

# Bullying

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IDOE



# Definition

- Intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words or other behavior, such as name-calling, threatening and/or shunning committed by one or more children against another.
- An imbalance in real or perceived power must exist between bully and victim.

# Definition

- Not intentionally provoked by the victims.
- Includes various forms of hazing (“initiation rites”).
- Bullying = Peer Abuse

“Approximately          of Midwestern school children reported some episodes of bullying, with about 14 percent experiencing severe reactions to abuse.”

Hoover, Oliver & Hazler, 1992

- Begins in elementary school, peaks in middle school and tapers off in high school.
- School size, racial composition, school setting are not factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying.

“An estimated 160,000 children each day miss school for fear of being picked on.”

National Association of School  
Psychologists

# Is it just “part of growing up”?

- “A look at social development shows this isn’t normal, healthy behavior. Bullying is an indication of poor social development.”

*Tonja Nansel, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*

# Or a question of rights...

- All children have a right to a school environment where they feel safe and ***can learn to the best of their abilities.***

# Direct Bullying

- Examples:
  - ◆ Teasing
  - ◆ Taunting
  - ◆ Threatening
  - ◆ Hitting
  - ◆ Stealing

# Indirect Bullying

- Example:
  - ◆ Social isolation through intentional exclusion

# Characteristics of Bullies

- Can be both male and female, but most often are male.
  - ◆ Little research on girls who bully.
- Tend to have troubled backgrounds.
  - ◆ Family problems.
  - ◆ History of physical/emotional abuse.
  - ◆ Physical punishment is used at home.
  - ◆ Inconsistent discipline at home.
  - ◆ Parental involvement and warmth are often missing.

# Characteristics of Bullies

- Apt to break rules.
- Little anxiety over consequences or potential punishment.
- Strong societal self-esteem, but low core self-esteem.
- New report shows that bullies are likely to be among the most popular kids in school, admired by peers and teachers alike, especially in middle school years.

# Characteristics of Bullies

- Need to feel powerful and in control.
- Derive satisfaction from inflicting suffering.
- Little to no empathy for victims.
- Defend their actions saying the victim provoked them.
- Defiant and oppositional toward adults.
- Antisocial.

# Characteristics of Victims

- Anxious, insecure, cautious.
- Suffer from low self-esteem.
- May lack social skills and friends.
- Often socially isolated.
- Close to their parents who may be overprotective.
- Physically weaker.

# Consequences of Bullying

## For Bullies

- Bullies often maintain these behaviors into adulthood.
- Correlation between bullying and legal and/or criminal problems in adulthood.

“By some estimates 1 in 4 chronic bullies will have a criminal record by age 30.”

National Association of School Psychologists

# Consequences of Bullying

## For Bullies

- 1 in 4 chance of becoming a criminal by age 30.
- Develop into adults who are more likely to be convicted of serious crimes, be abusive toward their spouses/children, and have lower educational and career advancement.
- Children of bullies often become bullies themselves.

# Consequences of Bullying

## For victims

- Afraid of school
- Increased social isolation
- Possible depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem that can continue into adulthood.
- Feel unsafe at school.
- More likely to have school attendance problems than other students.

# Consequences of Bullying

## For victims

- May feel compelled to take drastic measures, such as fighting back, weapon-carrying or even suicide.
- Bystanders and peers of victims can be distracted from learning as well.

“Most if not all of the youth who carried out homicidal acts of violence [in schools] were deeply disturbed by repeated bullying experiences such as being teased, taunted, and rejected by peers.”

Dewey Cornell, Director of the Virginia Youth Violence Project

# Student Perceptions

- Adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective.
- Teachers seldom or never talk to their classes about bullying.
- Telling will only lead to more harassment.

# Why Bullying Often Persists

- Adults underestimate the amount of bullying.
- Reluctance to become involved.
- Believe it's an inevitable part of childhood.
- May be desensitized to the problem.

# Why Bullying Often Persists

- Teachers may feel powerless to do much about it; they don't know how to stop it, or they are afraid they wouldn't be supported by their principals.
- Telling a victim to stand up to the bully and fight back usually leads to more violent bullying.
- Takes place where there's little adult supervision.

# Why Bullying Often Persists

- Schools may be overwhelmed with many other problems.
- Lack of resources.

# School Risk Factors

- Presence of aggressive students in same or slightly higher grade
- Lack of supervision during breaks
- Staff have indifferent or accepting attitudes toward bullying
- Students have indifferent or accepting attitudes toward bullying

## ***However...***

- *Larger classes may offer an opportunity for all students to connect with someone.*

# Prevention Principles

- School-wide initiative
- Warmth and positive interest
- Involvement from adults as authorities and role models
- Firm limits and sanctions to unacceptable behavior and violation of rules
- Respect for differences
- Avoidance of gender stereotyping

# Why school-wide?

- The caring majority is a positive peer culture group that most students will elect to join if given the means and opportunity.
- Those who elect not to may have that option; but they may not disrupt the rest of the group.

# Least effective strategy

- Leave students to deal with the problem themselves.
  - ◆ Don't count on a victim to come forth: fear of retaliation or guilt for "tattling"

# Program is NOT

- A specific curriculum
- A conflict resolution program
- A peer mediation program
- Identical in any two schools

*Beware of programs that focus solely on students' responsibility for resolving bullying*

# Elements

- Measures at school level
- Measures at class level
- Measures at individual level

# Goals

- Reduce existing bully/victim problems among students
- Prevent the development of new bully/victim problems
- Achieve better peer relations at school
- Improve school climate
- Emphasis on changing norms regarding peer abuse/support

# Core Components

- Awareness and adult involvement
- Anonymous student questionnaire
- School-wide assemblies and in-service training
- Increase adult supervision in “hot spots”
- Class rules against bullying
- Classroom meetings
- Talk individually with victims, bullies, and parents of involved students

# Discussion

- Describe a time when you were either the victim of a bully or when you bullied someone else. How old were you and the other people involved?
- How did you feel afterwards? Was there an adult you could confide in or go to for help or advice?
- Did you ever witness someone else being bullied? Was it a stranger, friend or relative? As a bystander, did you do anything to intervene?

# School-wide action

- Awareness and adult involvement.
  - ◆ Questionnaire/survey

# School-wide action

- Increased adult supervision
- School-wide conference
  - ◆ School assembly
  - ◆ Staff in-service

# Classroom-level activity

- Class rules
- Class meetings

# Individual interventions

- Talks with bullies and victims
- Talks with parents of involved students

# Steps to implement plan

- Bullying Prevention Committee
- Student questionnaire
- Determine what behaviors will no longer be allowed
- Develop consequences for inappropriate behavior
- Share expectations and consequences with parents, students, all school staff
- Develop empathy for victims and empower “silent” majority of students
- Classroom meetings
- Teach problem-solving techniques
- Emphasize no bullying/harassing rules
- Re-evaluate

# Pitfalls to avoid

- Avoid creating paperwork
- Get administrative support first
- Be careful of stigmatizing students as either bullies or victims
- Not limited to handful of isolated lessons
- Don't expect change overnight