

INTERVENTIONS & PREVENTION

Tools for parents, teachers and school personnel:

1. Check your attitude.

At times, parents, teachers and other caregivers can play a role in fostering and encouraging bullying behavior. Whether direct or indirect, messages from adults sometimes reward aggressive behaviors. For example, students regarded as the school sports stars are sometimes not held as accountable for their aggressive behaviors as other students; while the behavior of students considered to be attractive are sometimes seen as assertive, rather than aggressive or spiteful.

2. Check your behavior.

Parents, teachers and other caregivers need to evaluate the situation to determine whether or not discipline is handed out consistently. If the severity of punishment depends upon the mood of the adult, it can create a threatening environment for children.

A teacher may unintentionally display bullying in the classroom by verbally making fun of a student or using a certain tone of voice, which can encourage similar behaviors by some students. A parent needs to check what similar behaviors they may be role modeling at home.

A teacher also shows inconsistent discipline by overlooking a more popular students' inappropriate behavior and disciplining a less popular students' similar behavior.

Since teachers and other adults are seen as role models, discipline in the school and home environment must be addressed in a mature and responsible manner. Excessive, loud and verbally abusive comments should never be used since children pick up and copy such behaviors.

Excessive teasing or sarcasm should never be used in the classroom, or home setting, teachers and other adults need to understand the difference between teasing and making fun of someone. When challenged, an adult may resort to inappropriate discipline and comments. Teachers, therefore need to remember that they hold a tremendous amount of power and are role models for their students. Other caregivers are also role models, and parents are always teaching their children, whether it is intentionally or unconsciously done.

- 3. Present a bullying program to all students so they can recognize what constitutes bullying and harassment.** This will help to educate those students considered to be bullies by helping them understand the dynamics behind their behaviors, while providing the victims with some tools they can use to protect themselves.
- 4. Complete a survey on bullying.**
- 5. The school and parents need to put a bullying program as a priority.**
- 6. Consider implementing a "consulting teacher" program.** Students will check in with a particular teacher once or twice a day so that any conflicts are handled immediately or consider developing a peer mediation program.
- 7. A program on coping skills should be available and offered to victims of bullying.** Those who are bullies need to be given information on ways to develop the skills needed to find more acceptable ways to behave.
- 8. Schools need to keep the "No Bullying" attitude alive by bringing it up at least once a month.** One way to accomplish this is to distribute a Bully Free Classroom Poster to all teachers.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

Recognition, Intervention & Prevention



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RECOGNITION

Why should schools have a special interest in bullying behaviors?

1. Schools are ultimately responsible for protecting children and are culpable when they don't.
2. Lawsuits have been brought against schools that have failed to stop abuse.
3. Violence in schools has increased .
4. Abuse toward students who are gay has increased.

What has research shown about addressing bullying in schools?

1. Implementing an anti-bullying program has led to significant improvements in the entire social climate of schools.
2. The Scandinavians were first to study bullying, followed by Sweden and Japan, which implemented specific programs and campaigns to stop bullying after a number of youths committed suicide. In this country, school bullying manifests itself through student suicides and students committing outward violence.
3. Norway measured the effectiveness of their anti-bullying campaigns by showing a 50% decrease in bullying behaviors over a two-year period. They also saw an overall improvement in the social climate and positive attitudes toward schoolwork and school.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is:

1. Deliberate and hurtful behavior.
2. Behavior that is often repeated over a period of time toward the same student(s).
3. Action against a person who may not be able to defend himself/herself.
4. Action taken by a person who typically desires to exercise power inappropriately over his/her victim.

There is a distinct difference between bullying and teasing among school-aged children.

1. A bully finds enjoyment continuously harassing the same person(s).
2. Teasing naturally occurs between classmates of equal stature or popularity.
3. Teasing is not prolonged.

There are three main types of bullying:

1. **PHYSICAL** - hitting, kicking, or taking someone's belongings
2. **VERBAL** - name calling, insulting
3. **INDIRECT** - Emotional or purposeful exclusion of one person from a group activity, or spreading nasty stories

REGARDLESS OF THE TYPE, BULLYING IS HURTFUL AND DAMAGING

Bullies misuse power, by physically, psychologically, or sexually abusing their victim(s).

Research has shown that victims handle the stress of prolonged bullying in different ways. For instance, while one victim may become withdrawn, another may become aggressive. In other circumstances, a child may act violently toward others or toward him/herself by attempting or successfully committing suicide.

A very small percentage of children may actually provoke being bullied. For example, a child who has a learning disability may misinterpret social signals or lack social skills, and therefore may tease or annoy other children until someone decides to retaliate. Similarly, teachers sometimes misinterpret this skill deficit and unfortunately come to dislike a child. In these instances, social skills training would benefit the child who is inappropriately labeled as "annoying".

BULLYING THAT TARGETS GAY STUDENTS

We need to deepen our understanding and become more aware of bullying and the prejudices associated with it, including the bullying of youths who are gay/lesbian. Although the topic may be uncomfortable for parents and school systems to address, it is vital that we do. Research reveals that gay/lesbian youths endure harassment and threats at school on a daily basis. In addition to living with the normal stress of being a teenager, those who are gay/lesbian face additional bullying and are two or three times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.

You don't have to accept homosexuality in order to promote tolerance. Simply bear in mind that while people have different views about this issue, most do strive to treat others with dignity and respect.