



0 BULLIES : 4 ME!!

Promoting Awareness...

of the prevalence, potential dangers, and
lifelong effects of bullying,

and

Providing Assistance...

with suggestions and strategies for prevention and
intervention based on research driven data.

A Practical Guide for Parents, Teachers, and
Administrators.

Betty J. Bennett, Ph.D.

Dear Parents and Educators,

Thank you for your interest in the safety and education of children. The purpose of this booklet is two fold. The first purpose is to bring about awareness of the growing problem of bullying and violence in our schools and society. The second is to provide information as to how we as parents, educators, and yes, even children can be part of prevention and intervention through education.

The information in this booklet is in no way meant to be a prescription for clearing out all of the bullies in your school or community. If that were the case, you may be the last man standing. We have all bullied in one way or another. My hope in getting this tool into your hands is to make one more person aware that bullying is not just a childhood routine, like the mumps or measles. The suffering for victims of bullying begins in childhood but can last a lifetime. Children grow up much too fast as it is. Enjoying a full and happy childhood may just contribute to a more healthy adult life.

I hope that you find this to be a useful resource. My study in this area is ongoing and I welcome any questions or feedback that you may have. Please feel free to contact me at bbennett@unf.edu.

Sincerely,

Betty J. Bennett, Ph.D.

Introduction

It has been said that bullying in schools represents part of the larger problem of violence in our society. I believe that prevention and intervention in our schools can represent part of a reduction of the violence problem in our communities. Studies have established links between aggressive behavior in children and violent acts later in life. Surprisingly, behaviors that were found to escalate most rapidly to the point of aggression were not the ones that seem to be of most concern, but instead were behaviors such as rumors, verbal intimidation and threats, pushing and shoving, and other behaviors that we see in schools on a daily basis. These are behaviors that, in the right situation, could be considered bullying, but generally would be considered minor and go unnoticed.

These basic behaviors are generally a situation of “children being children”. What if there was a way to determine if these minor behaviors were occurring in a bullying situation? Would it really be possible to recognize when bullying is happening so that the victim and the bully could both be helped?

In order to address these questions, we will first need to cover some basics about bullying. In the next few sections, you will find information to assist you in determining if a student might be involved in bullying activity. You will also learn what researchers have found to be considered “bullying behavior” by teachers, students, and other educators. In addition, you’ll find ways to recognize victims, who often are slow to seek help, and how best to offer them support.

Recognizing Bullies



The picture of the All-American TV bully is the big, overgrown boy who spends his school days pushing people, stealing lunch money, and stuffing students into hall lockers. There are surely bullies that fit that profile, but that image is not exclusive. Bullies come in all shapes, sizes, genders, and ethnicities. Ironically, because of the negative treatment that they receive, many victims become bullies themselves.

While it is true that children are born with certain personality traits, some making them predisposed to be more aggressive than others, no child is born to be a bully. Studies have suggested that children from homes where harsh punishments are used as the primary form of discipline, or where children are taught that the best way to handle a problem or confrontation is by striking back, are prone to exhibit bullying behaviors. In addition, the violence on TV (children see 11,000 murders by age 14) and in cartoons (26 violent incidents per cartoon) contribute to the increase in aggressive behavior. And of course, video games are a good source for desensitizing our children to the pain of others and making violence an acceptable way of solving problems.

As you can see, intervention and prevention of bullying in schools will not be as simple as finding all of the kids in school with a big letter “B” on their shirts. Perhaps a look at what a bully does might help.

What is it that a bully does? That's a really tough question. While bullying behaviors can be classified into three basic types; verbal, physical, and psychological, it is hard to get anyone to agree on an exact definition. What someone might think is just teasing might be viewed as cruel or possibly threatening behavior by another onlooker or even by the victim themselves. In fact, many studies have been done that have tried to classify what behaviors would be considered "bullying". Some behaviors that made the list are those directed toward another that are:

Dangerous	Intimidating	Aggressive
Harmful	Harassing	Unprovoked
Hurtful	Abusive	Intentional
Targeted	Deliberate	Usually repeated over time

Many of these behaviors are seen daily in and out of school, in varying degrees. In many cases, their appearance may not be related to a bullying situation. The lack of a common definition not only makes it easier for the bully to get away with their mischief, but it can cause misunderstandings among the adults. A child who can confuse adults is usually a child in control.

There is, however, a factor that sets bullying behavior apart from general misbehavior. An imbalance of power would make that difference. When we think of an imbalance of power in relation to bullying, the vision of that big, overgrown bully towering over the slight, scared victim comes to mind. However, this power imbalance could be represented in tone of voice, number of children, social status, a weapon, physical training, or even intimidating information held by the bully concerning the victim.

What About the Victims?

Victims of bullying suffer physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. In extreme cases, victims have attempted suicide, run away from home, or eventually begun to bully others or display other violent behaviors. Some other affects include:

Fear
Anxiety
Anger
Helplessness
Feelings of isolation



Illness
Attendance problems
Mood swings
Argumentativeness
Increased involvement in fights

Bullying also has been shown to have an impact on academic achievement for the victim. Bullied students can isolate themselves socially therefore making themselves at risk of dropping out of school. Many bullying victims stay home from school more often than students who are not victims of bullies, creating attendance problems. In addition, students who fear for their safety at school are unable to fully concentrate on their studies.

Another problem for children is that many don't tell anyone when they have been bullied. Some of the reasons children don't report are that they fear that:

The bullying will get worse if they tell
Adults won't believe them
Adults can't do anything
Adults won't understand the situation
Adults will tell them to ignore the bully
Or they feel:
Embarrassed and don't want any one to know
They will be laughed at
Or they lack:
Confidence to tell or are shy

Students should be educated to recognize bullying and encouraged to report when it happens. Education can help prevent "casual tattletales" and encouragement can assist getting a handle on who the bullies are.

Unfortunately, some view bullying as simply a rite of passage that must be endured, or that will “toughen her up” or, “make him a man”. This is not true. While some of these ill-fated victims will survive with only a few scars, some will carry memories that will haunt them for years to come.

What Can We Do?

It is easy to become outraged with a problem and wonder why nothing is done about it. This is one of those problems. Circumstances exist that have caused the bullying to continue.

Following are some suggestions to help modify these circumstances.

Parents:

Listen to your children ~ Learn from your children

Communicate with your child’s school

- ☺ Inform your child’s teacher of bullying activity in your community
- ☺ Inform your child’s teacher of bullying information in the media
- ☺ Attend school meetings and functions

Parents & Teachers:

Talk to your children ~ Teach your children

- ☺ What is a bully
- ☺ What are bullying behaviors
- ☺ What to do if approached by a bully
- ☺ No one has a right to bully them
- ☺ They should always tell someone if they are bullied
- ☺ They should also tell if someone else is bullied
- ☺ They should never bully

All Educators:

- ☺ **THE BOTTOM LINE: ANY FORM OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED!**
- ☺ Final remarks in a 2002 report by the United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education following the Columbine shooting included:

Educators can play a part in prevention by creating an environment where students feel comfortable telling an adult whenever they hear about someone who is considering doing harm to another person, or even whether the person is considering harming themselves. Once such an environment is created, it will remain important that the adults in that environment listen to students and handle the information they receive in a fair and responsible manner.

Some suggestions from the literature to assist in reaching the bottom line are:

- Establish clear consequences for bullying that are strictly enforced by everyone in the school.
- Teach students when and how to report bullying.
- Provide inservice for teachers and staff in how to recognize bullying and what to do when they see it happening.
- Continually reinforce the message that bullying will not be tolerated and that the school is determined to put an end to it.
- Provide a safe environment to cultivate a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Encourage adults to serve as role models of how to interact appropriately with others.
- Use more positive and less punitive disciplinary actions whenever possible.
- Create empathy for the victims of bullying.
- Create policies and procedures for handling varying levels of bullying.

An Even Greater Responsibility

- Studies have shown that without intervention and support, bullies will continue to bully and may practice other types of antisocial behaviors such as
 - Vandalism
 - Shoplifting
 - Dropping out of school
 - Using drugs and alcohol
 - Frequent fighting
 - Carrying weapons
 - Difficulty holding jobs
 - Problems sustaining relationships
 - Being abusive to their spouses and children
- In a study of male bullies grades 6 through 9, 60% were convicted of at least one crime as adults (compared to 23% who did not bully). In the same study, by the age of twenty-four, 35-40% of these had three or more convictions (compared with 10% who did not bully).
- In a study completed over a 22 year period, findings indicated that children who were aggressive to their peers at age eight were five times more likely to have criminal records for antisocial offenses by the age of 30 than their non-aggressive peers.
- Research on the 37 “targeted” shootings that took place on American school campuses between 1974 and 2000 including Columbine, found 71% of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured prior to the incidents.



In Closing

It is evident that the frequency of bullying incidences is on the rise. Also clear is the link between minor bullying behaviors and more aggressive, even violent behavior. The implications of these two facts on American schools are staggering. While the scope of bullying has gone far beyond the boundaries of the local school yard, educators still play a vital role in the effort to reduce bullying in schools and society. By recognizing the minor misbehaviors for what they are and treating them accordingly, the cycle of violence can be interrupted at its most basic level.

Working to decrease the influences of bullying in our schools is an important step in recapturing a more safe and civil society for ourselves and our children. It should, however, not be the only step. There are other issues involving discipline in schools in need of attention that educators are striving to resolve. While we work on these “parts” we must also be concerned with the whole, or the environment. Making sure that the school/home and the people in it support the new behaviors and values being taught and expected, is as important as the new behaviors themselves. People are naturally likely to return to old behaviors when placed back into environments where the old behaviors are encouraged.

Suggested Websites

<http://www.mcgruff.org/Grownups/bully.htm>

National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)

This site offers tips to parents and teachers on how what they can do to help prevent bullying

<http://www.safenetwork.org/>

Family Education Network

This site includes helpful information for parents to help children know what to do when faced with a bully.

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/index.shtml>

Kidscape

The focus of this site is on ways to keep kids safe through preventing bullying before it happens.

<http://www.ncpc.org/>

National Crime Prevention Council

Information about bullying and general crime
Prevention for kids, teen, and adults.



<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/safety/Anti-Bullying.html>

Nebraska School Safety Center

This site is designed as a resource for schools, parents, and community members wishing to know more about bullying.

<http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/document.php3?D=d65>

Superhighway Safety: Safe Use of the Internet

This site provides helpful information on the newest trend in bullying. "Cyberbullying", or the use of email, instant messaging, chat rooms, and is a convenient, closed-doors way to bully.

About the Author

Betty J. Bennett is an Assistant Professor at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, FL. She teaches graduate level courses in the Department of Counseling and Educational Leadership. Prior to receiving her doctorate in Educational Leadership at Florida State University, Dr. Bennett was employed at the public elementary, middle, and high school levels in the roles of teacher, administrator, and district level staff. She is also an Instructor of Tang Soo Do Karate and teaches elementary school students martial arts, self-discipline, and self-respect. Her research interests include school leadership, discipline, character/moral education, and bullying. She can be contacted at bbennett@unf.edu.

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