Development.*

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