

# What is Bullying?

From Assets for Youth

Bullying occurs when a student or other person is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative action on the part of one or more other students or persons. Bullying is characterized by the following three criteria: (a) it is aggressive behavior or intentional 'harm doing'; (b) it is carried out repeatedly over time; and (c) it occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power.

## Common Types of Bullying

*Physical Bullying* – physical acts of aggression such as hitting, kicking, tripping, or pushing.



*Verbal Bullying* – threats of physical bullying, name-calling or other insults, making faces or obscene gestures, graffiti on lockers or bathroom walls.

*Relational Bullying* – spreading rumors, intentional exclusion of others, passing of harmful notes about another person.

*Cyberbullying* – Bullying which takes place through e-mail, chats, online BLOGS, or texts by spreading harmful information or lies about others through Internet sources or cell phone cameras or text messages. This can include Sexting



*Sexual Bullying* – unwanted touching or comments made about a person's body, body type or physical features. Wedgies, bra snapping, and obscene sexual gestures are examples of sexual bullying.

## Bullying Dynamics

Bullying is not normal conflict, and therefore should not be treated as such. Bullies often seek power, have no remorse or blame the victim, don't try to problem solve, and are not friends with those who they victimize. Treating a bullying situation as a conflict resolution session will re-traumatize the victim.

### **Bullying is characterized by:**

**Imbalance of power** – Power can be social status, size, socioeconomic, majority or any other power that one person has over another.

**Repeated over time** – Often happens over and over to the same victim or between 1 bully and one target.

**Intentional** – the act is intentional harm doing and is not accidental or a result of a heated argument or 'blow-up'.

**Unequal levels of affect** – The affect between individuals involved is different. One is gaining personal power and one is getting personal power taken from them.

Conflict	Bullying
<b>Equal power</b>	<b>Imbalance of power</b>
<b>Equal emotion/affect</b>	<b>Not equal affect. Strong emotional reaction from victims</b>
<b>Accidental or occasional</b>	<b>Purposeful/ repeated</b>
<b>Remorse</b>	<b>No remorse – blames the victim</b>
<b>Solve Problem</b>	<b>Not interested in resolution</b>
<b>Not power seeking</b>	<b>Seeks power or control.</b>

## An Additional Problem

From Inside/Out Youth Services

For every 1 youth who is bullied because of their actual sexual orientation or gender expression – 4 straight kids are bullied because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender expression. Across America, youth violence and discrimination in the classroom and on the streets is robbing our future.

- 20 percent to 40 percent of the U.S. homeless teen population is comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth (LGBT).
- Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students nationwide experience harassment at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. (Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network, 2007 National School Climate Survey)
- Truancy rates are 5 times higher among LGBT students. One third of LGBT students miss school monthly because they feel unsafe (GLSEN)



### **The Impact of Bullying on the Target/Victim:**

- Bullying has been correlated with impulsivity and depression, overwhelming anxiety, anger, revenge, and/or suicide for the victim.
- Victims of bullying have higher rates psychosomatic complaints (e.g., headaches and abdominal pains), together with lower levels of academic attainment, self-esteem, and social functioning.
- Higher levels of substance use.
- In incidents of school place violence, almost three-quarters of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the incident (71%). In several cases, individual attackers had experienced bullying and harassment that was long-standing and severe.

### **If Your Child is a Target/Victim:**

- Encourage him or her to:
  - Talk about the problem, listen, and let him or her know if it keeps happening to tell you.
  - Get a friend to be with him/her, "Hey Jason, can I walk home with you?"
  - Get a friend to help, "Chelsea, it's hard for me when Anne laughs at my clothes. Please stick up for me the next time."
  - Get away: it is a GOOD idea to avoid bullies.
  - Get help: it is NOT tattling to ask for help, "Mrs. Jensen, I need you to help me figure out what to do when Jacob laughs at me."
- Make sure your child knows about Safe2Tell, (877) 542-7233, <http://safe2tell.org/>, an anonymous reporting system.
- Talk to your child's school if it is happening there.
- Monitor and follow-up.

### **The Impact of Bullying on the Bystander:**

- Bystanders take a variety of roles: Assistants, Reinforcers, Outsiders, Defenders

- Bystanders often feel frightened, guilty and helpless. They often think that someone else will respond, resulting in them being at less risk of being bullied also.
- Observing any aggression, including bullying, puts the witness at higher risk of mental health issues.
- For those struggling to “fit in” with their peers, observing others’ victimization may heighten anxiety around their own vulnerability.

### **If Your Child is a Bystander:**

Encourage him or her to:

- Not laugh at the behavior. That is what the bully wants.
- Don’t just stand there, that tells the bully and the victim that you agree with what is being said.
- Say something positive about the person being bullied, “I think it’s cool that you do so well in math. I wish I could be that good.”
- Tell the bully what you know about bullying, “it’s mean and hurts people’s feelings when you say things like that, I think you should stop.”
- Get help from an adult. Teach the difference between telling (for the purpose of helping, stopping someone from being hurt) and tattling/snitching (to get someone in trouble, for personal gain).
- Get together with other kids, stick up for each other and make sure to include the kids who are likely to be victims in your activities and events.



### **The Impact of Bullying on the Bully:**

- Longitudinal studies show that aggressive school-aged children are at very high risk of being violent in adolescence and beyond.
- The aggressive child is at higher risk of:
  - \* alcohol and drug abuse
  - \* accidents
  - \* violent crimes
  - \* depression
  - \* suicide attempts
  - \* spouse abuse
  - \* neglectful and abusive parenting
  - \* serious injuries resulting from violent interactions



### **If Your Child is a Bully:**

- Model appropriate ways to handle conflicts.
- Do not allow your child to bully a sibling (or anyone else) - Discipline.
- Monitor the situation.
- Do not put the bully and the victim together to solve the problem. Coach each separately.

- Build resiliency.
- Provide opportunities to talk.
- If this does not subside, consider anger management classes, counseling, etc.
- Correct thinking errors. Common thinking errors:
  - \* Everything should always go my way.
  - \* I don't care if I hurt other people.
  - \* I shouldn't have to follow rules or do boring things.
  - \* Lying can keep you out of trouble.
  - \* I never make mistakes and things are never my fault.