

# Words And Actions Can Hurt Me



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*"A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons."*

*Dr. Dan Olweus*

## Bullying, An Imbalance of Power



Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. Or will they? According to the National Education Association, 160,000 kids miss school each day because they fear being bullied. Further, bullies identified by age 8 are 6 times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24. (U.S. Department of Justice.)

Does bullying take place in our community? Yes; it hap-

pens in every community. Perhaps you remember a bully from your childhood or maybe you are dealing with a bully in your adult life. Do you know of someone who likes to gossip? Who talks kindly but does unkind things? Who uses other people to get what they want? How about the person who uses threats, put downs or physical force to intimidate others?

Unfortunately, many kids and adults will have to deal with a bully in their lives. This newsletter is the first in a series, designed to provide you with some tools and resources to help. In this issue you will also learn the most powerful secret weapon that can stop most bullying behavior.

### Bullying Defined

According to Dan Olweus, "A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more people." Bullying also involves a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Bullying shouldn't be confused with normal peer conflict. All children are subject to occasional teasing behavior and aggression.

If your child gets into a fight with a friend, sometimes unkind words are exchanged, and there may be a period of silence between them.

However, bullies are usually not friends and their actions and feelings are not mutual.

## Is Your Child Being Bullied?

Often times kids won't say they are being bullied. Some fear retaliation, others may think they are causing the problem or that they should be able to solve their own problems.

Sometimes asking open ended questions while participating in a fun activity

like playing a game or shooting hoops can be a way to learn more about your child's social life.

Asking a few of these questions can help get you started.

- When I was a kid there was a boy/girl who wasn't nice to others. Do you

know someone like that?

- If someone was unkind to you or someone else what would you do?
- Do you ever feel lonely at school?
- What makes a person popular at your school?

## Faces of Bullying

**Verbal Bullying** is the most common kind: saying unkind things such as name calling, teasing and put downs.

**Relational Bullying** is most common among girls: spreading rumors, leaving someone out on purpose. Can be non-verbal gestures.

**Physical Bullying** is most common among boys: violent actions such as hitting, tripping or pushing.

**Cyber-Bullying** is using technology such as the internet or other mobile devices to send or post harmful or cruel information about someone.

## Signs of a Problem

- Student has unexplained injuries or torn clothing.
- Grades begin to slide. Student doesn't want to go to school.
- Is socially isolated.
- Appears sad, moody, anxious or depressed.
- Has trouble sleeping and/or experiences loss of appetite.
- No longer participates in previously enjoyed activities or hobbies.
- Becomes secretive, sullen; has outbursts.

**If your student is experiencing any of these signs you need to get more information.**

## Bystanders: The Secret Weapon

While facilitating presentations I am not surprised to find that most kids have seen or know of someone being bullied.

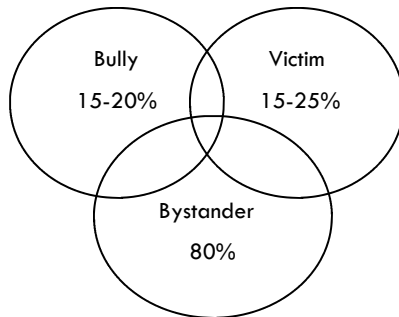
When I ask students if they have ever been bullied, typically every hand goes up. If I ask them if they have ever bullied someone else, I get the same response.

The majority of kids who say they have bullied someone have been involved as bystanders. Bystanders intentionally or unintentionally do things to encourage the bully to continue.

Kids often think what they are doing is harmless and may be funny. Others may be fearful and continue to support the bully because they are concerned about retaliation. Some know it's wrong and feel guilty about it but aren't sure what to do, so they watch passively from the sidelines.

Giving our kids the COURAGE to speak up is one of the most powerful things we can do to stop bullying. Research shows that it works!

We also know that true bullying situations do not work



*A majority of kids, 80%, are Bystanders. They are the most powerful and can make a difference in stopping the behavior.*

themselves out over time. Instead they get worse. Victims report a devastating impact on their self worth that reaches into adulthood. The behavior of the bully escalates and can become more severe.

Here's how you can help:

- Talk to your children about the difference between

tattling and telling. Tattling is to get someone INTO trouble while telling is to get someone OUT.

- Talk to your children about bullying, what it is and what it looks and sounds like.
- Discuss things that your child could do if they were a bystander:
  - ✓ Don't join in.
  - ✓ Walk away.
  - ✓ Stand up for the victim. "Hey, that's not cool. Stop it."
  - ✓ Befriend the victim. "What she/he did wasn't nice."
  - ✓ Invite a lonely child to play.
  - ✓ Tell a trusted adult.

Parents, if you are aware of a problem, get as much detail as possible from your child and share these concerns with the school staff. These professionals need this information to ensure the safety and well-being of our students.

## References & Resources

**What to Do When Kids are Mean to Your Child-** Elin McCoy

**Queen Bees and Wanna Bees-** Rosalind Wiseman

**Playground Politics:** Understanding the Emotional Life of your School Age Child-Stanley I. Greenspan M.D.

**Teaching Your Child the Language of Social Success -** Marshall P. Duke, Stephan Nowicki Jr. & Elizabeth Martin

**Bullies are a Pain in the Brain-**Romain

**Bullying at School What We Know and What We Can Do-**Dan Olweus

**The Parent's Book about Bullying-**Changing the Course of Your Child's Life - Voors

**www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov**

### When Should an Adult Intervene?

- ◆ Intervene immediately if there is a disparity in age.
- ◆ Your child has tried some techniques to make it stop unsuccessfully.
- ◆ The behavior is escalating.
- ◆ Anytime there is physical injury, stolen property, weapons or statements of intent to harm.
- ◆ The victim due to any factor, is unable to defend himself.
- ◆ The bully has a history of violence or is unknown.

## How to Address Issues With the School

Your child doesn't want to go to school. He/she shares that a group of kids have been threatening him/her. When you ask more questions you learn that this has been taking place for weeks.

Are you feeling a little angry? Would you like to step in a teach those kids a lesson or two about kindness? You probably have some expectations for how the school should address the problem.

Set up a time to discuss your concerns when you are calm and have organized your thoughts. This checklist may help.

- \_\_\_ Document what is happening where, when, how often and for how long.
- \_\_\_ List any strategies your child has tried to make it stop.
- \_\_\_ Identify who is involved.

After you share, ask for the teacher's perspective.

\_\_\_ Brainstorm possible solutions together.

\_\_\_ Set up a time to follow up.

If you feel your concerns aren't being taken seriously contact school administration. For more information visit the R-7 Student Handbook re: Harassment Policy.

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### Issues to Come

How to be a poor target/Help for the bully  
Cyber-bullying

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