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Family & Relationships

**Facing the Schoolyard Bully: How to Raise an Assertive Child in an Aggressive World**
Kim Zarzour
Firefly Books
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After the Columbine massacre, “prayers were reinvited into the classroom, parents were re-encouraged to spank. And while many called them ‘freaks,’ ‘sickos’ and ‘losers’ others struggled to understand a hidden world where if you don’t fit in, you are eaten alive,” writes Zarzour.

Society is left to stare unbelievingly at a school that has become a war zone. The country is shell-shocked. Thus a paradox is morphed in direct proportion to society’s inconsistencies: victim becomes bully.

Children victimizing children is nothing new and Zarzour’s book begins with a personal story of childhood trauma suffered at the hands of bullies. Understanding that the bully/victim dichotomy is timeless doesn’t mean, according to the author, that cruelty should be tolerated.

Zarzour defines the school bully as well as the victim giving reasons for the assumption of each role. “Ideally helping the bully begins at pregnancy with preventative programs that can identify high-risk children yet to be born.” Parents and teachers are given concrete advice about what to watch for and how to help when bullying becomes an issue. School administrators are told about successful programs that help eradicate this mushrooming problem.

Invoking a conversational tone throughout her book, Zarzour encourages adults to open their eyes to this trauma plaguing young people: a potentially lifelong damaging problem for both victim and bully.

“Assertiveness is an essential skill in today’s world, but it is not acquired with fists. It is learned gradually, as a child grows up feeling good about himself and empathetic toward others,” writes Zarzour.

Facing the Schoolyard Bully is a strong attempt to further educate the caregivers of children.

*Vyvyan Lynn*