

What is bullying?

- Unwanted aggressive behaviour among school aged children and young persons
- Involves a real or perceived power imbalance
- Behaviour is repeated over time
- Includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, excluding someone from a group on purpose.
- Can happen anywhere
- Is a one-sided relationship in which the victim is exploited and used
- A complex and multi-determined phenomenon (some have the social skills, some lack the social skills and some seem to derive pleasure from bullying and are unmoved by efforts to create a caring community)

Who is a bully?

- Bullies need to feel powerful and in control i.e. making someone miserable and isolated. That only works if people play along...bystanders who laugh, teachers or other adults who do nothing.
- Two types of bullying:
 1. Well connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity and like to dominate or be in charge of others.
 2. More isolated from peers, may be depressed or anxious, have low self esteem, not so involved in school, is easily pressured by peers and does not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.
- Bullies avoid adults; have friends and lack guilt for being cruel. They show no regret, concern or worry for the victim.
- Bullies just plain enjoy picking on someone else. They actually gain an exciting rush from having power over someone and are apparently motivated by the “pleasure” they derive from their actions.

Who are victims?

A typical victim:

- Is easy to pick on
- Is isolated and alone with few friends.
- Lacks social skills
- Looks and acts afraid
- Pestors and irritates others

Who is at risk?

Children who are or perceived to be:-

- Different from their peers – overweight, underweight, wearing glasses or different clothes, new at school or not in the fashion etc.
- Weak or unable to defend themselves
- Less popular than others and have few friends
- Have difficulty getting along with others, seen as annoying or provoking or antagonize others for attention

However, even if one has these risk factors, they may not necessarily experience bullying. Note that being at risk does not mean there is a problem. It is important to look for warning signs.

Do both boys and girls bully?

Both boys and girls bully. Girls are harder to spot. Bullies have friends who often join them in picking on others. Boys join together and threaten to physically hurt, while girls join together and whisper, gossip, spread rumors and alienate the victim. The abuse girls bring to others is more emotional than physical, but it hurts just as much, if not more.

Characteristics of one who is more likely to bully others:-

- Aggressive or easily frustrated
- Has less parental involvement or having issues at home
- Thinks badly of others
- Has difficulty following rules
- Views violence in a positive way
- Has friends who bully others
- Does not need to be bigger or stronger than those bullied

Consequences of bullying

- Negative effects on mental health
- Can lead victim to substance abuse
- Suicide
- Threatens physical and emotional safety and negatively impacts the victim's ability to learn
- Can go on and lead to victim experiencing isolation, feeling depressed and that nobody cares

Prevention and intervention

School focus on Safety for all: physically, socially, and psychologically.

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior it speaks loudly and clearly. It gives the message that bullying is not acceptable behavior.

- Find out what happened
- Work with all concerned – those who bully, those who are being bullied and those who witness bullying. This minimizes the effects of bullying.
- Let the bully know that his behavior is unacceptable.
- Tell a responsible adult
- The best way to address bullying is to *stop it before it starts*
- Understanding the cause of the behavior helps with the development of social and pro-social skills. What is the source of the frustration of a bully?
- Focus on sub-groups and school culture rather than individuals, when bullying is done by a group or groups e.g. resisting inappropriate peer pressure

- Environment-oriented approaches which require a broad based leadership involving staff and students. These should aim to maximize the inclusion of all students in the social support programmes. It will also minimize alienation.
- Modeling treating others with kindness and respect
- Encourage children (shy loners) to get involved in things they love
- School and community find ways of identifying persons who are being bullied (CHS Anti bullying club)
- Redirect behavior of children who bully...target a change of attitude of persons who tolerate bullying behavior in peer groups, schools and community.

The School

- Address barriers to student learning effectively and experiencing success at school
- Assess prevention and intervention efforts relate to student behavior especially substance use and violence
- Get to know what is happening through an anonymous survey
- Understand trends and types
- Measure results
 - Assessment considerations
 - Frequency and types
 - Adult and peer response
 - Locations including “ hot spots”
 - Staff perceptions and attitudes re bullying
 - Aspects of school and community that may support or help to stop bullying
 - Students perception of safety
 - School climate

What can parents/teachers do about bullying?

Bullying Test

Ask your child to answer these questions to evaluate whether he or she is exposed to bullying...

1. Have I been mistreated by my “friend” at different times and in a variety of situations?
2. Is there give –and –take in our friendship?
3. Is my “friend” sensitive to my feelings and willing to try to work out problems?
4. Have I ever been treated cruelly either physically or psychologically by my “friend”?
5. Does my “friend” change and treat me badly when other children are not around?

Coping skills for victims of bullying

- Support to families and individual victims
- All stakeholders involved in building a safe and caring school community
- Student support systems