

# HELPING HAND

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## Peer Exclusion May Be As Harmful As Bullying

Children who are excluded from activities by their peers are more likely to withdraw from classroom activities and suffer academically, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).

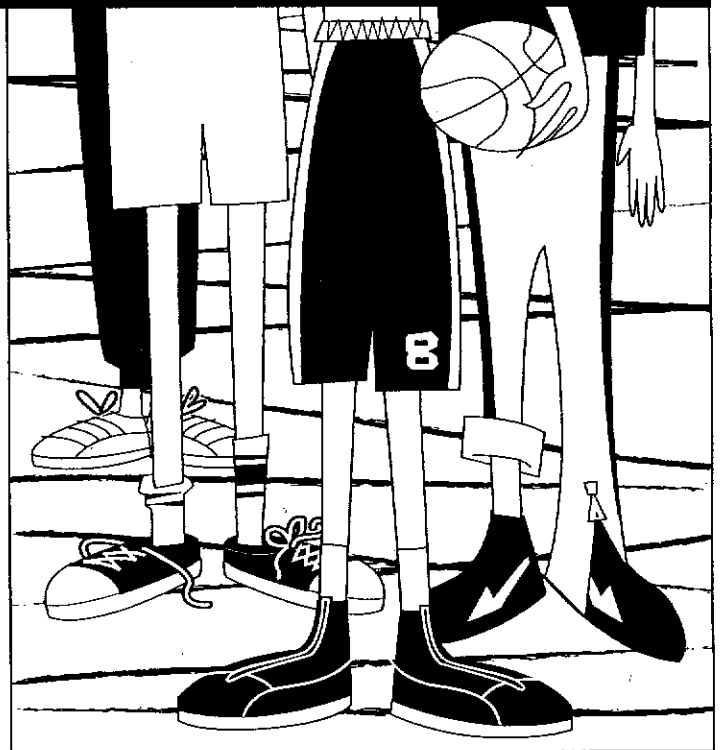
A longitudinal study, conducted over a five-year period following 380 students from age 5 to 11, found that children who are rejected by their peers have more trouble engaging in school activities than children who are not rejected by their peers. This kind of rejection can increase the likelihood that children are victimized or excluded by peers and impair a child's ability to interact with other children, participate in classroom activities and participate in the social context of the classroom. It can result in long-term maladjustment that may endure throughout a child's school years.

"Despite the recent emphasis that has been placed on bullying and victimization in schoolchildren, exclusion, although not as visible as verbal or physical forms of abuse, may be particularly detrimental to children's participation in many school activities," said lead author Eric Buhs, PhD, of the University of Nebraska.

Relative to other types of peer relationships, peer-group rejection appeared to be one of the strongest predictors of a child's likely or unlikely success in academics. Those children who suffered rejection were more likely to avoid school and were less engaged in the classroom setting.

"Once children experience this kind of maltreatment or rejection from their peers, they avoid most classroom peer activities," added Dr. Buhs.

"Children become less active participants in classroom activities because their opportunities to do so are increasingly restricted as a result of peer exclusion. Children who are harassed (picked on or teased) or excluded from activities by peers tend to try to avoid classrooms (and school) as a means



of escaping further abuse," said Buhs. While conventional wisdom tells us that socially withdrawn children tend to be victimized and/or excluded by peers, this study found that rejection more strongly and consistently predicted peer abuse and exclusion. The research findings also showed that students who were rejected may begin devaluing peer interaction activities and avoiding peer and classroom activities.

The findings from this research are consistent with the premise that peer abuse and peer exclusion function as distinct forms of peer maltreatment that have unique effects on children's engagement and adjustment patterns. This study raises the issue that physical or verbal bullying is not the only harmful form of peer maltreatment. While the study did not test specific interventions, the results indicate that future researchers may want to closely examine the role of peer exclusion and explore possible ways of countering the negative effects of this form of peer maltreatment.

(SOURCE: "Peer Exclusion and Victimization: Processes That Mediate the Relation Between Peer Group Rejection and Children's Classroom Engagement and Achievement," Eric Buhs, University of Nebraska; Gary Ladd and Sarah Herald, Arizona State University; *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 98 no. 1)

# Students Like to Learn Hands-On

Ask students and most likely they will tell you they most enjoy hands-on experiences in the classroom, according to a new survey conducted by SkillsUSA.

In a survey of more than 3,500 career and technical education students conducted by SkillsUSA, 45% of students surveyed noted the benefits of hands-on experience, saying it was the main thing that helped them the most in the classroom.

"In light of all the recent news coverage of boys needing hands-on experience to best learn in school, our survey shows that both boys and girls prefer — and therefore can greatly benefit from — tactile, experiential teaching methods," said Tim Lawrence, executive director of SkillsUSA.

The survey, conducted by SkillsUSA during their annual conference, polled 3,567 students. Respondents were career and technical students attending the national SkillsUSA conference and competition, an event that attracts thousands of young people from across the country who are training to become part of America's skilled workforce. Results are available online at [www.skillsusa.org](http://www.skillsusa.org).



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# A Deadly Game

Teenagers and young children around the country are playing a deadly game. They are using belts, ties, bags, their own hands, or any other item that can cause oxygen deprivation to play "the choking game." There is nothing funny about this game. Pressure is applied to blood vessels or oxygen to the lungs is cut off, causing a reduction of oxygen to the heart and brain. The blood pressure is reduced and the body begins the process of dying. Since they are not using any drugs or other substances to obtain this "high," many young people think there is nothing wrong with this frightening practice.

When the choking game is "successful," the pressure to the blood vessels is released, allowing oxygen to return to the brain, heart and other vital organs. Students are learning about this deadly practice by word of mouth, and by descriptions posted on the Internet. Other known names of the choking game are: the pass-out game, the fainting game, the tingling game, and the dreaming game.

If your teen or a teen you know is playing the choking game, s/he may have any of the following signs: unusual markings on the neck, complaints of headaches and bloodshot eyes. Parents can look around a teen's room for ties, ropes, bags, or other items that could be used for asphyxiation.

# How to Talk to Young People about Socializing Safely Online

Young people have heard the stories about people who are stalked by someone they met online or when someone becomes the victim of an identity theft or computer hacker. Young people may think they are well-educated about these events, however, they are naïve in thinking that they are immune to becoming a victim.

Although young people routinely apply common-sense principles and rules taught at home and school to avoid harmful situations in the physical world, they often don't apply these same rules in the online world. They do not make the connection that the same precautionary measures must be applied to both the physical and cyber world. That is why it is imperative that students be taught to understand why it is necessary to socialize safely online. Here are some valuable tips to assist in talking to students about the importance of practicing safe online behavior when using social networking sites:

**Protect privacy: Keep personal information personal.** Students should never give out their Social Security number, address, phone number, or family financial information like bank and credit card account numbers. Remind students that sharing information about other people in the family or about their friends can harm them. They should be cautious about sharing other information, too, like the name of their school, sports teams, or hobbies, where they work or hang out, or any other information that can be used to identify them or locate them offline.

**User names should not reveal too much personal information.** It is inappropriate and dangerous for anyone to use his/her name or hometown as one's user name. Although having a user name gives one the feeling of anonymity, most user names made up of personal information are easily deciphered, leading perpetrators to a student identity and location.

**World's largest billboard: Post only information that is appropriate for the entire public.**

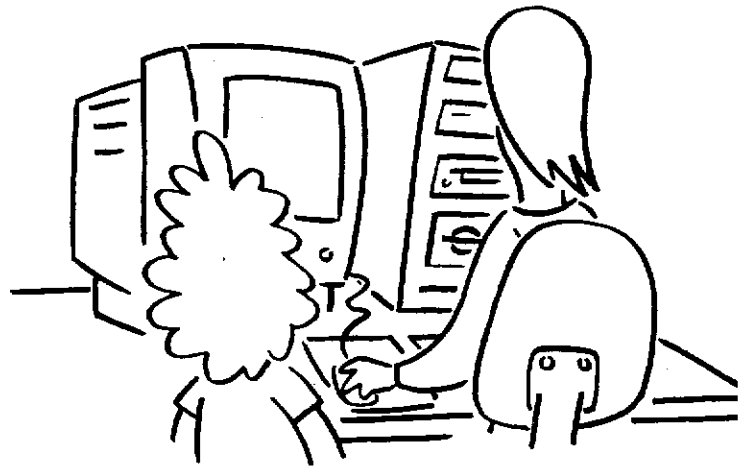
The Internet is the world's largest billboard — anyone can see individual web pages, including teachers, law enforcement officials, college or university admissions officers, or potential employers. What is posted on a website today may be harmful in the future.

**Students should be aware that posting inappropriate photos can lead to damaged reputations and unwanted attention from others.** It is important for students to consider the ramifications of posting visual content online by using webcams, videos, and camera phones. Posting inappropriate visual content such as explicit photos can attract individuals who have bad intentions toward the user, putting a person at risk. In addition, it can lead to suspension or expulsion from school.

**Remember that, once information is posted online and deleted or modified, the original will never be completely deleted.** Even if information is deleted from a website, older versions exist on others' computers.

**Don't talk to strangers: Be careful about adding strangers to "IM," "buddy," or "friend" lists — people are not always who they say they are.** A friend is someone you know well and can trust. The online world has blurred the meaning and definition of a friend. It is important to understand the difference — if students cannot provide solid information as to how they know another person, decide with them if the person should be included in their IM, buddy, or friend list. If you do not approve, delete the user name and block that user.

**Flirting with danger: Educate students about the dangers of**



**flirting with strangers online.** Virtual individuals can easily lie about their identity while they are online; and it is impossible to verify their true identity. You can give the wrong impression when flirting with a real stranger as well as an online stranger.

**Go with your gut.** If anyone feels threatened or uncomfortable by someone or something online, he/she needs to tell an educator or another trusted adult who will know whether or not to report an incident to law enforcement and the Internet service provider. Having students speak up can prevent someone else from becoming a victim.

**Cyber strangers vs. physical strangers: Online friends should not be met offline.** Explain that strangers in the online world pose a threat to students as much as strangers do in the physical world. If educators or parents allow students to physically meet up with virtual friends, adults should chaperone the meeting. Never let them go alone — not even with a friend.

**Teach students not to click on links or download attachments in e-mails from strangers or e-mails they are not expecting.** E-mails from unknown individuals may contain viruses or spyware that could damage computers and steal personal information — including money from bank accounts. Some viruses can "spoof" the name and e-mail addresses of friends and fool individuals into thinking the message is from someone known.

(Source: <http://www.staysafeonline.org/connectedandprotectededucators.html>)

# Five Ways to Keep Students on the College Track

A recent *Time Magazine* reported an estimated 30% of high school students will drop out before graduation. Time also stated that colleges have even higher dropout rates than those of our high schools. Many adults believe motivating students to stay in school begins at home.

National education advocates and co-authors of *Finding Your North: Self-Help Strategies for Science-Related Careers* Drs. Frederick Moore and Michael Penn, say parents play a vital role in helping their children not only stay in, but also succeed in, school. Teachers can help urge parents to invest in their children's education.

They offer five tips for parents to support their child's education:

1. Make it a priority to understand, develop, and support your child's strengths.
2. Provide opportunities for your child to meet and/or be mentored in their areas of interest.
3. Assist your child with understanding the process to obtain a job in their desired career.
4. Create an environment for your child to make mistakes, but provide tools to overcome obstacles.



5. Challenge your child to better understand how they naturally process information (audio, visual, and feeling).

Drs. Penn and Moore stress the importance of support systems and advise students to let the experience of others be their compass in education.

"Students need a resource that provides them with honest and practical advice about how to maintain a proper perspective when they are challenged during their academic pursuits," they say.

They also encourage students to learn to identify and tap into the source of their passion so they can use that energy to fuel their exploration of life.

**For more information, contact:**

**For more information about Chippewa Valley Schools' Student Assistance (drug and violence prevention) Program and/or the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families, please call 723-2360. Visit the Coalition website linked to the Chippewa Valley School' website.**