

The Big Bad Bully

Series # 2

This is the second in a series of three articles on bullying. It is hoped that you will find each informative and enlightening.

What is Bullying?

Recall that bullying is a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. It is a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. The key elements of bullying are a power imbalance, the bully's intent to harm, the victim's distress, and most importantly, repeated over time.

The Effects of Bullying on Its Victims

Bullies can cause damage to its victims in a variety of ways. These include

- physical pain and suffering
- low self-esteem
- fear of going to school
- school work problems
- injuries
- depression
- disturbed sleep
- withdrawal

Of course, it is not just the victim who suffers. The damage caused also affects friends, family members, schoolmates, and the school community at large. As we work through some of the issues which result from bullying, and look for solutions to the problem, these "secondary" effects need to be addressed as well.

The Bullying Cycle

Bullying appears to have four main aspects to its cycle. If any of these aspects are not identified and addressed, bullying tends to increase in any setting. By recognizing the distinct aspects of this cycle, the partners for "anti-bullying" can work to decrease hurtful incidents at every level. It is also important to note that bullying can begin *off* the playground and continue *on* the playground and at school, and vice-versa.

The four aspects to bullying are:

- it starts off as playful "pranks", "jokes", and "rough and tumble" play
- the victim gives in and is submissive to this behavior

- the bully escalates the abuse and is increasingly more aggressive and hurtful
- the pattern of *repeated bullying* develops

Where does bullying occur? These are some of the “usual” places. However, bullying is not limited to the following:

- classrooms
- playgrounds
- hallways
- change rooms
- school buses
- to/from school
- telephone
- internet - ICQ, MSN, FACEBOOK, e-mail
- in the community

There are four basic conditions for bullying to occur at the school. These are,

- lack of assertiveness by the victim to resist bullying
- lack of communication about the bullying incident at the school
- lack of peer support to offer resistance to a bully
- lack of communication about the bullying incident at home

Any efforts to reduce bullying at the school needs to take each of these conditions into consideration. No one group can cause the desired changes by itself. It is clear, therefore, that a coordinated community / school / parent / staff / student approach is necessary in order to promote and establish a safe, welcoming learning environment for all.

Some Excuses Why Kids Don't Intervene in Bullying

1. Fear of retaliation from the bully or bullies
2. “It’s none of my business.”
3. “Teachers should help.”
4. “The victim should help themselves.”
5. “Other kids should help.”
6. “I don’t know what to do.”

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