



**SAFE HARBOR
COUNSELING**

**Dr. Beth
Speaks**



Oct. 29, 2018

WSPY, Your Life Matters, Bullying Recap

- Mike Williams And it's time now for, *Your Life Matters*, with Clinical Social Worker, Dr. Beth Placketka from **Safe Harbor Counseling** and **Dr. Beth Speaks**.
- Mike Williams Dr. Placketka, how we doing this morning?
- Dr. Beth Placketka Really good! Thank you. It's nice to see you again.
- Mike Williams Yes, good to see you as well.
- Mike Williams As we're closing out the month of October we've been focusing on Bullying and our first sets of shows, and we have one more topic that kind of ties in with that for today. So we want to remind folks about this month, **October Bullying Awareness Month** and another other topic today about bullying.
- Dr. Beth Placketka Exactly I'd like to really review because I've gotten a lot of questions about whether or not a person is being bullied, what they should do about it, how they should respond. I think the very first thing that is really important to pay attention to, is it's not just kids. Sometimes it's easier when it's kids because an adult can intervene and stop the process. There's a lot of bullying going on in workplaces among adults. Sometimes in neighborhoods, it can be churches, hospitals, schools, all different kinds of places where people work, you find bullying.
- Mike Williams It might be a bit of an eye opener for listeners to know that it's not just kids, clearly there are cases where adults are doing it. It seems like it's a little bit more wide spread, a little bit more prevalent than maybe we first thought of.
- Dr. Beth Placketka Exactly and I think often we miss it because we always think, that if it's happening to me, I did something wrong, I should do something about it. Yes we should do something about it, but usually it's not because you did something wrong. It's very real. It's very painful. It can cause physical, mental, and emotional symptoms. It can affect social interactions and relationships because you kind of tend to withdraw because you're afraid because you don't know where it's coming from. It affects friends and family members by connection, just being related to somebody or being in their presence, you can tell that they're in pain and then you start feeling bad too.

Mike Williams We've talked over these first few shows about the different types of roles that there are in a bullying situation.

Dr. Beth Placketka Exactly! There's obviously a bully who demonstrates certain behaviors that we can take a look at. There's people who know what's going, can see it but are not part of it, and then there's of course the target. The target is typically someone who's very good at their job, has good social skills, and tends to cut other people slack. They think that people are just having a bag day and not take offense easily. The witnesses began to be afraid because they don't want it happening to them. But bullies, of course, they are doing certain things beyond just regular rudeness, and it is not just their personality style. Because if it's if somebody is mean or grouchy all the time to everyone, that's just how the person relates to the world. These are behaviors that are targeted at someone.

Mike Williams And maybe a little more about the some of the examples of these types of behaviors, things we can kind of look for to get a sense for who might be a bully or if we are a target of some bullying.

Dr. Beth Placketka Exactly! I think it's good to know these because the earlier you recognize them, the more quickly you can do something about it. So it would look like purposely doing or saying things to make a person feel bad. There could be communications, interactions that are written or verbal. it could be physical - finger appointing, they could be electronic that carry a negative message and it hints that you are doing something wrong or that you are wrong, but doesn't tell you how to fix it. It happens often. It happens over a long period of time. So it's not just someone having a bad week. Examples are finger pointing, raised voices, tense looks, dirty looks, false accusations, or sharing personal information that should be kept private.

Mike Williams And then as far as the target and even the witnesses too that you bring up, they are feeling all kinds of different things.

Dr. Beth Placketka Oh Exactly! Emotionally, they feel anxious, tense, depressed, helpless and hopeless. Mentally they are confused-Difficulty remembering things, that cognitive functioning starts going, and physically - their stomachs hurt. They sometimes have heart palpitations, migraine headaches. And if they are under stress for a really really long time the whole systems like even your bones and your circulatory system can be affected.

Mike Williams So what are some of the things we can do to try to combat this?

Dr. Beth Placketka

OK, well I think if it's early on, directly saying to the bully, "Hey, I'm very concerned we're not getting along the way we used to can we talk about this?" Identifying for the bully clearly and calmly what you see so that you're kind of calling them on the behavior without being aggressive and also expressing a willingness to discuss it. You want that because you don't want to become aggressive yourself. Sometimes the bully will back down because they think, oh, they're on to me and they'll move on to another target. But often we don't recognize that until it's gone on a little bit further. So the very first thing, once you know that it's going, is you need to call it to yourself and to the people who are helping you, what it is. You have to say, "I am being bullied" and stop trying to make the bully happy because they're kind of playing a tune, and they just want to see you dance. What the bully really likes is being able to control you. The second thing is you really want to get healthy. Physically, you need to eat well, rest, sleep. You'll feel like you have to keep trying to do your work better and better and more and more, but no, you need to get yourself on a routine, and absolutely do the things that keep us physically healthy. The third thing is you want to get emotionally healthy that means you might need medication. When we're under a lot of stress all the chemicals in our bodies start changing and then it makes us feel anxious and depressed. And it's very hard to regulate that without medication.

Dr. Beth Placketka

It's very important too, that you get professional support. Professional counseling from someone who actually knows about bullying. Often when somebody comes in, and they say I'm anxious, a clinician will try to help a person recognized what they're doing or thinking that is causing that, so that they can make the changes. But when it is what somebody else is doing, talking to the target about what they need to change, only makes the situation worse. So you want to seek out a person that knows about bullying and can help you respond appropriately. It's really important to know that there's no shame for you in someone else's behavior. If someone is lying about you, it continues to be a lie, and you should not carry that shame with you. I always encourage people when they come to see me in this manner to like write your resume. You may need it. You might decide you want another job, but more importantly, you see all the things you know and can do because working with a bully makes you think that you are incompetent. Then if you must get away, just quit, find another job. If you can't get away, literally, protect yourself emotionally maybe another department. Have a strong group of friends that will validate what you're doing, but don't waste time trying to change the system or bully because they are not going to change. They might change toward you, but that's their way of life, and they're going to find someone to pick on.

Mike Williams That's some really good information today and all month long. We hope our listeners learned a little bit more and that is all the time we have left on today's show but don't forget you can submit your questions at safeharboril.com. Tune in next Monday morning for another edition of ***Your Life Matters*** with Clinical Social Worker, **Dr. Beth Placketka** from **Safe Harbor Counseling** and **Dr. Beth Speaks**.

Mike Williams Dr. Beth, thanks for joining us again.

Dr. Beth Placketka Thanks for having me.

