

Bullying Resource Packet

**Center for School Mental Health Assistance
(2002)**

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BULLYING RESOURCE PACKET

Introduction

Bullying, a form of violence among children, is common on school playgrounds, in neighborhoods, and in homes throughout the United States and around the world. Because bullying often occurs out of the presence of adults or in front of adults who fail to intercede, bullying has long been considered an inevitable and uncontrollable part of growing up. School bullying has come under intense public and media scrutiny recently amid reports that it may have been a contributing factor in shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, in 1999 and Santana High School in Santee, CA in early 2001.

Bullying can affect the social environment of a school, creating a climate of fear among students, inhibiting their ability to learn, and leading to other antisocial behavior. Yet, through research and evaluation, successful programs to recognize, prevent, and effectively intervene in bullying behavior have been developed and replicated in schools across the country. These schools send the message that bullying behavior is not tolerated and, as a result, have improved safety and created a more inclusive learning environment.

What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated and systematic harassment and attacks on others. Bullying can be perpetrated by individuals or groups and can include behaviors ranging from the overt and direct (e.g., physical violence/attacks, verbal taunts, name-calling/put-downs, extortion/stealing money and possessions) to more subtle, indirect forms of peer-directed aggression (e.g., threats, intimidation, exclusion from the peer group). The key component of bullying is physical or psychological intimidation that occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse. Further, bullying occurs among social relationships wherein exist power imbalances. That is, bullies are considered to possess greater physical or psychological power relative to their victims, who are unable to aptly defend themselves.

How prevalent is bullying?

According to a pioneering study conducted in Scandinavia, approximately 15% of students either are bullied regularly by others, or are initiators of bullying behavior; about 9% are victims and about 7% bully others repeatedly. Of the victims, almost 20% endorsed engaging in peer-directed aggression, themselves. U.S. studies report considerably higher rates. One investigation identified a 77% victimization rate among junior high and high school students (reporting across entire school careers). Another investigation revealed that 1 in 4 students in grades 4 through 6 had been bullied several times within the prior three months; 1 in 10 estimated being bullied at least once a week. Further, 1 in 5 students (20%) reported bullying others frequently within the prior three months. A high rate of bully-victim activity was also gleaned in a broader U.S. sample of 11 to 15 year olds (10.6% victim, 13.0% perpetrator, 6.3% both victim and perpetrator). Direct verbal aggression is the most prevalent mode of bullying.

Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary school years, peak during middle school/junior high school years, and decline during high school years. In the U.S., bullying seems to be most prevalent among 6th to 8th graders, relative to elementary and high school students. In an investigation of over 83,000 students in Norway, Olweus (1993) found that, though 16-17% of students in grade 2 reported being bullied, by grade 9, the percentage decreased to 3% of girls and 6.5% of boys. A large proportion of the bullied children in lower grades reported being bullied by older children. Students who are bullied either do not report the bullying to adults, or they wait a very long time before doing so.

Gender differences in bullying

Patterns of bullying and victimization are very different for boys and girls. Boys are much more likely to report being bullies and perpetrating violent acts on others than are girls. Many female victims report being bullied primarily by boys. Boys are more likely to be the perpetrators of "direct" bullying (bullying which involves direct physical or verbal attacks), while girls are more likely to use "indirect", subtle, social means to harass other girls (social exclusion, manipulation of friendship relationships, spreading rumors). As boys are more likely to be perpetrators of aggressive physical and verbal bullying, they are also more likely to be victims of bullying. Further, boys are more likely to possess positive attitudes about aggression, which have been found to enhance the likelihood of peer-directed behavior.

Characteristics of bullies and victims

Students who engage in bullying behaviors have a need to feel powerful and in control, derive satisfaction from inflicting injury/suffering, have little sympathy for their victims, and are generally defiant or oppositional toward adults, antisocial, and apt to break school rules. Bullies show poorer school adjustment (academic achievement, perceived school climate) and are more likely to be involved in other problem behaviors (e.g., drinking alcohol, smoking). Bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is used, where children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are lacking. Scant evidence exists to support the contention that bullies victimize others because they feel bad about themselves.

Students who are victims of bullying are typically quiet, shy, anxious, insecure, cautious, and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted by students who bully them. Victims show poorer social and emotional adjustment and have poorer relationships with classmates. They often lack social skills, have few friends, and are socially isolated. Social skills deficits and low status identify some young adolescents as more apt targets of bullying. Victims tend to be close to their parents and may have parents who can be described as overprotective. Victims--especially male victims--tend to be physically weaker than their peers. Other physical characteristics, such as weight, dress, or wearing eyeglasses are not reliable predictors of victimization, however. The social characteristics which contribute to the vague quality of "not fitting in" seem to be the most reliable predictors of victim status. Small classes of victims may naively invite bullying via disruptive, provocative behavior patterns or may entrench their victim status via retaliatory, yet unsuccessful, aggressive behaviors.

Victims: Possible signs of bullying

Specific behaviors or patterns of behavior may indicate a child is being bullied. Behaviors or characteristics which may suggest closer adult inquiry include:

- frightened of walking to or from school
- change from usual route to school
- avoiding the school bus
- begging to be driven to school
- unwilling to go to school (school phobia)
- feeling ill in the mornings
- truancy
- decrement in school performance
- having had clothes or books destroyed
- suddenly "missing" possessions or money
- asking for money/stealing money (to pay bully)
- beginning to bully other children or siblings
- providing improbable excuses to explain any of the above
- increasingly withdrawn
- stammering
- poor confidence
- anxious/nervous symptoms
- decreased eating
- crying self to sleep
- nightmares
- attempting/threatening suicide
- refusing to say what's wrong
- unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- becoming aggressive or unreasonable

What causes bullying?

A number of different factors (family, individual, school) have been identified which contribute to bullying problems. Child-rearing styles have been found to predict whether children will grow up to be aggressive bullies. A lack of attention and warmth toward the child, modeling of aggressive behavior at home (physical and verbal aggression toward the child by parents or use of physical/verbal aggression by parents toward each other), and poor supervision of the child are all associated with bullying behavior.

The best-documented individual child factor in bullying is temperament (basic tendencies by children to develop certain personality styles and interpersonal behaviors). Children who are active and impulsive in temperament may be more inclined to develop into bullies. With boys, physical strength compared to age peers also seems to be a characteristic that is associated with bullying.

Social context and supervision at school play a major role in the frequency and severity of bullying problems. Low levels of supervision at school (playground, school yard, hallways) are associated with the development of bullying problems. Social climate in school needs to be one where there is warmth and acceptance of all students, and one where there are high standards for student and teacher behavior toward one another. Bullying problems can be greatly reduced in severity by appropriate supervision, intervention, and climate in school.

Consequences of bullying

A strong correlation exists between bullying other students during the school years and experiencing legal or criminal troubles as adults. In one study, 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least 1 criminal conviction by age 24 (Olweus, 1993). Chronic bullies maintain their behaviors into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships.

Victims often fear school and consider school to be an unsafe and unhappy place; as many as 7% of America's 8th-graders stay home at least once a month because of bullies. Being bullied tends to increase some students' isolation because their peers do not want to lose status by associating with them or because they do not want to increase the risks of being bullied themselves. Victims experience significant psychological harm which interferes with their social, academic, and emotional development; being bullied leads to fear, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, problems that can (and do) persist into adulthood.

Bystanders are also negatively affected when bullying occurs. Bullying may cause anxiety or fear in bystanders. Children who observe violent behavior and perceive few negative consequences for the bully will be more likely regard bullying behavior as acceptable and will be more likely to use aggression in the future. Collective instances of this pattern, over time, may contribute to harsher, less empathetic school social climates which, in turn, engender deeper problems with school aggression.

Perceptions of bullying

The majority of students surveyed in a study conducted by Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) believed that victims were at least partially responsible for bringing the bullying on themselves. Students tended to agree that bullying toughened a weak person. Students may consider victims to be "weak," "nerds," and "afraid to fight back." Forty-three percent of students said they try to help the victim; 33 % said they should help but do not, 24% said bullying was none of their business. Students also reported that teachers seldom or never talk to their classes about bullying. An investigation by Olweus (1993) revealed that students feel that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective, and that telling adults will only bring more harassment from bullies.

What can be done to stop bullying?

Much bullying occurs without the knowledge of teachers and parents, and victims are very reluctant to tell adults about their problems with bullying. Important strategies to arrest bullying include: providing good supervision for children, providing effective consequences to bullies, using good communication between teachers and parents, providing all children with opportunities to develop good interpersonal skills, and creating a social context which is supportive and inclusive, where bully behavior is not tolerated by the majority. Many bully prevention experts believe a systematic restructuring of the school social environment is needed to effectively counteract the bullying problem. In addition to altering opportunity and reward structures for bullying, effective programs seek to encourage and reward prosocial behavior.

Some well-intentioned strategies have *not* proven successful. For instance, traditional conflict-resolution tactics may be more harmful than beneficial, as they may entrench existing power differentials between bullies and their victims. Group treatments for bullies, too, can solidify positive attitudes about aggression by providing an environment in which several aggressive peers may model each other's behavior. "Zero tolerance," or exclusionary, responses to bullying may be excessively broad -focused, especially with as many as 5 of 6 children admitting to having bullied another child. Exclusionary policies may send the message that bullying is unacceptable in the school milieu, but do little to ameliorate the foundations of bullying behavior.

Intervention Programs

Because bullying occurs in the social environment as a whole, effective interventions must involve the entire school community, rather than focus on the perpetrators and victims alone. Focus groups with intended adolescent audiences may serve an invaluable function in determining age-friendly means of communicating program information and in testing program materials.

- Video Monitoring: Cameras installed for crime prevention (school entrance & playground) can record problems other than theft (i.e., bullying). Provides documentation of actual instances of bullying.
- The Telling School: A school in which any child who is bullied by another child or adult, or who sees another child being bullied, is urged to report the incident to designated school personnel. Children who report are promised anonymity.
- Big Brother/Big Sister Programs: Pair boys and girls entering kindergarten and first grade with a student from an upper grade. Big brother/sister checks with new child at least once a day.
- Student Watch Programs: Goal of these programs is to improve the school by making it a safer and more pleasant place for students. Trained student volunteers patrol the school buildings and grounds and report instances of bullying and other antisocial acts.
- Telephone Hotlines: Toll-free national hotline where trained professional counselors are available 24 hours a day. Calls are anonymous and confidential.
- Support Groups:
 - Purpose: become proficient in coping with the type of bullying they are experiencing.
 - Advantages: gain peer acceptance, belonging to same-age groups and having positive status in it, being like others. Same gender groups are more conducive to achieving group goals because boys and girls tend to engage in different types of bullying (direct vs. indirect)

- Stories and Drama: Books can be used to enhance awareness of the cruelty inherent in bullying. Drama and role play can be used to help children gain an understanding of their own behavior and increase their capacity for empathy.
- The No Blame Approach: Maines and Robinson (1992) - Counseling-type procedure. Assumption that bullying is an interaction that demonstrates dominance and status at the expense of others. A change to more positive values on the part of the bullies is essential.
- The Method of Shared Concern
Pikas (1989). Goal: find a solution to the bullying problem that results in peaceful coexistence between bullies and victims. No attempt is made to determine blame or to administer punishment.

Olweus (1994). Goal of interventions at the school, class, and individual level is to reduce as much as possible existing bullying problems in and out of school. In addition to providing discrete, consistent sanctions for bullying, the Olweus program emphasizes school environments characterized by warmth and positive interest from and involvement with adults (see also Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999). Schools that have implemented Olweus' program have reported a 50% reduction in bullying.
- Measures at the school level: Bully/Victim Questionnaire, school conference day on bully/victim problems, better supervision during recess and lunch time, more attractive playground, contact telephone, general PTA meeting, teacher groups for development of school climate, parent circles
- Measures at the class level: class rules about bullying, praise and sanctions, regular class meetings, roles plays, literature, cooperative learning, common positive activities, class PTA meetings
- Measures at the individual level: serious talks with the bullies and victims, serious talks with the parents of involved students, help from neutral students, help and support for parents, discussion groups for parents of bullies and victims, change of class or school.

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Resources

1. Bullying Prevention Handbook (1997) by John Hoover; ISBN: 1879639440
2. Bullies & Victims: Helping Your Child Survive the Schoolyard Battlefield (1998) by Suellen & Paula Fried; ISBN: 0871318407
3. Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do (Understanding Children's Worlds) (1994) by Dan Olweus; ISBN: 0631192417
4. Childhood Bullying and Teasing: What School Personnel, Other Professionals, and Parents Can Do (1996) by Dorothea M. Ross; ISBN: 15562015175
5. The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8 (1999) by Allan L. Beane; ISBN: 1575420546
6. Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Interventions for Bullying and Victimization (1996) by Richard J. Hazler; ISBN: 1560325097
7. Bully Victim Conflict: An Overview for Educators (1996) by Beverly B. Title; ISBN 1562461230
8. How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies: A Book That Takes the Nuisance Out of Name Calling and Other Nonsense (1995) by Kate Cohen-Posey; ISBN: 1568250290
9. The Parent's Book about Bullying: Changing the Course of Your Child's Life (2000) by William Voors; ISBN: 156838517X
10. The Anti-Bullying Handbook (2000) by Keith Sullivan; ISBN 0195583884
11. Bullying: A Guide for Counselors, Managers, Teachers and Parents (1995) by Vivette O'Donnell; ISBN: 1855941759
12. Bullying in Schools: And What to Do About It (1997) by Ken Rigby; ISBN: 1853024554
13. Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students (1996) by Nan Stein; ISBN: 0810618737
14. A Community Approach to Bullying (1996) by Peter Randall; ISBN: 1858560608
15. Countering Bullying: Initiative by Schools and Local Authorities by Delwyn P. Tattum; ISBN: 094808085X

16. Daniel the Dinosaur Learns to Stand Tall Against Bullies: A Group Activities Manual to Teach K-6 Children How to Handle Other Children's Aggressive Behavior (1996) by Teresa M. Schmidt; ISBN: 1562461184
17. Quit It! A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use With Students in Grades K-3 (1998) by Merle Froschle; ISBN: 0810618818
18. Sugar & Spice? Bullying in Secondary Schools (1992) by Celestine Keise; ISBN: 0948080728
19. Tackling Bullying in Your Schools: A Practical Handbook for Teachers (1994) by Sonia Sharp; ISBN: 0415103746
20. Trevor and Tiffany, the Tyrannosaurus Twins, Learn to Stop Bullying: A Group Activities Manual to Teach K-6 Children How to Replace Aggressive Behavior (1996) By Teresa M. Schmidt; ISBN: 1562461176
21. Blueprints for Violence Prevention: Book 9. Bullying Prevention Program (1999) By D. Olweus, S. Limber, & S. F. Mihalic; Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

Online Resources:

1. Bullying at school information: www.scre.ac.uk/bully/
2. Stop bullying now: www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/bullyweb/
3. Bullying in the public schools: www.ecsu.ecsu.ctstateu.edu/depts/edu/textbooks/bullying.html
4. "Bullying" – how to stop it: www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/family/nf309.htm
5. Steps to respect: A bully prevention program: www.cfchildren.org/str.html
6. Bullies: A serious problem for kids: www.ncpc.org/10adu3.htm
7. Bullying in schools and what to do about it: www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/
8. Anti-bullying network: www.antibullying.net/
9. Take action against bullying: www.bullybeware.com/
10. Bullying.org: Where you are not alone: www.bullying.org
11. Bullying can be stopped: www.pleasestop.com/bullying/html
12. Safe and responsive Schools Project: www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/resources_bullying.html

Other Resources

Bully B'Ware Productions
1421 King Albert Avenue
Coquitlam, British Columbia
Canada V3J 1Y3
Telephone/Fax: (604) 936-8000
(or 1-888-552-8559)
e-mail: bully@direct.ca

Safe Culture Project
Effective Prevention of Bullying
802 North Lincoln
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www.safeculture.com/

