13 Reasons Why Not: Helping Victims of Bullying

Dr. Jill Packman, PhD, MFT, RPT-S
School Counselor
School Psychologist
University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Elisabeth Liles, Ph.D., NCC, CCMHC, LPCC, RPT-S
School Counselor
California State University, Sacramento
Define bullying and its different types
  * How to tell them apart
What’s going on in schools
Etiology of bullying
Characteristics of bullies & victims of bullying
How you can help – avoiding victimization
Resources
* What is bullying?

* Why is it difficult to identify?
Identifying Bullying Behavior

* When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's **RUDE**.
* When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's **MEAN**.
* When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it- even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset— that's **BULLYING**.
* Actions must be intentional. (Olweus, 1993)
* Bullying involves a power differential (this can be perceived rather than actual).
* Arrogance in action. The bully is trying to gain or maintain power. They see themselves as beyond reproach so they use their power.
* Contempt is an important factor. The bully often show contempt for their victim. They don’t see the victim as worthy of their time or concern.
* Bullying is repetitive. There is a threat of further action. The behavior doesn’t stop or the fear is that the behavior won’t stop.
EDC § 48900(r)

(1) “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a pupil or group of pupils...directed toward one or more pupils that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (A) Placing a reasonable pupil or pupils in fear of harm to that pupil’s or those pupils’ person or property.
- (B) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.
- (C) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.
- (D) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.
Missing Component: Mental Health

* Model Policy
  * Provides state guidance, direction, and recommended standards to help local school systems create their own district and school policies.
  * California’s Model Policy is lacking one recommended key component: mental health

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014)
Verbal bullying includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. While verbal bullying can start off harmless, it can escalate to levels which start affecting the individual target. Keep reading in this section for techniques to deal with verbal bullying.

Adults often miss this type of bullying. Words are seen to be less harmful.

Sticks and stones….
Physical – Threats or actual violence, pinching, hitting, butt slapping

Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property. Physical bullying causes both short term and long term damage.

Physical bullying is the most obvious. Adults intervene most often in physical bullying.
Social/Relational – Leaving someone out, gossip, destroying reputation, manipulating relationships

Social bullying, sometimes referred to as covert bullying, is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Social bullying includes:

- lying and spreading rumors
- negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- mimicking unkindly
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone
- damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.
Cyber bullying – Facebook, Twitter, email, text, sexting

Cyber bullying can be overt or covert bullying behaviors using digital technologies, including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites and other online platforms.

Cyber bullying can happen at any time. It can be in public or in private and sometimes only known to the target and the person bullying. Cyber bullying can include:

- Abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos
- Deliberately excluding others online
- Nasty gossip or rumors
- Imitating others online or using their log-in
- Only 1 in 10 teens/kids tell their parents when cyber bullying occurs.
- Cyber bullying victims are most likely to commit suicide
Bullying by the Numbers

* 160,000- estimated number of U.S. students who skip school daily to avoid being bullied
* 32%- students who report being bullied at school during the school year
* 86%- gay or lesbian students who report being bullied
* 70%- teachers surveyed who say that educators “almost always” intervene when bullying occurs
* 35%- 9th graders who believe their teachers are interested in trying to stop bullying
* 66%- bullying victims who believe school professionals responded poorly to the bullying they observed
* 10-20%- bystanders who provide any real help

www.tolerance.org/bullied
Students talk to peers or friends rather than adults

Peers are not equipped to handle the serious nature of bullying.

Students don’t believe adults can make the bullying stop

Students don’t trust adults to handle the situation.

Adults revictimize bully targets.

Social Media
Signs a kid is being bullied

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide
Signs a kid is bullying others

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal’s office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don’t accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity
Why kids don’t ask for help

*Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Kids may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale.

*Kids may fear backlash from the kid who bullied them.

*Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Kids may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.

*Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.

*Kids may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect kids from bullying, and kids can fear losing this support.
What bullying does

- PTSD like symptoms
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Often the help we try to provide revictimizes students
- Makes people feel worthless
- You begin to believe the “press”
- Feelings of helplessness that can lead to acting out
- Suicide
- Homicide
- Bully Movie Clip “The Bus” 1:08:05 & 31:32
How YOU can help!
“Empathy means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments…”

~ Carl Rogers
Avoiding victimization

* Bullying is a life changing event
* Be sensitive to gathering information vs. providing support.
* Bullying carries a stigma. Be understanding, compassion, and supportive.
* Victims of bullying are often difficult to like. Be sure you biases are in check.
* Be aware of the power you hold.
* Don’t offer advise.
* Don’t minimize the experience.
* Bully Movie Clip “Shake Hands” 29:35
* Acknowledge a need to gather information. Questioning can be seen as not believing the student's story.

* Offering suggestions the student has already tried can be seen as you not seeing the student as capable.
  * Stand up to them
  * Tell them to stop
  * Avoid them

* Be sensitive to your attempts to keep the victim safe as punishment.
  * Changing the victim's lunch or schedule
  * Asking the victim to stay by an adult
  * As the adult, you be around. Catch it happening to intervene
Empathy
* If you see bullying or a child comes to you and tells you about bullying. EMPATHIZE.
* DON’T TRY TO FIX IT!!!!
* Listen, respond to what you are hearing (reflections) – build a relationship of trust
* Don’t tell the student what they should have done, what they should do.
* Tell the student they don’t deserve this.
* Make yourself available to talk
* Document, document, document
* Bully Movie Clip VP interviews kids 1:13:56
* Bully Movie Clip VP talks to Alex 1:16:08
* Actions aimed at changing the behavior of the bullying youth (fighting, getting back at them, telling them to stop, etc.) were rated as more likely to make things worse. (Davis and Nixon, 2010)

* Students reported that the most helpful things teachers can do are: listen to the student, check in with them afterwards to see if the bullying stopped, and give the student advice. (Davis and Nixon, 2010)

* Students reported that the most harmful things teachers can do are: tell the student to solve the problem themselves, tell the student that the bullying wouldn’t happen if they acted differently, ignored what was going on, or tell the student to stop tattling. (Davis and Nixon, 2010)

* As reported by students who have been bullied, the self-actions that had some of the most negative impacts (telling the person to stop/how I feel, walking away, pretending it doesn’t bother me) are often used by youth and often recommended to youth. (Davis and Nixon, 2010)
What can the victim do? And how can you facilitate it?

- Resilience is the antidote to bullying!
  - Empathize
  - Repeat that it isn’t their fault
  - Repeat that no one should treat others the way they have been treated
  - Ask the student how can I keep you safe?
- Feel better about themselves
- Have confidence
- Ignoring or laughing doesn’t work
- Avoiding doesn’t work
- Talk to people!!!!
- NEVER EVER PUT THE BULLY AND VICTIM IN THE SAME ROOM TO TALK!!!
1. What people think of you does not define you.
2. Just because someone says it, doesn’t make it true.
3. You are worthy.
4. You are special.
5. You have something to contribute to this world.
6. You are stronger than you think you are.
7. “Life is tough, but so are you.” – Stephanie Bennett-Henry
8. “I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.” – Maya Angelou
9. You may feel differently in as little as 5 minutes. (Research says so.)
10. Change is constant.
11. Someone always cares.
12. Help is available.
13. You always have another choice.
Interventions

* Activities that foster resiliency:
  * Increase confidence and self-esteem
  * Increase feelings of self-worth
  * Lower anxiety and depression
  * Strengthen self-awareness and self-acceptance

* Examples:
  * The Rosebush (Oaklander, 1978)
  * Draw your Family/School
  * Card to Self
After a student tells or you see something…

- Don’t question what you saw or what the person said.
- Kids being kids isn’t true. Kids don’t bully.
- Document, report, protect
- Don’t fix – you can’t!
- Don’t tolerate it…
- Watch
Resources

* LOCAL:
  * https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/se/bullyingprev.asp
  * CSUS Center for Counseling and Diagnostic Services: (916) 278-6252, ccds@csus.edu, Eureka Hall Room 421
  * www.flipthescriptnow.org
  * http://www.tolerance.org
  * http://www.stopbullying.gov/
  * http://cyberbully.org/
  * www.TheNationalCampaign.org/sextech