



Did You Know. . .?

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About Bullying

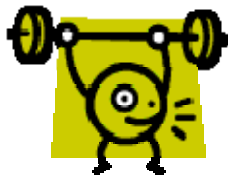
Parents Reaching Out connects with families, schools and communities in New Mexico. We offer information from many reliable sources. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their PEN Notes publications in this information series.

Being bullied or bullying is not just a part of growing up!

Bullying is a repeated physical or psychological attempt to terrorize a victim. It can be committed by a single person or several students and can be against individuals or groups. Bullying consists of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and stealing, which are typically engaged in by boys. It may also be indirect, such as spreading rumors causing the victim to be isolated from their peers, which is a method usually used by girls.

Studies show that at least 15 % of students are either bullied regularly or start bullying behavior. Direct bullying increases through the elementary school years, peaks in the middle school/junior high school years and declines during the high school years. Boys are more likely to engage in bullying behaviors and to be the victim of bullies. Studies also show that children who are active and impulsive in temperament may be more inclined to develop into bullies.

Characteristics of bullies:



- Have a need to feel powerful and in control
- Get satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering with no empathy for the victims
- Often say the victim provokes them
- Often come from homes where physical punishment is used
- Lack of parental involvement and warmth
- Are defiant or oppositional toward adults and are antisocial; often break school rules
- Appear to have little anxiety and to possess strong self-esteem
- Are impulsive and react immediately and often seem out of control in problematic situations

Characteristics of victims:

- Are anxious, insecure and cautious and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defend themselves or strike back when confronted
- Are socially isolated and unhappy
- Close to and may have overprotective parents
- Tend to be weaker than their peers
- Don't report the bullying or wait a very long time before doing so because of fear that adults cannot or will not protect them
- Often are bullied by older students making the victim less confident



Long Term Consequences:

Victims of bullying are typically very unhappy children who suffer from fear, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem---problems that can continue into adulthood. The victim may try to avoid school or social interactions and can even be so distressed that they commit or attempt to commit suicide. And even when bullying does not drive victims to the extremes of suicide, they experience significant psychological harm, which interferes with their social, academic and emotional development. The sooner the bullying stops, the better the long-term outcomes are for the victim.

Bullies seem to carry their behaviors into adulthood, thus causing negative influences in their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships. There is a strong correlation between bullying other students during the school years and experiencing legal or criminal troubles as adults.

What parents can do if their child is being bullied:



1. Ask your child directly. Children don't tell due to shame and embarrassment or fear of retaliation. Watch for the characteristics of victims.
2. Work with your school immediately by first going to his teacher to make sure your child is safe, that effective consequences are applied and that monitoring at school is adequate.
3. If your child is timid and lacks friends, try to arrange for participation in positive social groups that meet his/her interests.
4. Suggest that schools implement a comprehensive anti-bullying program. This program must involve the entire school community and parents. Also suggest developing a class code of conduct.

What to do if your child is aggressive or bullies others:

1. Talk to the child, make it clear you will not tolerate this kind of behavior, and talk to teachers and administrators. A bully will try to minimize or deny wrongdoing.
2. Arrange for an effective, non-violent consequence that is age appropriate and fits the crime.
3. Increase supervision of your child.
4. Cooperate with the school in modifying your child's aggressive behavior.
5. Praise your child's efforts toward nonviolent behavior.
6. Ban violent television, including cartoons or violent videos games. These tend to increase violent behavior.

Bullying is a serious problem that can affect a student's academic and social progress. A comprehensive plan that involves all students, parents and school staff can help ensure that all students can learn in a safe and fear-free environment.

"Did You Know...?" fact sheets are developed by Parents Reaching Out in collaboration with the New Mexico Public Education Department under a grant from the US Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the Federal Government.