

Bullying and School-Age Children

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- “We are all either bullies, bullied, or bystanders” - -Richard L. Gross, MD
- “Bullying is when someone repeatedly and purposely says or does mean things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself”
 - Dan Olweus

Bullying

- Aggressive behavior that intends to cause harm or distress
- Repeated over time
- Occurs in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power or strength
- A form of intimidation toward someone perceived as weaker
- A way of getting what one wants through coercion or force

Two Types of Bullying

- Emotional Bullying, including CyberBullying (on-line)
- Physical Bullying

Emotional Bullying

- May begin as “name calling” or teasing by someone who is not a friend. (This is **different** from a friend giving a friend a nickname that may not be flattering, but still done out of affection, e.g., pigpen, brain, professor)
- Name calling or teasing that is **persistent** and with the **intention** of hurting feelings

Emotional Bullying

One person or a group singles out another person with the **intent of being mean and hurtful**, in front of others or in private, and when they are **asked to stop, they don't**:

Includes gossip, name calling, teasing, threatening, spreading rumors, social exclusion, mean practical jokes, belittling, humiliation, embarrassing, shaming, isolating/ostrasizing

CyberBullying

- Using technology and internet (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, blogs, chatrooms, email, etc.) to harass, embarrass, shame, humiliate, stalk, threaten, torment
- Very problematic because it is very intimidating.

CyberBullying

- CyberBullies may conceal their identities so the victim experiences anonymous attacks
- Is the type of bullying that a victim cannot escape because it haunts them 24-7, and can be seen, read, saved and shared by a vast number of people

Physical Bullying

The instigator attempts to physically dominate the victim, with the goal of **instilling fear, and to coerce them to act in ways they would prefer not to.**

How?

-kicking, tripping, shoving, punching, slapping, pushing books on ground, spitting, destroying personal property/clothing, unwanted sexual touching

Physical Bullying

After threatening violence or after one instance of violence, the **victim fears future violence**

The bully uses this threat to coerce the victim to behave in ways they wouldn't typically do:

- give away lunch money, give away lunch, give away answers on tests, do homework, engage in embarrassing behavior

How common is Bullying?

PACER (2016), CDC (2015), NCES (2015),
NSCS (2011):

- 20-30% of students reported being bullied during school year
- 64% of those bullied did not report it (only 36% did)
- 56% - 70% of students witnessed bullying at school

How Common is Bullying?

- 70% of students report bullying is an on-going problem at their school
- 15% of high school students are bullied electronically
- 10% of students drop out or change schools because of bullying
- 80% of students who identify as LGBT
- 25-60% of overweight kids

Gender Differences

- **Boys** report being bullied by boys; **Girls** report being bullied by boys and girls
- Non-physical bullying is most common form.
- In general, **boys** are more likely to be physically bullied, rather than emotionally bullied, by peers. **Girls** are more likely to be bullied more subtly: rumor spreading, leaving others out of groups, sexual comments, and cyberbullied.
- However, boys and girls experiences are more similar now than ever

Where Does Bullying Occur?

- At school: in classroom, hallways, in bathroom, on sports fields, during recess, in lunch-room
- On school bus
- In the neighborhood
- Walking or biking to/from school
- Around town, at beach, at park
- At playground, community center
- In cyberspace

Targets of Bullying

- those with **disabilities** – physical, intellectual, developmental
- those with **weight problems**
- those of **minority** race/religion
- **LGBT** – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender youth
- anyone **vulnerable/different**
- those with **poor social skills**

How Can You Know If Your Child Is Being Bullied?

- Comes home with torn, damaged or missing pieces of clothing, books or other belongings
- Has unexplained cuts/bruises
- Has few, if any friends with whom s/he spends time
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to/from school riding the bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers

How Can You Know If Your Child Is Being Bullied?

- Takes long, illogical routes when walking to/from school
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school
- Appears sad, moody, anxious, teary when s/he comes home. Has trouble focusing.
- Complains of headaches, stomachaches or other physical problems
- Has trouble falling/staying asleep. Has bad dreams
- Loss of appetite
- Allowance money “spent” and no evidence of purchases

Consequences of Bullying

- Short-term and long-term consequences for victims:

In general, victims of chronic bullying have **more physical and psychological problems** than those not harassed. They are more likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, absent from school, and to think about suicide. They tend not to grow out of the role of victim, e.g., tend to be bullied for years. As adults, they may be at risk for depression, anxiety and other mental health problems.

Consequences of Bullying

Short Term:

- excessive tiredness/lethargy
- change in appetite
- change in sleep habits
- isolating self, staying close to home
- lack of desire to go to school
- moodiness
- regression (return to a less mature state, e.g., bedwetting)

Consequences of Bullying

Long Term:

- feeling intense sense of aloneness
- more intense social withdrawal
- drop out of school and other activities that had been valued
- excessive worry, sadness
- irritability
- decreasing self-worth

Consequences of Bullying

Long term:

- difficulty controlling anger
- aggressive or violent acting out
- hopelessness
- suicidal thoughts
- self-hurting behavior
- suicide

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

1. Focus on your child

- **CHILDREN NEED PARENTAL HELP TO STOP THE BULLYING**
- Children typically do NOT tell their parents because they are embarrassed, ashamed, frightened of the bully and afraid to being a “tattle tale”
- If a child has told parents about it, it has taken a lot of courage to do so

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Focus on your child

Be supportive and gather info about the situation

- never tell child to ignore the bullying
- **don't blame the victim.** Don't assume child did something to provoke it.
- **listen carefully.** Learn as much as you can about when and where it occurred and the tactics used and if there were any witnesses

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Focus on your child

- **Empathize.** Tell victim that bullying is wrong and that you are glad s/he had the courage to tell about it. Enlist child in the solution. Get ideas about what child can do about it and let child know that you will contribute as well. **Goal – child does not feel alone.**
- If you disagree with how your child handled the situation, **don't criticize** – s/he's already getting that from the bully, and doesn't need it from you.

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Focus on your child

- **Don't encourage physical retaliation** – not likely to end the problem and could have worse consequences
- **Control your own emotions** – it's very easy to be reactive when it's your own child. Very important to have a plan of action rather than just react impulsively

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

2. Contact your child's teacher or principal or the adult in charge of the setting where it is occurring

- If persistent, bullying may not stop without the help of adults
- **Keep own emotions in check** (mama-bear or papa-bear is the knee-jerk reaction, but it puts listener on the defensive). Give **factual info** that was told to you by your child –**who, what, when, where, and how**
- Emphasize that you want to **work together** toward a solution. **Develop a safety plan.**

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Contact child's teacher or principal or adult in charge of the setting

- Do not contact the parents of the child who bullied your child – could make matters worse. School officials should contact the parents
- Expect that bullying will stop. Talk regularly with child and staff to monitor. If it persists, contact school again (and again, and put concerns in writing)

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

3. Fortify your child

- Forewarn your child about the possibility of bullies
- Help child become more resilient to bullying by developing positive attributes – music, sports, arts, community service, etc. Helps child be more confident among peers

What to Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Fortify your child

- Encourage contact with friendly students at school. Teachers are good observers of the social scene in the classroom and their suggestions can be helpful
- Encourage friendships outside of school environment

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Fortify your child

- Teach safety strategies: how to seek help from an adult when feeling threatened (safety plan). Role playing helps.
- Assure child that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.

What To Do If Your Child Is Bullied

Fortify your child

- ask self if child is being bullied because of a learning difficulty that makes it hard to read social situations or has poor social skills. Seek professional help if necessary.
- child must feel **safe at home** – shelter from the storms of life. Encourage your child to talk to you about anything and s/he will feel less alone in the face of adversity

Resources

www.nobullying.com

www.pacer.org/bullying

www.connectsafely.org (for cyberbullying)

SUPAC (Syracuse University Parent's
Advocacy Center)

LDA of CNY (Learning Disabilities
Association of Central NY)

Thank You!