

## The Big Bad Bully

### Series # 3

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

#### What Bullying Looks Like?

Bullying is a form of aggression with an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. There is conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity meant to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror.

These acts are repeated over time. You might see:

- teasing and whispering....telling lies/stories, being mean and pretending it's a joke
- tripping and pushing....and saying you didn't do it or pretending it was an accident
- intimidation....making someone feel scared
- threatening....saying you're going to do something mean
- name calling and laughing....making fun of someone or calling them names that hurt them

#### What Are the Qualities of Bullies?

- aggressive towards peers, teachers, parents, siblings etc.
- positive attitude towards violence with little or no empathy with their victims
- impulsive and act on a strong need to dominate others
- generally are not anxious or insecure and do not suffer from low self-esteem
- often high in the social "pecking order" and have great influence over their peers

#### What Are the Qualities of Victims?

- anxious and insecure, cautious, sensitive, and quiet
- hold a negative view of themselves and their situation
- often feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive
- isolated at school and may not have even one good friend

#### The Reasons Why Kids Bully

We've talked about what bullying is, what it looks like, and the characteristics of both bullies and their victims. To better understand the problem of bullying,

however, we need to explore the *why* of bullying. Here are a few of the known reasons.

- to get attention from their peers and /or adults, family members
- to gain power over others
- poor supervision/parenting at home
- aggressive/abusive "bullying" behavior modeled at home and by other caregivers
- lack of attention and warmth at home
- trying to impress peers to gain social status
- family stress (financial, illness, divorce, critical events)
- rejection
- inconsistent consequences at school
- difficult temperament

### **What Kind of Environment Promotes Bullying?**

Research shows that bullies who grow up in an environment that tends to encourage aggressiveness will develop many anti-social tendencies. Care givers tend to

- exercise little restraint on aggressive behavior
- give open permission to be aggressive
- tend to "forgive" acts of aggression and find excuses or "rescue" their child's behaviors
- expect neither guilt nor remorse when their child is hurtful
- often appreciate their child's public display of strength
- neither can or will control or supervise their child
- rely on harsh physical and/or verbal discipline
- abuse their children and expose them to a model where the strong exploit the weak
- be cold and aloof, lacking in warmth and empathy
- be permissive in regard to hostility, exercising no limits
- be uncooperative with other care givers (school staff, day care staff, family members)

### **On the School Level**

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. A coordinated approach is necessary in order to promote and establish a safe, welcoming learning environment for all.

### **Getting Started on Prevention**

1. We need to increase the awareness and knowledge about bullying at all levels in order to develop a common understanding and approach. *(Resources, newsletter, articles, workshops, staff meetings, parent interviews)*
2. We need to establish firm limits on acceptable behaviors. *(G.E.D.S.B. Code of Conduct, Bellview-Joseph Brant Personal Responsibility Plan, P.R.I.D.E. Behaviour Expectations)*
3. We need to provide consistent, predictable consequences for bullying behaviors. *(On-going communication regarding expectations, problem-solving approach implemented, predictable and consistent disciplinary action developed and shared with staff, students, parents)*
4. Adults need to watch, monitor, and intervene when necessary. *(Consistent expectations for supervision and intervention for staff and parents)*
5. We need to develop clear rules that bullying will not be tolerated. *(School-wide development and implementation along the lines of Discipline with Dignity guidelines)*
6. We need to establish processes to support the bullied victim. *(Consistent problem-solving approach, opportunity for counseling/accessing appropriate support agencies or groups)*
7. We need to establish processes to change the bullying behavior of the bully. *(Consistent problem-solving approach, opportunity for counseling/accessing appropriate support agencies or groups)*

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Jane Goldspink, Principal  
École Dufferin  
Grand Erie District School Board  
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