

Switch off the bullies

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Members of the Avalon Hoshin Jutsu club learnt anti bullying techniques at the Avalon Recreation Centre.

CHILDREN should be made to surrender their mobile phones at night in a bid to stop the devastating effects of bullying, according to a northern beaches expert.

Avalon's Rose Smith, who has run a free anti-bullying camp on the northern beaches for the past 15 years, said children needed to learn to "disconnect".

"Cyber-bullying is huge and the problem is they don't know how to disconnect and turn off," she said

"Studies have been done on kids with mobile phones which show teenage girls will be interrupted up to 30 times a night by their phone, which can affect their sleep, study and their relationship with their family."

Ms Smith said parents should take their children's phones when they went to bed and return them in the morning in order to give them some time off.

"The argument I hear from parents then is 'what if they're left out?', but in reality we teach them resilience and teach them that these things will not last.

"Most children understand parents have rules and will be sympathetic to their friend."

On Saturday, Ms Smith will once again run her free camp, Bullyproofing 101: Back To School Skills, at the Avalon Recreation Centre.

The camp teaches children in years two to seven how to deal with bullies, social skills and educates them about stranger danger through playing games, theatre sports, drama and general discussions.

Participants will also learn basic, non-aggressive martial arts to help build their self confidence to stand up for themselves or intervene to stop bullying.

“By combining some basic physical techniques with anti-bullying skills we will give them the tools to handle anything school throws at them,” Ms Smith said.

“If we can help them at an early age with things such as bullying we can make a difference in their later years because the scars of bullying can stay with someone for life.”

Originally working with at-risk street kids with the Salvation Army, Ms Smith turned her focus to bullying and has spent the past 20 years in the field.

TAKING CHARGE

ROSE’S TIPS TO COMBAT BULLYING

Become your child’s friend on Facebook so you can monitor their activity

Only allow your child to access Facebook in a common room

Children should surrender their mobile phones when they go to bed

Encourage them to make friends in different environments

Teach them basic social skills like compromise and being a good sport

GET THE SKILLS

BULLYPROOFING 101

WHAT: Free anti-bullying camp where children in years two to seven learn about cyber bullying and how to disconnect, exclusion and peer pressure, physical bullying, social survival skills including dealing with gossip, the pack mentality and reading social signals

WHEN: Saturday from 10am to 1pm

WHERE: Avalon Recreation Centre

BOOKINGS: Mandatory at hoshin.com.au