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Rachana tried to journey to meet her mother — an alcoholic mother at a private school in Bengaluru — but soon tough.

However, once she realised that she was with the then 13-year-old student had stood her ground and sought justice for herself.

But while she expected the fight to continue to provide her with closure, it was, in reality, only the beginning of an emotional journey which she could see once a decade later. "The coach in question was excellent at his job and I myself had bullied those who were looking forward to leaving home life." While she often tried to put the incident behind her, the repetitive taunts harked at her from her classmates nagged at her dreams before they could fade. "When you're going to get your nails at night or and put your hair care cream on the next morning," she recalls.

It's a bitter-sweet journey, Sharda believes, with whom she founded the intervention school on temper, Calton Academy, which hopes to encourage conversations around the subject, has also been a victim of bullying as a teenager. "Grade 9 was like a hell," he confesses, adding, "Bullying was the norm and we were teased with hockey sticks and pens and everything else we saw for everything. I've stayed up through most of my parenting years for my son and serving in their class clock, were getting beaten up off twice there up a few minutes later. We were like slaves, wrapping their clothes, and reading their beds every day."

Several studies have spoken about the long-term effects of being bullied, as often as a child is bullied. Yes, for instance, bullied any kind of physical injury for several years, and this in turn affected her relationships.

AN UNINTENTIONAL BULLY?

Yet, both her and Sharda's school hold the bully outside responsible for the trauma they faced. "Mostly when you speak of bullies, we speak about their behavioural traits," believes Sharda.

Bhavana Valluappan, a mental health counsellor, adds that most bullies are unaware of the fact that their actions can be detrimental to another individual. Low self-esteem, says Valluappan, leads to

SPOT THE BULLY

Bullying is so damaging that it can have a lasting impact on a victim. Parents need to know whether they are raising a monster

another person. "In such a situation, the child desires to place authority over someone else, in order to find his own identity."

AN EASY PREY

Bullies, in any form, always makes for an easy target, says Dr Madhuri Singh, counselling psychiatrist and family counsellor at Bangalore Hospital. "Such kids react to being bullied in a way that the dominating individual desires, making the latter repeat the behaviour, with increased excitement," she says. Often, children who stand out from the crowd due to specific characteristics like a physical trait (like a nose) also get bullied, mostly by their peers, which in turn can make them a victim of bullying.

CLIPPING A DOMINATING BEHAVIOUR

Valluappan says that an open dialogue, which addresses the reason for a child's behaviour and attempts to understand what she wishes to achieve via the bullying, can bring about a change in behaviour. "It is, however, crucial for the person initiating the conversation

to avoid taking an assertive tone while dealing with the child." Instead of a situation — the parents' separation or divorce — could make a child more aggressive and prone to bullying. "Often, kids tend to bully others when they find themselves in situations that aren't considered 'ordinary,'" says Sharda Lakshmi, a former psychology teacher of 15 years. "In such circumstances, it's crucial for the child to know that the scenario isn't common, but normal."

WHAT CREATES A BULLY

Shardha's popular notion that children of dominating parents tend to be dry and intolerant, Valluappan says. "Kids who have been led by their parents, tend to be the biggest bullies themselves."

Lakshmi, "Kids who're intimidated by an adult figure, especially their parents, often become bullies because they grow up believing that this is accepted behaviour." It happens because only that children who are bullied by their parents, who tend to be more over-protective than them, thus making bullying a vicious cycle. "Working parents, who spend lesser time with their children, tend to miss the subtle cues that could be indicative of a dominating status. If a child is bullied by his peers, and grows aggressive with others in the process, it's critical for parents to recognise this change and connect with the kid."

PARENTS CAN HELP

Parents, says Sharda, always make their kids aware of the consequences they'll have for them. "It's crucial to seek helpful parents that you are being bullied is extremely difficult for the bullies, who tend to be disappointed," he says. Valluappan offers a solution. "The best way to handle this step is to encourage a healthy communication with the child daily." "We wish that children always exhibit subtle cues which indicate that they are being bullied. They might be unusually quiet, or an unusually agitated at the time, especially with their parents. As a while we may observe the behaviour as a 'phase' or should stop fearing a blind eye to it," she stresses.

Dr Singh adds that boosting a child's confidence goes a long way in reducing their self-esteem. "Often, children who do it to the demands of others when they are made to believe that they're incapable of making the right decisions. Parents must give children the freedom to live freely, and make informed decisions, which can go a long way in curbing their identity," she concludes.

