

PEER RELATIONSHIPS AND BULLYING: A PARENT'S RESOURCE

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Sara R. Marcus, Ph.D
Southeast Psychological Services

OVERVIEW

- What's important about peer relationships?
- Defining bullying
- Identifying bullies and victims
- Where and when is bullying most likely to occur?
- What works for managing bullying?
- How can parents help?
- Questions/comments



CHILDREN'S PEER RELATIONSHIPS

- Positive relationships with peers are critical for healthy child development.
- Poor peer relationships during childhood place children at-risk for a host of negative outcomes.
- As children move from early childhood into pre-adolescence, peers take on increasing importance and the family is no longer the child's central social environment.



THE MANY FACES OF BULLYING

- Physical aggression
 - Getting “beat up”
 - Being punched, kicked, or otherwise physically harmed
- Overt, verbal victimization
 - Verbal threats of harm
 - Put-downs, teasing
- Relational (indirect) aggression
 - Gossiping behind the victim’s back, spreading rumors
 - Social exclusion, ignoring



WHAT DO BULLIES AND VICTIMS LOOK LIKE?

- Common characteristics of bullies:
 - Poor self-esteem with regard to academic ability and behavior
 - In adolescence, view themselves as attractive and popular
 - May experience harsh treatment in the home
 - Low empathy
- Common characteristics of victims:
 - Observable “differences” (e.g., physical handicap, poor hygiene)
 - Social insecurity and anxiety
 - Poor social skills
 - Emotional reactivity



WHERE AND WHEN DOES BULLYING HAPPEN?

- Places and times with low adult supervision
 - Restrooms
 - On the school bus
 - Playgrounds
 - Lunchroom
 - Cyber-bullying



LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

- School-wide anti-bullying programs
- Small group counseling for those at-risk of bullying or being bullied
- Individual counseling for bullies (focused on building empathy and positive self-esteem)
- Individual counseling for victims (focused on developing coping skills and assertive responses and to being bullied)



HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

- Model respectful, accepting relationships
- Encourage your child to embrace differences and be compassionate
- Do not accept and redirect behaviors that put others down
- Help your child develop coping strategies
 - Who can my child go to if s/he is being bullied?(e.g., tell a teacher, ask a friend for help)
 - Discourage crying and visible displays of upset
- Assertiveness skills
 - Teach scripts for how your child can come to another child's defense
 - Practice verbal responses that are assertive, rather than passive or aggressive
 - Ignoring and fighting back may increase bullying behavior



HELPFUL RESOURCES

○ Parent resources

- *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* by Dan Olweus
- *Bullies and Victims: Helping Your Child Through the Schoolyard Battlefield* by S&P Fried
- *Girl Wars: 12 Strategies That Will End Female Bullying* by Dellasega and Nixon
- <http://www.antibullying.net/>

○ Books to read with your child:

- *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss (all ages)
- *Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Bully?* by Teddy Slater (ages 6-8)
- *The Berenstain Bears and the In Crowd* by S&J Berenstain (ages 6-10)
- *Bullies are a Pain in the Brain* by Trevor Romain (ages 8-13)



QUESTIONS????

COMMENTS???

Sara R. Marcus, Ph.D.

Southeast Psychological Services

6115 Park South Drive

Charlotte, NC 28210

(704) 552.7550

smarcus@southeastpsych.com

