



The Bully, the Target, and the Bystander

Volume 1, Issue 2

September, 2008

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Take Action

Research indicates that bullying behavior, when not addressed, frequently leads to increasingly serious behavioral issues, “exacting a terrible toll on children” with lasting scars (NEA, 2008). Bullying behavior becomes habitual and a bully “may not develop a mature sense of justice” (NCPA, 2008). Thoughts of suicide, criminal activity, and family violence into adulthood can be the consequences when these destructive behaviors go unabated (NEA, 2008; NYVPRC, 2008).

The bystander, even when not directly tormented, still may suffer the consequences of bullying. Bystanders can be

“deeply affected, feeling angry, guilty and helpless” because either they don’t know what to do, or feel guilt for doing nothing (NEA, 2008).

The target of continued bullying begins to live with a constant sense of fear, dreading the next incident. Anxiety, humiliation, depression, and stress often leads to



“A very substantial percentage of the population views bullying as a rite of passage.”
-Dr. Ted Feinberg

physical symptoms that typically affect school attendance and performance (NEA, 2008; NCPA, 2008). Worse, as a student gets older, he or she may believe violence is the only solution to their misery. “One of the common areas that binds all of the school shooters together is all of them were the victim of bullying” (PBS, 2008). Dr. Ted Feinberg states that bullies are sometimes dealt with in a “dramatic and final way” when victimization has continued without adult intervention (PBS, 2008).

“In the end, all children are affected when bullying goes unaddressed” (CES, 2008).

Teasing & Name Calling

In Kevin Henkes book by the same name, Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect until school begins. By the end of the first day, Chrysanthemum’s name has gone from absolutely perfect to dreadful. Mrs. Twinkle, Chrysanthemum’s teacher, discovers her distinctive name has become an object of derision. Remarkably, Mrs. *Delphin-*

ium Twinkle loves Chrysanthemum’s name and her positive influence inspires others to appreciate one student’s beautifully unique name (Henkes, 1991).

In the elementary years, when name-calling and teasing first begins, teachers are highly influential with students. “If teachers allow teasing to continue by not making

attempts to stop this behavior, they can send a message that teasing is acceptable and the victims feel unsupported” (NASP, 2008).

When educators do not accept name-calling and teasing behavior, students frequently begin to establish their own respectful and tolerant environment.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *The lasting effects of bullying behaviors.*
- ♦ *The power of influence.*
- ♦ *Truth or Myth?*
- ♦ *The history of Labor Day.*
- ♦ *Breaking the silence bullies depend on.*
- ♦ *The bully and their target.*

Who's At Risk?

Surprisingly, bullies may be likeable, and thus have little difficulty in making friends. Bullies generally have a "strong need to dominate others" and also tend to be confident, with an inflated sense of self-esteem (NYVPRC, 2008). Bullies are commonly more physically aggressive, easily angered, impulsive, and may have problems at home (NYU, 2008). Bullies usually come from homes where there is little positive interaction and where



How are bullies grown?

discipline styles are either "extremely permissive or excessively harsh" (NYVPRC, 2008).

Dr. Ted Feinberg and a team of guidance counselors found that bullying is more prevalent in boys than girls, but the gap is narrowing (NASP, 2008). When correlating bullying behaviors to normal peer interactions, Dr. Feinberg found that bullies engage in adverse behaviors repeatedly, their actions are purposeful, they manifest

limited emotional reaction or remorse, and there's little effort applied to problem solving (NASP, 2008).

Most importantly, Dr. Feinberg and his team found that bullying is more prevalent in "environments dominated by negative feedback and attention" (NASP, 2008). Educators play a critical role in the learning environment through discussions, positive behavior reinforcement, role-playing and utilizing character development curricula.

Do Bullies Prefer to be Alone?

Common perception: Students who bully are often loners, lacking social skills.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services debunked this statement, finding that just the opposite is true. Bullies not only have friends, but usually their friendship networks are more extensive than those of other children (HRSA, 2008). The friendship base is impor-

Is this Truth or Myth?

tant to a bully because these individuals often support and encourage the bully by affirming negative behaviors. Bullies typically attempt to promote the exclusion of others socially, which requires a group's participation (NYU, 2008). From

this, the bully derives feelings of power, popularity, and dominance.

The HRSA found that bullies "generally have more leadership skills than victims of bullying," including the ability to coerce others to remain silent (HRSA, 2008; NC, 2008).

History Still in the Making

In the 1800's, people worked long hours for little pay. Labor unions were formed to fight for higher wages but another purpose existed: to battle for safer work environments. The work of labor unions, and leaders, united many and by 1930, every state celebrated Labor Day, which is still recognized each year on the first Monday of September.

Today, educators are fighting to provide a safe learning environment for all students. "Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place" (HRSA, 2008).



What can YOU do to create a safer learning environment for students?

Much has been done to promote awareness of bullying but we still have work to do. Join in Bullying Prevention Week, October 5-11, by sharing the message, "Bullying is never okay. What can you do to stop it?" (NEA, 2008).

An Easy Target

Targets of bullying are normally thought to be shy, insecure, have low self-esteem, and lack social skills. Targets generally have fewer friends which equates with reduced peer protection and feelings of rejection (NYU, 2008; NCPA, 2008). A bully may target a student because he or she is perceived to be “irritating, different, or socially awkward or insecure” (NYU, 2008). Targets are not usually inclined to defend themselves, retaliate when bullied, or report bullying to adults (NYVPRC, 2008). A student who is targeted usually exhibits distress, relinquishes desired property or

position when coerced, and may be physically weak (NYU, 2008).

What can educators do to help potential targets?

*Model and expect acts of respect.

*Ask the counselor to help with lessons promoting appropriate social skills.

*Highlight the “strengths or special talents of children who tend to be” targets of bullying (NASP, 2008).

*Focus on team-building principles, acts of kindness, and compassion.

*Discuss historical figures or

personalities from fiction who demonstrate emotional control in times of fear or sadness.

*Role-play strength and confidence.



“Parents and teachers who observe bullying behavior and do nothing to stop it reinforce the behavior.”

-Dr. Ted Feinberg

Breaking the Silence

Students who are bullied, as well as bystanders, routinely remain silent out of fear they will incur additional wrath, or become targets themselves. A bully becomes bolder when malicious behaviors continue unaddressed. However, students must understand they can not defeat bullying alone; everyone must become involved. The National Education Agency suggests that the culture in schools must encourage communi-

cation and convince students there is no shame in reporting harmful behaviors. “Any child who is bullied by another child or adult, or who sees another child being bullied, is urged to report the incident to designated school personnel” (NEA, 2008).

In order to understand bullying, everyone must speak the same language as well. “A common vocabu-

“Children know who the bullies are long before teachers and parents do. Yet children do not tell on bullies.”

Dr. Karen DeBord

lary related to bullying, harassment, and interpersonal relations is essential to success” (NEA, 2008).

How Much Should Kids Handle?

“Work it out” or “solve the problem yourself” are common phrases adults use to encourage independence. However, asking a child to handle a tormentor on their own may be expecting too much.

When a friend comes to the defense of another, it may help or end the bullying. “But one individual’s attempts don’t necessarily stop the

bully completely because the bullying often happens in a group situation” (NYU, 2008).

The target is commonly quiet, ashamed of being bullied. The bully encourages others to remain silent through intimidation. The bystand-



“The bully system can create a group-wide undercurrent that is difficult to overcome single-handedly.”
(NYU, 2008)

ers, even friends of the antagonist are relieved they’re not on the receiving end.

“Thus, there is an unfortunate silent majority that is ill prepared, ineffective, and equally fearful” (NYU, 2008).

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Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

September Q&A

Q: Children are better off walking away if bullying is witnessed.



Unfortunately, remaining quiet or walking away from a bullying incident only rewards the bully. The success of bullying is critically tied to the silence of his or her target and/or bystanders.

In fact, "when bullies are confronted with a united front of their peers who support the victims and show that bullying behavior is not socially acceptable, their power is taken away" (CES, 2008).

In 2005, a group of tweens indicated bullying is "not cool" and felt the need to do "something." The great news is 56% said "they usually either say or do something to try to stop bullying that they observe or tell someone who can help" (HRSA, 2008).

With increased anti-bullying education, our youth are realizing the critical role they play in ending bullying in schools and communities (HRSA, 2008).

Resources

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