

Bullying



Let's Meet Henry.....Henry is 11 years old and attends Main Elementary School which is located a few blocks from his home. He is in the sixth grade and is an average student. Henry has always been a bit shy and somewhat anxious around his peers. He just moved to this city 3 months ago and has not yet made any friends at the new school, though he does have a "best friend" at his old school. Henry is quite tall and thin for his age and is very self-conscious about his appearance.

Over the past month, Henry has become increasingly withdrawn. Several weeks ago he came home with a tear in his favorite jacket. When his mother asked him what happened, he hurriedly said it was an accident. He goes straight to his room after school and shuts the door. His mother has noticed that he has become more irritable and is often tearful, but when she tries to talk to him about this, he tells her to go away. She is worried about him but, thinks this is a phase he's going through because they've just moved to a new city, etc. She also worries about making Henry too dependent on her if she gets too involved in his problems.

Bullying—What it is all about

WHAT:

Bullying is an everyday occurrence that many people discount or view as something that will work itself out. Bullying, however, is not a random passing of kids and a one-time occurrence. Bullying is actually a relationship between the victim and the child who is bullying. The interactions in many ways serve as a dance where the two partners assume their expected roles. Bullying is defined as "repeated physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological attacks or intimidation by one individual who is perceived as being physically or psychologically stronger than the other" (SAMHSA, 2004). The form of bullying can be mild or severe. Either way, the bullying is never provoked or something that the victim deserved. Studies show that bullying is a chronic problem across our schools with 22% of girls and 27% of boys engaging in the involved behaviors (Crothers, 2008). Further, the act of bullying is not a behavior that just appears. Many risk factors contribute to the presence and extent of bullying. Risk factors can stem from situational, familial, or societal factors (SAMHSA, 2004). Bullying is not merely a part of growing up or linked with just adolescence or puberty. In fact, bullying is a behavior that can be tracked back to aggressions noted in the preschool years. The child that does not get his way in the block corner may very easily become the one shoving smaller peers on the playground. Research shows that bullying thrives in the elementary and middle school years and leaves lasting imprints on the victims that it impacts (Psychology Today, 1995).

**"Bullying -
not just
child's
play."**

**"Bullying is a
major problem,
particularly in
Elementary and
Middle schools,
and comes with
major costs to
the individual
and society."**

SO WHAT:

“Bullying exists in virtually every westernized culture”

Bullying is a behavior that is not exclusive to boys or any particular ethnicity group. Girls are just as likely to participate in bullying and in actively seeking out their victims. Boys have been viewed as being aggressive and mean. But, when you look at the definition of bullying; it is “the intent to hurt or harm” (Psychology Today, 1995). The behaviors that boys typically engage in are kicking, hitting, pushing, shoving, and verbal aggressions. The girls; however can cause just as much heart-ache when engaged in bullying. The form of bullying that girls engage is called “relational aggression” (SAMHSA, 2004). The harm that comes from relational-bullying can be just as longstanding as the physical harm caused by aggressions. Behaviors often attributed to relational bullying include the intent to harm or manipulate the relationships of others. Damage caused by relational bullying often includes: spreading vicious rumors, telling others to stop being friends with a particular person, and trying to dominate a person through social exclusion. Studies show that bullying is a chronic problem across our schools with 22% of girls and 27% of boys engaging in the above described behaviors (Crothers, 2008).

NOW WHAT:

“No student should be afraid to go to school because of bullying, and no parent should be worried that their child may be bullied”

Recognizing that bullying is a daily problem facing our students is a positive first step. Improving the culture of our schools requires a collaborative effort of educators, parents, and students. Let’s look at recommendations provided by the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program that can make a real difference for our students and move us closer to an all around safer school:



- **Assessing school needs and goals by using an anonymous questionnaire**
- **Form a bullying prevention committee**
- **Provide in-service and professional development to review findings, discuss problem, and collectively plan intervention**
- **Hosting school-wide events to implement anti-bullying themes and activities into the curriculum**
- **Increasing supervision in areas known for bullying acts including: hallways, cafeteria, and the playground**
- **Develop school-wide rules for and consistent consequences for violations against bullying**
- **Develop a system to reinforce positive behaviors**
- **Holding staff discussions to enhance understanding and motivation**
- **Involving parents in school activities and ensuring that parents and schools are aware of related resources in the community**

(SAMHSA, 2004)

References

Big Bad Bully. (1995). Psychology Today. WWW. Psychologytoday.com Retrieved 4-5-08

This article provided a comprehensive profile of what bullying looks like. The article describes a bully's personality and the inequality of power that is commonly noted. Further the difference between girl and boy bullying responses are detailed and the motivations that typically drive these behaviors.

Crothers, L. M., Kolbert, J. B., (2008) Tackling a Problematic Behavior Management Issue: Teachers' Intervention in Childhood Bullying Problems, *Intervention In School and Clinic*, 43, 132-139.

This journal article describes the role of teachers and the benefits acquired by teaching behavioral conduct. Details are included for socialization activities and mixed group skills. Recommendations are in place for pairing students that typically are not interacting and using peer tutoring. Additional supports are described for parent input and in addressing a student who bullies in a constructive way.

Ellis, A.A., Shute, R. (2007) Teacher Responses to Bullying in Relation to Moral Orientation and Seriousness of Bullying, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77, 649-663.

This journal article details a research study exploring teacher response to bullying. Details included the teacher's perception of the seriousness of the incident. Other variables included the difference in school approaches and whether they utilized a rule based response or a proactive problem-solving model. Teacher perceptions were also analyzed regarding their impression of bullying severity and when to intervene versus ignore the incidents within their schools.

Frisen, A., Jonsson, A.K., Persson, C. (2007) Adolescents' Perception Of Bullying: Who Is The Victim? Who Is The Bully? What Can Be Done To Stop Bullying? , *ADOLESCENCE*, 42, 749-761.

This journal article details a Swedish research study. Responses were collected from adolescents regarding bullying in their school years. The highest incidence of bullying occurred between seven and nine years of age. The reasons for bullying included a child not fitting in, differences in appearance, and low self-esteem. The adolescents provided reasons for bullying reduction and their view of adults in the intervention process.

Green, G. (2005) Bullying: A Concern for Survival. *Education*, 128, 333- 336.

This journal article describes bullying and the necessary attention that schools must allot for redirection. Details include the benefits of anonymous surveys to determine the extent of bullying behaviors. Teacher behaviors are also explored and the message that they send to students when they react or ignore bullying in the school. Recommendations for administrators to commit to stop bullying and treat teacher education in necessary follow-through as directly as time allotted for academics.

**SAMHSA, (2004) Retrieved 4-10-08
From http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/bully/bully_6_pg4.htm**

**SXC.HU (2008) Retrieved 4-23-08
From <http://SXC.HU>**

