

Kids and Bullying

What is Bullying?

Bullying includes a wide variety of behaviors, but all involve a person or a group repeatedly trying to harm someone who is weaker or more vulnerable. A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (Olweus, 1994). It can involve direct attacks (such as hitting, threatening or intimidating, maliciously teasing and taunting, name-calling, making sexual remarks, and stealing or damaging belongings) or more subtle, indirect attacks (such as spreading rumors or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone).

The problem

- Bullying is not a normal behavior
- Bullying is widespread in American schools, with more than 16 percent of U.S. school children saying they had been bullied by other students during the current term, according to a survey funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- Most incidences occur in places with little supervision, e.g. playgrounds and hallways

The Facts

- Bullies are typically larger than their victims and have more positive attitudes toward the use of violence than other students; victims are less popular, often without a single friend in class
- Bullying victims tend to be more anxious and insecure than other students and often react by crying, withdrawal, and avoidance when attacked
- Bullying occurs most frequently in sixth through eighth grade
- There is a little variation between urban, suburban, town, and rural areas; suburban youth were 2-3 percent less likely to bully others.
- Males are both more likely to bully others and more likely to be victims of bullying than females. Males are also more likely to say they had been bullied physically (being hit, slapped, or pushed), while females more frequently say they were bullied verbally and psychologically (through sexual comments or rumors).

How Bullying Victims Suffer

- Victims' grades may suffer because attention is drawn away from learning.
- Fear may lead to absenteeism, truancy or dropping out.
- Victims may lose or fail to develop self-esteem, experience feelings of isolation and may become withdrawn and depressed.
- As students and later as adults, victims may be hesitant to take social, intellectual, emotional or vocational risks.
- If the problem persists, victims occasionally feel compelled to take drastic measures, such as vengeance in the form of fighting back, weapon-carrying or even suicide.

How Bullies Suffer

- Students who perpetrated acts of bullying attend school less frequently
- They are more likely to drop out of school than other students.

What are the long-term consequences of bullying behavior?

Bullying is often a warning sign that children and teens are heading for trouble and are at risk for serious violence. Teens (particularly boys) who bully are more likely to engage in other antisocial/delinquent behavior (e.g., vandalism, shoplifting, truancy, and drug use) into adulthood. They are four times more likely than non-bullies to be convicted of crimes by age 24, with 60 percent of bullies having at least one criminal conviction.

What can teachers and school administrators do? Schools and classrooms can become controlled environments to recognize bullying attitudes among children and curb them in early stages. Teachers can observe and monitor disruptive behaviors in children, ask children to talk about what they feel about bullying, read stories with morals, involve children in establishing class room rules, teach cooperation by assigning projects that encourage collaboration, and develop action plans to ensure students know what to do when they encounter a bullying situation. Teachers can also encourage role modeling, provide one-to-one discussions, improve self-esteem in children, promote artistic activities to prevent bullying may be encouraged in classrooms. Teachers can confront bullies in private and notify parents of victims and bullies when confrontation occurs. School Administrators can assess the awareness and scope of bullying problem in the schools through student and staff survey, supervision of high-risk areas, post and publicize clear behavioral standards, encourage parent participation, and establish confidential bullying report system.

What can parents do? Respect and treat children courteously. Meet teachers and track your child's progress at school. If bullying occurs, keep records of bullying incidents and work collaboratively with school personnel to address the problem. Support your child but do not encourage dependence on you. Do not encourage your child to be aggressive or strike back. Be patient as conflicts with children cannot be resolved overnight. If the problem persists, seek attorney's help or local law enforcement officials.

Further information about bullying, and its prevention can be accessed through the following sources:

Description, Research and Statistics:--www.bullying.org

Advice for teachers and families

- www.stopbullyingnow.com
- http://sde.state.ok.us/publ/publ_pdf/Bullying.pdf
- Dan Olweus's very useful book, *Bullying at School* (Blackwell Publishers, 1993, ISBN #0-631-19241-7)
- <http://www.nwrel.org/request/dec01/choosingcreating.htm>
- http://www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml
- <http://www.stop-violence.org/page.asp?pageID=7&NavID=2>
- <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools/bullying/overview.html>
- <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/ssp/bullymanual.htm>
- http://www.cfchildren.org/resources_parent.shtml
- <http://www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/bullying.html>
- <http://www.nwrel.org/comm/monthly/bullies.html>

Organizational Links for more information

- *Anti-Bullying Network:* <http://www.antibullying.net/>
- *Bullying.org:* <http://www.bullying.org/>
- *The Bullying Project:* <http://www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/bullyweb/bully.htm>
- *National Bullying Awareness Campaign:* <http://www.nea.org/issues/safescho/bullying/>
- *National Resource Center for Safe Schools:* <http://www.safetyzone.org/bullying.html>;
http://www.safetyzone.org/publications/fact4_article1.html

Interactive websites for kids

- www.kidshealth.org
- www.bullying.org

Reference: Olweus D. Annotation: **bullying** at school: basic facts and effects of a school-based intervention program. *J Child Psychol Psych.* 1994;35:1171-1190