



## BULLYING INFORMATION

School for many is not always the safe learning environment it was meant to be. In fact, bullying in school has reached an alarming level, causing fear and concern for everyone.

The most effective way to deal with the problem of bullying is by increasing knowledge and an awareness of the issues involved. The aim of this program is to reduce the occurrences of bullying, if not eliminate them entirely.

**Prevention Beats Intervention**—It is always better to prevent a problem than it is to treat it after it has happened.

### Increased Awareness of Bullying

School attendance is required in all fifty states. It is important for students to go to school in a safe and supportive environment.

#### ***Bullies***

- Masters of the art of humiliation and technicians of the science of terrorism; they wreak havoc on childhood
- 285,000 students are physically attacked in school each month
- 160,000 children miss school each day due to fear
- 70% of all students have been bullied
- 14% of students say bullying has a severe impact on their lives
- Bullying embraces all anti-social acts such as assault, extortion, intimidation, and violence
- Bullying is the willful, conscious desire to hurt another person
- A student is bullied when picked on, hit, kicked, threatened, sent nasty notes, nasty and unpleasant things are said to him or her and when no one ever talks to him
- Bullying behavior extends beyond physical abuse and violence to include psychological intimidation

## Double I / R Criteria

**Intentional**— Bullying incidents are not accidental. Bullying differs from typical “rough-and-tumble” childhood play. Most kids do not intentionally hurt other kids and in bullying, the behavior continues and even escalates.

**Imbalanced**— Bullying is characterized by an imbalance of power, physical or psychological. Bullies are masters of the abuse of power and use of coercion.

**Repeated**— To be considered bullying, the acts must not only reflect intention and an abuse of power, they must also occur more than once.

**Bullying takes one of two forms: Aggressive or passive.**

### Characteristics of Aggressive Bullies:

- The most common type of bully
- Initiate aggression toward peers
- Characterized as fearless, coercive, tough and impulsive
- Strong inclination toward violence, a desire to dominate others and expression of little empathy toward their victims (Olweus,1994; Ross, 1996)
- Commit open attacks on their victims (“direct bullying”)
- Enjoy being in control and wish to subdue others
- Cognitively distort the meaning of their victim’s behavior as well as overreact in ambiguous situations
- See the world with a paranoid’s eye (Ross, 1996)

### Characteristics of Passive Bullies:

- Less common than the aggressive type
- Tend to be dependent, insecure and anxious
- Participate in bullying, but typically do not initiate the aggression
- Intentionally isolate and exclude others from the group (“indirect bullying”)
- May lack strong inhibitors against aggression
- Likely to follow suit if they see the aggressive bully’s actions being rewarded
- Often lack a defined social status among their peers
- Eager to affiliate with aggressive, action-oriented bullies
- Referred to as “camp followers” or “hangers-on” (Olweus,1994; Ross, 1996)

Even though it may not be physical, bullying is occurring when students use verbal means to inflict pain on others. Teasing and name-calling are indeed bullying, and it is important to remain aware of the extent of the problem. Whether the bullying is aggressive or passive, the goals of intervention are to help bullies understand the impact of their actions on others (i.e., feel empathy).

**Both boys and girls engage in bullying, although the interactions can be quite different.**

### ***Male Bullying***

- Negative behavior labeled as “bullying”
- Often engage in direct forms of bullying
- Frequently use visible forms of bullying (pushing, shoving, threatening, and so forth)
- Usually bully both sexes

### ***Female Bullying***

- Bullying behavior classified as “mean”
- Often engage in indirect forms of bullying
- Frequently use less visible form of bullying (slander, spreading rumors, manipulating friendships and the like)
- Usually bully other girls

As noted, it appears that through socialization, boys often receive the label of “bully” when they commit offenses toward another child. On the other hand, girls’ adverse behavior is more often viewed as “mean.” Bullying by girls is more difficult to detect because their methods are more indirect.

### **Additional Facts about Male and Female Bullies**

- There is a tendency for boys to be exposed to a greater amount of bullying than girls. This trend is marked, primarily in junior high school. (Olweus,1994)
- Worldwide research on bullying has demonstrated consistently that there is a higher incidence of bullying among boys as compared with girls. (Ahmad & Smith, 1994)
- Research demonstrates that in the lower grades, the majority of the bullying is committed by older boys. (Olweus,1993)
- Boys who act as bullies are often found to be the oldest members of their peer group. (Olweus,1993)
- Boys engage in direct bullying four times as often as girls and are victimized twice as often. (Olweus, 1993)

## Myths and Misconceptions about Bullying

**Myth:** “Bullying is just a stage, a normal part of life. I went through it; my kids will too.”

**Reality:** Bullying is not “normal” or socially acceptable behavior. We give bullies power by our acceptance of this behavior.

**Myth:** “If I tell someone, it will just make it worse.”

**Reality:** Research shows that bullying will stop when adults in authority and peers get involved.

**Myth:** “Just stand up for yourself and hit them back.”

**Reality:** While there are some times when people can be forced to defend themselves, hitting back usually makes the bullying worse and increases the risk for serious physical harm.

**Myth:** “Bullying is a school problem, the teachers should handle it.”

**Reality:** Bullying is a broader social problem that often happens outside of schools, on the street, at shopping centers, the local pool, summer camp and in the adult workplace.

**Myth:** The size of a class or school is significant in predicting the frequency of bullying.

**Reality:** Bullies appear in classrooms and schools of all sizes. A more important factor than the number of students in the room is how the teacher manages the room.

**Myth:** The aggressive behavior of bullies results from school-related failures and frustrations.

**Reality:** It is true that bullies often have school-related failures and frustrations. However, the academic failures usually follow the aggressive behavior, not the other way around. The academic problems are likely caused by the behavioral problems because children who are highly active, antagonistic and aggressive spend more of their time out of their seats and less time oriented toward school tasks.

**Myth:** Children who are different (e.g., overweight, wear eyeglasses or speak with a different accent) are significantly more likely to be a bully’s prey.

**Reality:** Bullies tend to have an amazing “homing device” that helps them identify other young people who are powerless or at least less powerful. The attraction for a bully is the lack of power, an understanding that the victim cannot or will not be defended, either by himself or herself, or by peers.

**Myth:** Bullying is more likely to occur to and from school than at school.

**Reality:** Although it is true that bullying often does occur away from the school, especially on the school bus, this situation is less common than bullying within the school setting.

**Myth:** Students will outgrow aggressive behavior as they get older.

**Reality:** There often is a reduction of aggressive behavior, on average, as students move through their academic experiences. This is, in part, a developmental factor. On the other hand, students who are impervious to the socializing effects of other students in the school actually may intensify and expand their bullying.

**Myth:** Because students learn to become bullies at home, nothing can be done in the classroom to counteract the influence of the home environment.

**Reality:** Although it is true that students learn to become bullies in their homes and neighborhoods, students are situational learners.

**Myth:** If parents would do more with their children (e.g., exercise more discipline, teach social skills, etc.), then teachers could do more.

**Reality:** This is partially true. However, children also may have skill deficits in areas in which parents are unable to help them.

Source: Bully Busters