



OVERVIEW OF BULLYING

Our society has a legacy of aggression. Our nation had a turbulent birth steeped in violence with indigenous people. The fact that our national fabric is tied up in aggression can be seen in the alarming incidence in family relationships.

The best, most natural starting point for reducing aggression in schools is to reduce bullying. Middle schools make an excellent target for anti-bullying efforts because of the developmental tasks that characterize this period. The search for autonomous identity during adolescence often leads to dependence on a peer group. Their peers often are coercive and angry in their behavior.

Only recently have we come to understand the importance of schoolyard bullying. Bullies identified by age 8 are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 than non-bullies and five times, by age 30, to have a serious criminal record. Bullying is not normal "rough-and-tumble" child development. It is a precursor as it fosters intense misery among other students. There may have been a time when competitive and aggressive skills had survival value for the human species.

Definition of Bullying

A person is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons. (Olweus, 1991, p.4.3)

Bullying is the intentional infliction of pain always directed by a stronger student against a weaker one. Bullying is a chronic pattern of abuse over time, not rare episodes. It may involve either overt or covert actions. Direct bullying is an open attack on a victim, while indirect (or covert) bullying can take the form of social isolation and exclusion or social ostracism.

The Roots of Bullying

Early parenting practices lead to conduct problems by the time children reach grade school. By middle childhood, these problems among extremely aggressive children lead consistently to rejection by better-behaved peers and academic failure. In late childhood (adolescence) these behavior patterns may result in delinquency.

CONCLUSION

1. American schools exist in a larger culture steeped in violence and fascinated with aggression. The exact relationship between bullying and aggression is unknown, but bullying is an element of the pattern of antisocial behavior so troubling to citizens of the United States.
2. Many schools are not physically or psychologically safe environments for learning. Up to 15% of students report themselves severely traumatized by peer abuse.
3. Bullying is the physical or psychological harassment of persons less able to defend themselves.
4. Families of bullies share fundamental characteristics. Parents tend to be emotionally cold, hostile and uninvolved. Bullying may be modeled after harsh discipline or physical abuse perpetrated in the home.
5. Bullying may be instrumental; that is, it gets the bully the desired outcome.
6. Prevention of bullying may become a legal obligation of the schools.

Source: Bully Busters