



## Bullying Prevention: Moving from a Culture of Cruelty to a Culture of Caring

*Moderated by Stacey DeWitt  
Founder and President  
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### Module One Today's Culture of Cruelty

*"I...I didn't think anyone thought anything of me, but that I was fat and that I was stupid."*  
– Sarah, Age 14

*"I woke up at 4 in the morning and I was crying. And I really didn't care if I lived or died I was so upset."*  
– Bill, Age 17

*"I have been beaten up, I've been chased down, I've been thrown in trash cans, and I have been thrown in dumpsters. But of course, none of it was really as bad as just the verbal harassment. Because you couldn't escape it."*  
– Marvin, Age 17

*"Sometimes I had to hide in the bathrooms and, I just did what I had to do."*  
– Jay, Age 15

*"They would say that I was gay, I was stupid, I was retarded, I was a freak — just pretty much anything they could possibly think of to make my life miserable."*  
– Kyle, Age 14

*"It was horrible. I remember the day in class he put up a sign that said 'psycho' and I just put my head down in my chair and there was a boy behind me who was kicking my seat and I was just like, Can you please stop? And he wouldn't. I'm like, please stop! He's like, No, whore. Whore! Whore! He was kicking my seat, and I just started crying..."*  
– Erica, Age 18

Hello, I am Stacey DeWitt, president and founder of the Connect with Kids Education Network, a company that provides schools across the nation with research-based, multimedia resources designed to improve student behavior. I will be your facilitator throughout this course.

Our subject is **bullying** ... that is **the act of children being cruel to one another**. Before we begin, let's take a moment to review what's in store.

We'll review some of the basics – **what constitutes bullying**, the **latest research and trends** about why it's happening and who is affected, **strategies to involve and educate students, parents and your colleagues** as cultural agents of change – whether it's in your classroom, on the playground or even in the community – and where to turn for assistance.

This section begins with comments above, shared by six students. No scripts. No leading questions. Their true stories confirm that bullying is a real challenge in schools today. The American Medical Association calls it a public health issue; the National

Association of School Psychologists reports that every school day, 160,000 children stay home because they are afraid of getting hurt at school.

Bullying is nothing new – most adults can instantly recall one or several of their own bullying experiences from childhood. But many veteran educators will tell you that bullying seems different today. They describe a culture in their hallways that is less empathetic and compassionate – that is more cruel than kind. And they describe bullying as more insidious and more difficult to see and control.

What has changed and how does that impact how we prevent and manage bullying? By the end of this module, we hope you will have a greater understanding of:

- **The characteristics of the cultural shift that has impacted bullying.**
- **The definition of bullying in schools today.**
- **The behavioral consequences of bullying.**
- **The first steps to address bullying at its start.**

Many believe, as a general rule, that students today are meaner than they were generations ago and that bullying has changed – perhaps because we have. Our global village is more competitive than in any time in history. There are fewer jobs, a greater disparity of income, a shrinking middle class, more families near or below the poverty line. And as nations... states... cities... schools... even families compete and compare themselves to one another. Generation Me has emerged, and what some experts are calling a culture of cruelty.

“I think the takeaway is the majority of the evidence shows that Generation Me, people born after 1980, are significantly more narcissistic and individualistic than GenX and the Boomers before them,” says researcher Jean Twenge, Ph.D., and professor at San Diego State University.

Dr. Jean Twenge and her colleague, Dr. Keith Campbell, head of the Psychology Department at the University of Georgia, have been studying student behavior for decades and in 2009 released one of the nation’s largest mental health studies of adolescent characteristics and behavior. They used a psychological evaluation tool called the MMPI – the **Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory** -- which has been used among students since the 1930’s. Twenge and Campbell analyzed data from over 77,000 college and high school students between 1938 and 2007. The outcome was clear: Our value system is shifting.

“We seem to have a generation now which really values these sorts of external, extrinsic things, materialism. They want to be entertained all the time and focusing on becoming famous, well those are really putting the values inside out. What you really want instead is valuing those things that are more important: Finding something that you’re passionate about and having those good relationships with other people,” says Dr. Twenge.

The studies show that students today have an **increased focus on extrinsic versus intrinsic values**, which means they value fame, materialism, and outward praise more than character traits like kindness, caring, and cooperation. They are **more competitive**. And . . . they found **higher rates of narcissism** among our nation’s youth.

Dr. Twenge defines this narcissism as “an inflated sense of self. Somebody who is narcissistic thinks they are the best, even when they are not, so they think they’re better looking and smarter and more successful than everybody else even though when you look at that objectively, they’re just like everyone else. So one of my favorite papers in terms of attractiveness in narcissism is called ‘Narcissists think they are so hot but they are not.’”

Dr. Campbell of the University of Georgia, sees narcissism as an inflated view of yourself. "You think you're better than you are, you think you're superior to other people, you feel entitled, you feel special, you lack real empathetic relationships, you can have lots of shallow relationships, but you don't have the empathy or caring that makes long term relationships or positive long term relationships," he says.

When kids are narcissistic and value competition, materialism, fortune and fame the end result is a crueler culture. A culture that experts say begins to show problems with conflicts in relationships, with a breakdown in community, and a lack of connection. And teens interviewed by Connect with Kids confirm that what the research says translates to real life.

*"You want to be liked better than anyone else, or I know I do. . . I want to be like on top of the pile, and if I'm not there I've got to do a lot. . . I feel I need to do a log of things to get there," says Michael, age 14.*

*"You make achievements, but you never get to the top, because the bar just keeps rising," says Megan, age 18.*

*"I definitely feel like my parents don't understand what my life is like and they don't really have a concept of what an average day in my life is like," says Josh, age 17.*

*"Kids are some of the cruelest people in the world... but unfortunately, they don't realize that. And a lot of it goes overlooked by parents and teachers... and they don't stop kids when they hear something in class because they figures, kids will be kids, they're just going to do that" says Hilary, age 17.*

Competition, extrinsic values, and narcissism. It's clear all are contributing factors to a culture of cruelty. But there is also something else. Twenge and her colleagues found another major influence that has changed the way we think and act toward one another: media. **Media – television, video games, the Internet – all intensify competition and narcissism, glorify violence, and normalize cruelty.**

*'It's just a bunch of electrons, you know, it's all, it's just this little page that can change an entire perception of your relationship with other people,' says Alex H.*

*"If you go on Facebook and see a picture of four of your closest friends in this place that you have no idea where they were, what they were doing, you naturally think, "Where was I? Did they invite me? Like, what's going on?" says Alex S.*

*"Yeah, I mean, I feel like it's hard to live up to everything online," says Katherine.*

*"I believe that Facebook and wanting to measure up to other people and constantly being able to compare yourself, it's coming on your phone, the computer, real life, there's not one minute where you're not trying to measure up to something else, and how can you not be depressed when you're so miserable with yourself and anxious to be someone else?" says Ellen.*

*"I mean people are presenting the best images of themselves and so what you see is, and when they're kids, it's going to be partying, it's going to be stuff that's cool, and you're going to think, 'I'm not doing that, everybody else is doing that but me.' And that's*

*going to make you feel left out, it's going to make you feel socially ostracized, and that leads to depression, dejection, it's tough....," says Keith Campbell, Ph.D.*

Watching TV, movies and video games, some students are impressed by the violence.

*"I just think it's pretty cool. Blow up somebody. And it explodes and his guts go everywhere," says Benford, age 16.*

*"Just like stuck 'em on a hook and it came through the stomach....," says Seth, age 15.*

How powerful is media violence? Researchers at the University of Michigan have been tracking over 800 children for more than 40 years. They started in 1960. They found the more young kids were exposed to media violence ... the more likely they were to end up as violent adults. In fact media violence was a better predictor of later crime and violence than poverty, substance abuse, or even abusive parents.

"Television is on in the average American home about 8 hours a day. At the same time people are engaged in what we call interpersonal familial conversations with one another for about 4 minutes a day. So, where are they getting their messages? Clearly they're getting their messages from the media," says Art Silverblatt, Ph.D., a Professor of Communications at Webster University.

And, experts say, the message is ... violence is normal.

"They become desensitized to aggression and violence. And I think that the more they're exposed to it as well, the more they're likely to use that form of behavior to solve problems," says psychologist Jennifer Kelly.

"They are not just releasing aggression. They're practicing aggression. When we practice something, we get good at it. If we don't practice something, we don't get good at it. So spending a considerable amount of time in an aggressive, violent situation on a daily basis is going to improve our aggression skills," says psychiatrist, Dr. Adolph Casal.

"The frightening part of it is the more that they end up seeing those types of characters and the aggression and the violent act is that they become immune to it and then they may imitate it," says Brenda Saturday, a family therapist.

"I do not discount the fact that one of those contributing, very strong contributing factors is the prevalence of violence in our society in entertainment, of entertainment violence that says it's OK to be violent, it's OK to be aggressive, it's OK to lash out when someone disses you or gives you a hard time, when you have a conflict you don't negotiate you go for the throat first. And that's the message. That's the overwhelming message of entertainment media," says Dr. John Murray, a child psychologist with Kansas State University.

And some students agree.

"Yea I think when people play video games and people watch videos and they see violence a lot, it just becomes natural to them and it just doesn't seem bad anymore... and it really is," says Donovan, age 15.

So what have we learned? There is significant research that indicates bullying is the by-product of a cultural shift. Four key factors have influenced that shift:

- **an increased focus on extrinsic vs. intrinsic values**
- **increased competition**
- **higher rates of narcissism and**
- **media that desensitizes us to cruelty and elevates violence.**

And that's not all . . . there are layers upon layers of cause and effect. Overburdened schools, overworked families, single parent homes, the harshness of political discourse... on and on and on. But the end result is a culture of cruelty.

**What does a culture of cruelty mean for educators?** It means that **children enter your hallways and your classrooms with a different mindset** than students did, even a decade ago. They are **pre-disposed to aggressive behaviors, bullying, and meanness** – not necessarily because they have problems at home or deep psychological wounds, but because by the time they get to school they have already learned from the culture – and **need to “unlearn” – that cruelty is normal, it often works, and sometimes it's even cool.**

Given the change in culture and the widespread problem of cruelty among us, preventing and managing bullying today requires a new approach. We can no longer just counsel the bully and victim or shrug off the behavior as the growing pains of childhood.

The research is clear. The best way to counteract bullying is to change the culture within our schools. Working together, we *can* create a **counter-culture of caring**. A culture of caring that **teaches empathy** that **promotes concern for others** rather than just for oneself, a culture that **values respect and kindness**, and **builds a connected community**.

That is the goal of this course: To provide you and your colleagues with the tools to build a counter-culture of caring in your school. Now that we understand the underlying dynamics that are causing the problem, let's move to the specifics. Bullying starts early. To prevent it, we have to begin teaching children about the dynamics of bullying in the pre-school and elementary years. The first steps: Identifying bullying and understanding the consequences if bullying is left unchecked in this new culture of cruelty.

So what is bullying? Is it just kids being mean to each other? The answer is no. **Bullying is generally defined as repeated physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological attacks or intimidation by one individual who is perceived as being physically or psychologically stronger than another.** Said in a more concise way – bullying has four elements:

**Pain:** Someone is physically, psychologically, or sexually hurting someone else.

**Power:** The person who is doing the bullying is perceived as more powerful and is usually attempting to wield some power over the victim.

**Persistence:** Generally the bullying is persistent, which means it happens more than once – it's a repeated act.

**Permission:** Usually someone else knows about it and is allowing it happen. A bully almost always has an audience.

As said earlier, the behavior of bullying is nothing new. Aggression is a natural part of human nature that starts when we are very young. But if left unchecked the consequences can be critical – causing serious harm to individuals, schools, communities and society at large. Understanding the behavior is the first serious of steps to solving the problem – as described in this Connect with Kids video segment:

There are bullies on the playground ... they hit and push and make fun of others kids ... but they didn't invent bullying. It started millions of years ago. Aggression helped our ancestors survive ... and that's why experts say children are still programmed to be aggressive from birth.

According to research from Wichita State University, kindergarten students verbally and physically harass each other once every three to six minutes. They are Baby Bullies.

"Aggressive behavior is innate and if we still lived in the jungle, say, that would be an adaptive behavior," says Jeff Sprague, a behavioral scientist at the University of Oregon, and co-director of its Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior.

The myth is that children suddenly ... somehow ... become bullies in the fifth or sixth grade. As bullies get older, their behavior may be noticed because it gets more daring ... but it starts early.

"I was appalled that they were saying that one little guy was pounding on the face of another kid and I couldn't believe that in first grade this sort of behavior starts already," says Maryellen, a mother.

Experts say even two- and three- and four-year-olds bully each other ... although some adults just ignore it.

"So left to our own devices, sort of unsupervised or untrained, children will continue to become aggressive," says Dr. Sprague.

Jeff Sprague travels the nation helping schools develop anti-bullying programs. His struggle is convincing adults to see bullying as a serious problem, not "just kids being kids. If left unchecked, they will not grow out of it, they'll grow into it," he says.

Grade school bullies are four times more likely to be convicted of a crime later in life. As they get older, bully victims are six times more likely to have thoughts of suicide. And, when school shootings occur, two-thirds of the time the kid with the gun is a victim of bullying ... looking for revenge.

Experts say that all those terrible feelings can start to build as early as preschool. And here's what the kids have to say: "When I was three I got bullied a lot." "When they bully me, I cry." "I feel sad when it's bullying me, and then I turn out mad." "And it makes me want to do it back to them."

Schoolyard bullying happens all the time, but it can be hard to spot. If you're an adult, you either have to hide out, behind a car or a fence, or you have to ask the children.

"My parents probably don't know. And teachers, I don't think they get the full thing. Because the full thing is a lot. They get probably like half of it," says Matthew, age 11. At one elementary school bullies play "keep away" using shoes taken from one of their classmates. According to the National Institutes of Health, 16 percent... one of every six kids ... are victims of bullying.

"They, they were, um, scratching me and punching me and kicking me," says Christopher, age 7.

"He punched me right here," says Kevin, age 7.

"She would say, you're not my friend unless you buy me something new, or you give me all your, clips, hair clips, yeah, was that it?" says 7-year-old Nina with her mother, Ana.

Nine-year-old Brianna says she's been a bully victim for almost as long as she's been in school. "They pushed me, they cursed at me. Like a lot, each day."

She tries to be strong ... to stand up for herself ... but the bullies make her cry, and the crying makes it worse. "Yeah, they start laughing and then as soon as they're laughing they think of more things to say about me."

Brianna has always been the smallest in her class. She's nine, but only weighs 53 pounds. She says her size makes her a target, and, for some strange reason ... so do holidays.

"At Christmas they would always call me Santa Claus Elf. On Halloween they said, um, they said even with the costume on you still look the ugliest as ever. Like on Valentines Day, I would sometimes ask someone to be my Valentine, and they would say nobody wants to be your Valentine."

For Brianna, this abuse started in the first grade ... for other children it starts even earlier. By the time she was seven, Brianna was being bullied so much, her mom put her in a different school. But the new school had bullies, too.

"And they literally snatched the backpack, and jumped on it. And bent and smashed a tin lunchbox. And after that she just got the backpack and started swinging," says Cheryl, Brianna's mother. This time, Brianna fought back ... and then got suspended for two days.

The victims of bullying are hurt and angry, and all of that emotion builds up. Experts say bully victims are more likely than other students to bring weapons and use violence at school. A taskforce from the U.S. Secret Service has analyzed every school shooting dating back to 1974. The most common motive, they found, is revenge.

"They were victims of chronic and severe bullying in their schools. They had asked for help and they had felt like they didn't get any," says Jeff Sprague.

According to the American Medical Association, bully victims have more depression, more anxiety and more thoughts of suicide ... all of which makes it very hard to learn. The National Association of School Psychologists says that each day, about 160,000 students miss school for fear of being picked on.

Chiling Hammer, as second-grade teacher, says that during her first year as a teacher, half of her class would stay inside during recess. "When they go out they get, you know, beaten up, or kids tease them, they won't share their equipment with them. They get harassed so they'd rather stay in and just stay in the classroom with me rather than go outside for recess."

As you can see, bullying starts early and happens often. If left unchecked, it can have severe consequences for all of our children: the bullies, the victims, and the witnesses. Here's what we know:

Bullying impacts everyone. **Victims are more likely to experience depression, exhibit high-risk behaviors and have suicidal thoughts and bring weapons to school.** Bullies are likely to be **convicted of a crime** and, like their victims, **engage in high-risk behaviors. Bullying distracts all three groups – the bullies, the victims and the witnesses – from learning,** and a culture of cruelty that promotes bullying can **impact attendance and truancy,** keeping kids from coming to school.

Given these potential outcomes, it is critical that we focus on building a culture that prevents bullying and make certain that we identify the behavior and stop it early. The first step is raising awareness and helping children understand the anatomy of bullying. Experts say that even very young children can be taught to identify and learn behaviors that counteract bullying like empathy, courage, respect, and kindness. So what and how do we teach them?

We have to clearly and consistently **teach students the definition and consequences of bullying, provide specific strategies for dealing with bullying, develop and define clear consequences, and teach students the importance of reporting these behaviors in school.**

We have covered the definition and consequences of bullying. Now, it's important that you, as an educator, teach that same information to students. What is bullying, what are its consequences, why is it so critical that we prevent it. As they say, when it comes to the first and most important step – the devil is in the details – because most young students can't always articulate the motivation behind their own behaviors or the behaviors of others. We have to teach them.

"If you just say bullying. Especially the younger children, they're not really going to understand what you're talking about. But if you start giving them definitions of being

called mean names, or being pushed to the side, or having their lunch taken, then they start getting it. So you have to do some defining of what bullying is before they really get it,” says Lucinda Mejdell-Awbery, PHN, MA, Student Support Services Coordinator with the Visalia Unified School District.

As you teach students the definition and consequences of bullying, **be specific**. You can evaluate their level of understanding by asking them to **identify their own experiences** and taking them through the four elements of bullying in some of those examples. Also, provide some **real-life examples** of your own: Use news stories, videos, and text – anything you can find that will give them a real-life example of bullying. And make certain that you **explain the negative consequences** of the behavior in that real-life example. Talk to them specifically about how bullying impacts relationships, communities and the society as a whole.

Along with helping students define bullying and understanding the consequences of the behavior, it's important to give them positive solutions for resolving conflict and to help you develop a counter-culture of caring. Let's take a look at some programs that are teaching assertive-training as a tool for combating bullying.

Tyler says he's been bullied since kindergarten. Now, his class is teaming up with another school in Oakland, California, to write pamphlets and act out skits about bullying.

“We want to make this, this world bully free,” says Tyler, age 9.

By talking about the problem, these second-graders aren't so afraid of the bully anymore ... it's another way to be assertive.

“Maybe one more time they do it I'm just going to call the President!” says Tyler.

That's funny to imagine, but it's actually a great attitude. And these third- and fourth-graders are ... again ... learning to protect themselves by being assertive. As participants at the Mosaic Project, a kind of bullying-proofing camp in Northern California, kids learn there are three parts: your body language, what you say, and how you say it.

“I think we can reach them on a much deeper level when we're here living together, working together, essentially creating our own culture. What we're doing here is we're creating a micro chasm of the world that we want to see,” says Lara Mendel, the Mosaic Project's executive director and co-founder.

Ms. Mendel describes an imaginary confrontation with a bully, and then demonstrates how being strong and firm can defuse the bully ... without starting a fight. She teaches how to be assertive without being aggressive. And then she gets the kids to actually say the words ... to practice a script.

She says too often kids who are bullied are told to “just stand up for yourself!”

“But the only option they're given in terms of standing up for themselves is fighting, fight back. Get back in their face. And so what teaching assertiveness allows us to do is give them another option. You can stand up for yourself and you can be strong, and you can do it without spreading the hurt, or spreading the hate, or as we say here often, spreading the poison.”

Experts recommend that parents reinforce these lessons at home with lots of repetition.

“It has to be repeated quite often, because when the students are in the situation, and they are under a lot of stress, it's hard for them to remember, what they need to do,” says Lucinda Mejdell-Awbery. And teachers say that assertiveness training works.

“I see a different atmosphere on our campus. It's less fights, less referrals – I



think some real positive things have come from that,” says Ramona Conn, a first-grade teacher.

Another way for children to be strong and assertive ... is to team up with their friends. Matt and Tucker have made a pact to look out for each other. To watch each other’s back.

“It gives me this feeling that I’m, you know, that I have somebody for me, that I have, that I’m just not all alone,” says Tucker.

It looks like fun ... to run and yell and play ... but we don’t know what the kids know ... for the victims of bullies, recess can be the scariest time of the day.

“It’s like not as easy as you might think it is, you know, it’s not like you can just go up and say stop. It takes a bit of nerve,” says Tucker.

Tucker and Matthew aren’t so afraid of recess anymore because they have a pact: You stand up for me, and I’ll stand up for you. “If someone’s calling me names, my confidence level goes down, right? And then if Tucker comes in, he says that’s not OK, and then my confidence level goes back up, so then we’re both against them. And if, if you don’t have a friend like that, if you don’t have anyone to stick you up, your confidence level is down, they just keep on picking on you,” says Matt, age 11.

Two studies from Canada show why every child needs a “recess buddy.” The researchers found that when a friend, a bystander says, “stop,” more than half the time, the bullying actually does stop ... within seconds.

“It’s even been shown, if you have one close friend in school, you’re very much less likely to become a serious bully victim. So even one friend, and a social network, even better, provides that protection and provides that peer pressure against the bully,” says Jeff Sprague.

Many experts believe that bullying has become more widespread because bullying behaviors – that is intimidation, meanness and what some even call peer abuse – works in a society that embraces and even promotes cruelty. Our job is to show students the emotional pay-off of being assertive rather than aggressive and kind rather than cruel. We need now to literally teach them and help them experience what it means to live in a connected, other-directed community where you don’t have to watch your back because your friends have your back. What did we learn from the video? Let’s sum it up.

It’s important to teach children how to **be assertive rather than aggressive**. Look for opportunities in day-to-day life and provide real-life stories and examples of how to students can speak up for themselves without intimidating others. Try to **make certain that everyone has a least one friend** – someone they can count on who has their back. If you see a student who is completely isolated, try to pair that student with other children who share common interests. Most importantly, teach students that **taking care of one another is priority** in your classroom and in your school. Make it part of your mission statement; publicize it through materials on bulletin boards and handouts. And – make certain that you model the mission and reward caring behavior among students on a regular basis.

Finally, it’s critical to develop clear, consistent consequences, and to teach children the importance of looking for and reporting bullying when it occurs. Let’s review what the experts have to say:

“Because what happens if they don’t consistently respond, the kids pick up on that, and they think well, they don’t really care,” says Lucinda Mejdell-Awbery, a Student Support Services Coordinator with the Visalia Unified School District.

“So I think you need it on really both sides, encouragement for the victim, but also sort of putting up barriers and encouraging the bully to stop. In the absence of either

of those, the bully is even more empowered and the victim is even more degraded, demoralized,” says Jeff Sprague.

If we put these strategies into practice early, when kids are young, and reinforce with consistent repetition throughout their lives, we can and will change the culture. How do you fit all this in an already crowded schedule?

We know that it can seem overwhelming. As we continue this course, we’ll review specific strategies for how to “infuse” this process in your school day. In the meantime, remember this: Students don’t perform well in a culture of cruelty. They feel insecure, making it difficult to focus on academics and tend to the tasks of learning. So, we really don’t have a choice. We must build a culture of caring if we want to help children achieve – and truly become the best they can be. Building a counter-culture of caring is not a series of additional tasks that crowd the school day. It is a mindset, a mission, an approach that will produce rich and rewarding results.

What can help begin that process? Understanding the cultural shift, defining bullying and understanding the consequences and taking the first steps in addressing bullying early will help to build a counter-culture of caring.



Connect with Kids

## About Stacey DeWitt



Stacey DeWitt is the founder and president of Connect with Kids Education Network (CWK). She is an attorney and veteran journalist who has dedicated her life to child advocacy. During her legal career, DeWitt served as a deputy prosecutor working with disadvantaged children through the juvenile courts and family service agencies. There she developed a passion for educating students, their parents, and communities about how to successfully navigate life-changing social and emotional issues. As an attorney, she was actively involved in judicial review of ethical legal standards and served as a child advocate working to improve the state juvenile code, lobbying for legislative policies that improve the lives of at risk children, and volunteering to represent disadvantaged and abused children.

Prior to her legal career, DeWitt was a television anchor, producer and reporter for ABC, NBC, and PBS affiliates. As a broadcast journalist, she learned to harness the emotional power of video and became committed to using the power of media as an educational tool.

CWK is the outgrowth of her journalistic and legal experience. She and her husband founded the company with a mission to combine the power of media and the promise of education to improve the lives of children, parents, and the communities that support them. DeWitt has produced more than 65 documentaries focused on child behavior and parenting issues. More than 27 of those documentaries have received Emmy® awards or nominations. She has interviewed hundreds of children, families and experts on the social and emotional issues facing America's youth and is a sought after speaker and educational trainer nationwide.

She is married and is the mother of a college-age daughter and teenage son. She lives in Atlanta and works with her husband and company co-founder Sam DeWitt, who is equally committed to and passionate about providing positive solutions to improve the lives of our nation's youth.

For more information, please visit [www.connectwithkids.com](http://www.connectwithkids.com).