

Chad R. Francour

Current Issues

Bullying

“When I was a young boy, the bully called me names, stole my bicycle, forced me off the playground. You may find on the front of other children, forced me to turn over my lunch money each day, and give me a black eye if I told adult authority figures. At different times I was subjected to a wide range of degradation and abuse- de- pantsing, spit in my face, forced playground dirt... To this day, their handprints, like a slap on the face, me start in defining my soul.”

Eric E. Rofes

As indicated of the above, teachers in one’s own peer group should control bullying for it can deprive children and adults of his or her quality-of-life. Parents, coaches, society, and neighbors should exercise this control. Bullying is a problem that affects a lot of children, most not even victims, and can make school a place of fear leading to more violence and stress for the children, the school, and the family.

Recent school shootings in the United States have prompted many professionals to consider bullying and its impact on students. Needless to say, the school needs to be aware of bullying behaviors and the potential for damaging consequences. “With all the focus that has surrounded teenage gangs and gun violence, it may be easy to forget that the teenage years are not the only times that children face violent behavior” (DeHann). Bullying and aggressive behavior are even more common in the elementary grades as seen a number of studies. “Some studies suggest that around 20 percent of all American children have been a victim of bullying at

some point in elementary school, and the same number have described themselves as engaging in some form of bullying behavior,” (DeHann). A study conducted by Perry, Kusel, and Peary in 1988 found that approximately 10 percent of children in the United States experience severe victimization by bullying. In a more recent study, nearly 30 percent of the students reported being involved in bullying as either a perpetrator or a victim. This Nansel study translates to 3,708,284 students reported bullying and 3,245,904 students reported victimization.

Living in a society where property in power are much admired, where athletes and film heroes regularly criticize, beat up, and kill others. Where the weak, sick, or disabled are often undervalued, it is no surprise that children have come to imitate the very things he or she sees or hears. When bullies pick on someone else, it could make him or her feel important, they, and powerful. “Bullying is usually defined as a form of aggression in which one or more children intend to harm or disturb another child who is perceived as being unable to defend him or herself” (Smokowski & Kopasz). Researchers in this study identified four types of bullies. Physical bullies are action orientated use direct bullying behaviors such as hitting or kicking. Verbal bullies use words to humiliate his or her victim. Relational bullies convince their peers to exclude certain children. Girls often do this type of bullying when one’s peer group is of greater importance. The final type of bully is a reactive type. These bullies tend to be compulsive, putting other children to fight them, but then claimed self-defense when caught. DeHann suggests that bullying as some distinctive features. The intention of bullying behavior is purposeful, rather than accidental. The goal is to actually gain control over our child through physical or verbal aggression. Usually bullies make his or her attack without any real reason, other than they see the victim as an easy target. Ironically, “research has shown that although

bullies tend to have difficulty making friends, they do gain a certain level of popularity in pure status for their actions” (DeHann). School failure, peer rejection, and poor paternal relationships are given for causes of bullying.

Bullying is an important thing and occurs often at times when the victims are warned by bullies not to tell anyone. Victims are also seen as being weak and unable to stand up for themselves. Victims are more likely to be boys than girls in regard to physical aggression. Not only do children do bad, but also the stress of dealing with bullies can make oneself feel sick. “15 percent of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied at school” (DeHann). A study by Foltz- Tay in 1996 found that seven percent of eighth graders stayed home at least one day a month because of bullying. Sad, but true, being labeled a victim is likely to follow children from year-to-year. It is hard to keep your mind on schoolwork when you are worried about how you are going to deal with the bully near your locker or what is going to happen in the hallways, restrooms, or in gym. Long-term effects of victims as a result of childhood bullying include more achievement levels, thus, many do not reach his or her academic potential.

My personal feeling on bullying is that it should not be tolerated, but I am not so naïve as to believe that it is an inescapable part of life. As a society, we need to identify, develop, and teach coping skills or the victim will have social problems that do not end with school. Since 40 to 70 percent of all children reported being bullied during school breaks (Olweus), school administrators, teachers, and support staff need to effectively tackle the problem. He or she needs to have a no tolerance policy like my father, and elementary physical education teacher, recess supervisor, and former coach of football, basketball, and baseball. When asked what he says

and does when he hears someone being bullied he said, “You talk to him or her about what is being said and how the perpetrator would feel if the roles were reversed.” If you see someone being bullied, you should always try to stop it. If you do nothing, you are simply condoning it.

References

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