

## SON IS BULLIED

>> >Help! I have a wonderful 12 year old son. He is small for his age, and  
>> >has always been picked on. This year in school it just seems to be much  
>> >worse. He hates school and wants to be home schooled. I have always  
>> >told him to ignore people like that, but I'm beginning to think I have  
>> >been very wrong. I know that it has to be very bad for him to want to  
>> >be home schooled. If I go to the school, it will only make things  
>> >worse. I really don't know what to do, can you help?

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXXX

You are certainly feeling pushed into a corner. I am going to try to question some of your assumptions in order to search for some more room for you to move here.

1. I can appreciate the 12 year old logic that mother going to school would make things worse. But how sure are you that you agree? Bullying is a social problem that ought to be addressed at school - for everyone's developmental and educational sake. Why are you certain that the principal or other figures would have no idea how to help? Is it worth finding out? How would anything be made worse by your inquiring discretely whether the school feels responsible to take the matter in hand?

2. Are you sure that "ignoring people like that" is the right strategy for your nearly adolescent boy? As he becomes more mature, he becomes more self-conscious and may no longer be able to settle for adopting his mother's ideas. You might try to get your wonderful son into a wonderful conversation about what options he can think of. Don't try to get THE RIGHT ONE right off the bat. Try to brainstorm and come up with as many ideas as possible, even ostensibly nutty and especially outright funny ones. Then list the pluses and minuses of each idea. Some examples could be- blowing a police whistle, pretending to faint, offering candy to "hungry" attackers, learning karate, and so forth. Home schooling is one option, not the only one. The point is to get your boy actively involved in thinking about his options. If there is a male figure in his life, that would help here.

3. Consider whether you may have inadvertently become part of the problem. Some boys give up socially as a cover for their volunteering to take care of their mothers. Could your son be choosing home schooling as a way to be around you? Does he have any reason to think that you might want or need this? If this avenue is helpful, then you have the chance to convince him that you will take care of yourself, and free him from his sacrifice.

4. Are you living in a place where it is possible to raise children? Do you have the opportunity here to rethink whether the society that produces schools that cannot handle bullies may not be the society in which you want your son to gain his social bearings. Is it necessary (and possible) to move home to a better school rather than moving school into your home?

5. If you are still stymied, tell your son you are stumped and want to consult someone who could help you make sure you have looked at all your options. One option would be to seek a "brief solution-focused" therapist, at least for starters.

Take a deep breath, then a long look, and try to move out of the corner.