

What You Should Know About Bullying and How It Impacts Students Perceived As Different

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
Friday, April 27, 2012
9:00 – 10:30 a.m. Central Time**

**Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division**

Faculty

**Melanie Beasley
Director of Public Affairs
Family Sunshine Center
Montgomery, Alabama**

Bullying – What Is It?

- **When someone repeatedly and purposefully says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who is weaker, more vulnerable, and has a hard time defending him or herself**
- **It is one person achieving power and control over another**

What Is Bullying?

- **Verbal**
 - **Calling names and verbal harassment**
- **Physical**
 - **Pushing, hitting, or kicking**
- **Leaving another person out of a group**

What Is Bullying?

- **Telling lies and spreading false rumors**
- **Taking away money, other property, or damaging personal property**
- **Threatening or forcing another person to do things against their will**
- **Racial, sexual, or cyber-bullying**
 - **via cell phone or Internet**

What Is Bullying?

- **Bullying can take place:**
 - **Directly**
 - **Hitting, shoving, verbal abuse**
 - **Indirectly**
 - **Shunning, spreading rumors, online attacks known as “cyberbullying”**

What Is Bullying?

- The following three conditions are present in most incidences of bullying, SAMHSA reports:
 1. A power imbalance exists between the bully and the victim
 2. The bully's power is derived from physical size, strength, verbal skill, popularity, or gender

What Is Bullying?

3. The bully's target feels tormented, helpless, and defenseless

What Is Bullying?

“A form of abuse, harassment, and violence. Parents and school personnel should no longer consider bullying ‘just a part of growing up.’ It is harmful to both the perpetrators and the victims and is responsible for behavioral and emotional difficulties, long-term negative outcomes, and violence.”

– SAMHSA Report

What Is Cyberbullying?

- Sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying
- Can involve:
 - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
 - Posting sensitive, private information about another person

What Is Cyberbullying?

- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group

– Willard, 2005; Stop Bullying Now!

What Is Cyberbullying?

- Children and youth can cyberbully each other through:
 - Emails
 - Instant messaging
 - Text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones
 - Web pages

What Is Cyberbullying?

- Blogs
- Chat rooms or discussion groups
- Other information communication technology

- Stop Bullying Now!

What Is the Impact of Cyberbullying?

- Victims of cyberbullying reported higher depression than cyber bullies or bully-victims
- Not found in any other form of bullying

What Is the Impact of Cyberbullying?

- Unlike traditional bullying, which usually involves a face-to-face confrontation, cyber victims may not see or identify their harasser
- Cyber victims may be more likely to feel isolated, dehumanized, or helpless at the time of the attack

- Journal of Adolescent Health

What to Do About Cyberbullying

- Contact the police if cyberbullying involves acts such as:
 - Threats of violence
 - Extortion
 - Obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages

What to Do About Cyberbullying

- Harassment, stalking, or hate crimes
- Child pornography

What to Do About Cyberbullying

- A new app aims to help teen bullying victims by allowing parents to filter out profanity, vulgar or threatening language and telegraphic nastiness sent to their kids via text message
- Cult of MAC, September 27, 2011

What to Do About Cyberbullying

- Designed by Iconosys, a safety communication and life-style app developer, word bully lets parents customize a filter for profanity, vulgar or threatening language and other offensive communications

What to Do About Cyberbullying

- Whenever a message sent or received triggers the filter, it is automatically sent to the parent to let them know what was said
 - Depending on what the message is, parents can then decide on what action they need to take

– Ubergizmo.com

Teasing vs. Bullying: What Is the Difference?

- Teasing usually involves two or more friends who act or play together in a way that they all enjoy
 - Usually, the teasing goes both ways
 - One person does not exert power and control over the others

Teasing vs. Bullying: What Is the Difference?

- Bullying usually involves two or more children who are not friends
 - Often involves an imbalance of power

Teasing vs. Bullying: What Is the Difference?

- Often involves a bigger, more mature or more popular child picking on someone who is vulnerable or two or more children “ganging up” on one
- Usually happens more than once

How Much Bullying Is Going on in Today’s Schools?

- Based on responses from students at an undisclosed Alabama county school system:
 - 656 sixth-graders
 - 614 eighth-graders
 - 428 tenth-graders
 - 408 twelfth-graders

How Much Bullying Is Going on in Today's Schools?

- Percent bullied at least once in past 30 days:
 - sixth-graders – 18%
 - eighth-graders – 13%
 - tenth-graders – 12%
 - twelfth-graders – 8%

How Much Bullying Is Going on in Today's Schools?

- Percent who admitted bullying another student in past 30 days:
 - sixth-graders – 9%
 - eighth-graders – 18%
 - tenth-graders – 10%
 - twelfth-graders – 10%

How Much Bullying Is Going on in Today's Schools?

- Percent of students who do not feel safe at school:
 - sixth-graders – 16%
 - eighth-graders – 32%
 - tenth-graders – 28%
 - twelfth-graders – 17%

Who Bullies?

- Both guys and girls
- American male students have been found to bully and be bullied more than females in elementary and high schools
- A class of 30 children, on average, has four to five bullies

Who Bullies?

- Psychological studies on middle school children show that 15% of middle schoolers act as bullies one time or another

Types of Bullies

- Sadistic, narcissistic bully
 - Lacks empathy for others
 - Has a low degree of anxiety about consequences
 - Need to feel omnipotent

Types of Bullies

- **Imitative bully**
 - May have low self-esteem or be depressed
 - Easily influenced by the surrounding social climate
 - May whine, tattletale, or be manipulative
 - Often respond well to change in classroom or social climate

Types of Bullies

- **Impulsive bully**
 - Less likely to be a part of a “gang”
 - Bullying is more spontaneous and random
 - Has a hard time resisting bullying even when he/she is being watched

Types of Bullies

- Responds to someone patiently and compassionately explaining the situation

– www.healthyplace.com

Characteristics of Bullies

- May be outgoing and aggressive
- May appear reserved on the surface, but may try to manipulate people in subtle, deceptive ways
- They like to dominate others and generally focus on themselves
- Often have poor social skills and judgment

Characteristics of Bullies

- One study indicates that they may get little attention at home and use power and control to demand attention outside of the home
- Kathryn Jens, a school psychologist from Denver, says that 50% of bullies come from an abusive environment
 - They simply hand out to others what they personally receive

Characteristics of Bullies

- By the time a child graduates from elementary school, he or she will have watched more than a hundred thousand acts of violence, and about eight thousand murders on TV, movies, computers, etc
 - A bully will have watched even more acts of aggression on the screen and perhaps at home, than an average child

A study conducted by The Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University, on five hundred and fifty-eight 6th to 8th graders.

Characteristics of Bullies

- One study indicates that rather than being insecure and self-loathing, they are confident and have high self-esteem
- Generally have pro-violence attitudes, are hot-tempered, easily angered, and impulsive

Characteristics of Bullies

- Have a low-tolerance for frustration
- Usually have little empathy for their targets

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Bullies pick on those they think don't fit in . . .
 - Because of appearance
 - Overweight or skinny
 - Young children who are obese or overweight are 60% more likely to be bullied than other children in their age group, regardless of social class, race, religion, or social skills

– University of Michigan

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Short, tall, or small
- Because of social status
 - Low socioeconomic status
 - Wealthy exhibiting conspicuous consumption

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Because of race or religion
 - Persons of color
 - Religious, non-religious or non-traditional religion for the area
- Because of their sexual orientation
 - LGBT

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Because of their behavior
 - Shy
 - Eccentric
 - Showing symptoms of a disability
- Because they are ill

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Because they consistently give the desired response
- The children who react the strongest to being bullied tend to be the ones who are chronically bullied

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- In July 2006, the U.S. minority population reached 101 million, which equates to one in three residents of the nation being a minority

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of the U.S. population:
 - 15% are Latino
 - 5% are A/PI
 - 0.3% are AI/AN
- Latinos and A/PIs are among fastest growing sociodemographic groups in the nation

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- According to the latest population count, more than 50 million Hispanics now live in the United States
 - 1/6 of total population
 - One in five children in public schools nationwide are now of Hispanic origin

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- In 10 states and Washington DC, the majority of people under 18 are minorities
 - 17% of kids live in mixed-race families

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- The date for when America will become "majority minority" is expected as early as 2042
 - Where no one ethnic group makes up more than half the population

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- Children and adolescents represent significant proportions of the growing racial and ethnic minority populations
 - Currently, one-fourth of the total U.S. population is under the age of 18 years

Who Do Bullies Bully: Minority Populations

- Youth represent a third of the Latino population, nearly a third of the A/PI population, and a slightly more than a quarter of the AI/AN population

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Youth whose non-gender conformity or sexual orientation places them in the minority
 - Includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), and those questioning sexual orientation
 - Represent about 5% of American high school students

– GLSEN, 2006

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Much of the prejudice, discrimination, and victimization associated with developing a non-heterosexual identity is encountered at school

– Adams, Cox, and Dunstan (2004)

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- For many sexual minority students, school is experienced as unsafe, and hence their survival, rather than their education, assumes top priority
- LGBT youth are at heightened risk for a variety of academic difficulties and scholastic underachievement

– Weiler, 2004

– NASP, 2004

Who Do Bullies Bully?

- Sexual minority youth more likely to be absent frequently and leave school altogether
 - 28% drop out before graduation

– NASP, 2004; National Mental Health Association, 2004

Types of Bullying Victims

- **Passive victims**
 - Represent largest group of bullying victims
 - Do not directly provoke bullies
 - Show a lot of emotion
 - Rarely tell about being bullied, because they think it will make matters worse

Types of Bullying Victims

- Don't think adults can help
- May carry weapons for protection
- Do not encourage attack
 - They don't "ask for it"
- Are sensitive, cry easily, and are easy to pick on
- May be shy and lacking in social skills

Types of Bullying Victims

- Are usually insecure and lacking in self-esteem
- Are usually chosen last or left out
- May appear to lack humor
- Have few or no friends
- Are often anxious and easily upset
- Are bullied repeatedly
- May use money or toys (as bribes) for protection

Types of Bullying Victims

- **Provocative victims**
 - Are pesky and repeatedly irritate others
 - Are quick-tempered and prone to fight back
 - Get others charged up
 - Maybe clumsy, immature, restless

Types of Bullying Victims

- Provoke bullying
 - They "egg on" kids who bully
- Sometimes look as if they are bullies themselves, but unlike true bullies, they always lose in the end

Types of Bullying Victims

- **False victims**
 - Represent small group of students who complain frequently and without justification to teachers about being bullied by their classmates
 - Seems to be a bid for attention and sympathy from the teacher

Types of Bullying Victims

- Problematic for two reasons:
 1. These children should learn there are legitimate ways to get attention
 2. Teachers who may be unsympathetic about the problem could use behavior as excuse to ignore all bullying complaints

– Besag, 1989

What Bullying Victims May Lack

- Nonverbal communications skills
- Understanding of the social meaning of nonverbal communication cues
- Options for solving social conflicts

The Implication of Bullying on Mental Health of Youth

- 2008 Reuters Health Report:
 - Bullying can cause children (and youth) to develop anxiety and depression
 - Bullied children known to be more likely to have anxiety, depression and thoughts of suicide, as well as to experience social isolation

The Implication of Bullying on Mental Health of Youth

- www.bullyonline.org:
 - Bullying victims experience significant amounts of prolonged stress

Bullying and Mental Health of Youth: Symptoms of Stress

- Physical
 - Reduced immunity to infection leading to frequent colds, coughs, aches and pains, irritable bowel syndrome, headaches, shy bladder syndrome (paruresis), skin disorders, loss of appetite or overeating

Bullying and Mental Health of Youth: Symptoms of Stress

- University of Michigan study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, showed young children who are obese or overweight are 60% more likely to be bullied than other children in their age group, regardless of social class, race, religion or social skills

Health Consequences of Bullying

<small>Fekkes et al., 2003</small>	Bullied	Not bullied
Headache	16%	6%
Sleep problems	42%	23%
Abdominal pain	17%	9%
Feeling tense	20%	9%
Anxiety	28%	10%
Feeling unhappy	23%	5%
Depression scale		
-Moderate indication	49%	16%
-Strong indication	16%	2%

Bullying and Mental Health of Youth: Symptoms of Stress

- Psychological
 - Panic attacks, thoughts of suicide, forgetfulness, poor concentration, insecurity, PTSD, and suicidal ideation

Bullying and Mental Health of Youth: Symptoms of Stress

- Prolonged negative stress can culminate in a cocktail of symptoms often congruent with the diagnostic criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PTSD)

Bullying and Mental Health of Youth: Symptoms of Stress

- Include anxiety, anger, reactive depression, tearfulness, disbelief, panic attacks, fatigue, sleeplessness, migraines, joint and muscle pains, excessive guilt, suicidal thoughts, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence

- www.bullyonline.org

Suicides Related to Bullying Behavior

- Phoebe found hanging in stairwell at the family home, still wearing her school clothes, after being targeted by a group known as the “mean girls” because she was dating a popular football player at her school
 - Pupils said Phoebe was called “Irish slut” and “whore” on Twitter, Craigslist, Facebook, and Formspring

Suicides Related to Bullying Behavior

- 17-year-old Eric Mohat endured “merciless” bullying, name-calling, and physical abuse at Mentor (Ohio) High School before killing himself the same day that a fellow student taunted him in class by remarking, “Why don’t you go home and shoot yourself, no one will miss you.”

Suicides Related to Bullying Behavior

- **Megan Meier, a 13-year-old said to suffer from depression and ADHD, was at the center of highly publicized “MySpace” suicide case**
 - **Took her life after being subjected to online harassment perpetrated by a fellow student and that student’s mother**

Suicides Related to Bullying Behavior

- **11-year-olds Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover and Jaheem Herrera**
 - **Though neither identified as homosexual, both were frequently subjected to verbal harassment that included anti-gay slurs**
 - **Both hanged themselves**

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- **Increased acts of school violence are linked to bullying**
 - **A 2001 ABC News poll of 500 high school students found when students identify a potentially violent classmate, it’s generally a boy and one who has been bullied rather than a bully**

– Coloroso, 2003

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- **Of the 37 school shootings since 1974, 2/3 were directly linked to bullying in some form**

– Viadero, 2003

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- **Impacts student achievement**
 - **Bullying causes the brain’s amygdala to close the gateway to the brain and impede learning**
- **Has significant psychological impact on students**

– Feinstein, 2004

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- **An unchecked bullying culture impacts staff morale**
- **Increases the prevalence of anti-social and gang activity**
 - **Bullies are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as drinking, drug use and smoking**

– JAMA, 2001

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- Impacts youth outside the classroom
- Causes fear and dread in school
 - In a study of middle and high school students who identified three worst things to ever happen to them, the death of a parent was followed by bullying

– Lind, 1996

Why Concentrate on Bullying in School?

- A strong link exists between school bullying and future domestic violence

– Cullingford, 1997

What Can School Personnel Do?

- Re-education on who are vulnerable:
 - Girls who are new to the school, unassertive, and have few friends
 - Three gender types
 - Exceptionally attractive girls
 - Exceptionally unattractive girls
 - Boys who appear to be “gay”

What Can School Personnel Do?

- Physical characteristics that make them stand out
 - Overweight, unusually short or tall, speech impediments, noticeably bad complexion

What Can School Personnel Do?

- Plan to make a difference
 - Identify students who might be targets early in the year
 - Monitor their behavior, grades and interaction with peers
 - Monitor the reaction of their classmates to their presence

What Can School Personnel Do?

- Get counselors involved if you suspect bullying

What Can School Personnel Do?

- **What counselors should ask**
 - Have you ever been teased at school?
 - Do you know other children who have been teased?
 - Have you ever reported being teased? What happened?

What Can School Personnel Do?

- What kind of things do kids tease you about?
- Do you have nicknames at school?
- Do you sit with others at lunch, in class, at school functions?

– AMA

What Can School Personnel Do?

- **Avoid sarcasm and put-downs**
 - Model respect for others
- **Connect with all students, including the bully**
 - Students are less likely to bully in your class if they respect and do not want to disappoint you

What Can School Personnel Do?

- **Develop a sense of family among your students**
- **Express praise for students who intervene in bullying situations**
- **Give options to students**
 - Remind them you'll offer multiple solutions to bullying problems they bring you

What Can School Personnel Do?

- **Know bullying "red flags"**
 - Class snickers when particular student walks in, asks or answers questions, etc.
 - Student always left out of activities
 - Student's grades, attendance, and demeanor decline

What Can School Personnel Do?

- **Offer a safe means for students to report bullying**
 - Suggestion box
- **Empower bystanders**
 - Most bullying behavior stops in 10 seconds or less when a bystander intervenes in a positive manner

– Shore, 2005

What Not to Do

- Do not draw too much attention to the bullying behavior in front of other students
- Do not talk to the perpetrator and victim together
- Do not talk to the aggressor immediately after the aggressive act
 - It is a poor time for moral reasoning

What Not to Do

- Do not be inconsistent with the consequences
- Do not fail to follow-up with the victim

What Works in Bullying Prevention?

- What is required to reduce bullying in schools is nothing less than a change in the school climate and in norms for behavior
 - This requires a comprehensive, school-wide effort involving the entire school community
- Resources: www.stopbullying.com

Family Sunshine Center Approach

- Rockin' Respect Campaign
 - Respect others
 - Create kindness