



UNITED TRIBES
TECHNICAL COLLEGE
LAND GRANT EXTENSION

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Victims of Bullies

CHILDREN CAN BE GROUPED INTO FOUR CATEGORIES; POPULAR, CONTOVERCIAL, REJECTED OR NEGLECTED.

What it means to be a victim

Victims can be selected from any category, although neglected children often are more likely to be victims. Unfortunately in recent years, our attitudes have changed about what it means to be a victim. Many parents and school officials are likely to blame victims of bullying for being weak and not being able to stand up for themselves. This, coupled with the fact that victims are usually warned by bullies not to tell anyone, makes it difficult for them to talk with parents and teachers. Ten percent of children could be considered extreme victims who have been the victim of bullies at least once a week for a long period of time. These children are often considered younger, weaker, or sicker by their peers. Victims are just as likely to be boys as girls. They often report strong fears or dislike of going to school. These children often report closer feelings to parents and siblings, but whether this causes them to be victims or is simply how they cope with being bullied is unclear. Being labeled a victim is likely to follow children around from year to year. Most extreme victims report having few or no friends and being alone at recess and lunch. Symptoms that a child might be a victim of bullying:

- acts moody, sullen, or withdraws from family interaction
- becomes depressed
- loses interest in school work, or grades drop
- loses appetite or has difficulty getting to sleep
- waits to use the bathroom at home
- arrives home with torn clothes, unexplained bruises
- asks for extra money for school lunch or supplies, extra allowance
- refuses to go to school (15 percent of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied at school)
- wants to carry a protection item, such as a knife

Consequences for victims and bullies

Short term effects of being a victim: Being a victim is very stressful for children. Many children develop a strong dislike of going to school, especially times like recess or gym class. Many victims begin to distrust all their peers at school and have problems making friends. Extreme victims can develop depression or physical illness.

Long term effects of being a victim: The long term consequences of being a victim vary a good deal. Most victims of bullying do well in school and are able to make friends as they grow older. Most victims, especially if they receive support from adults important in their lives, survive the experience of being bullied without long term effects.

Short term effects of being a bully: Even though bullies are sometimes viewed positively by their peers, they rarely are capable of maintaining close friendships. They are usually don't do well in school and are not well liked by their teachers.

Long term effects of being a bully: Bullying is a behavior that is very often one of the first steps to more serious problems. Unless some kind of intervention takes place, the aggression of bullying often leads to more serious acts of delinquency and criminal activity. Bullies are also more likely to use drugs and alcohol as adolescents.

Suggestions for working with bullies:

- Work in small groups. It is often helpful to place bullies in groups with older children and have them engage in cooperative tasks. It will be necessary to provide a great deal of supervision.
- Reinforce children each time they engage in some degree of caring or pro-social behavior. It will be easier to establish more appropriate rules for interaction after they learn that there are more positive ways to gain attention and affection.
- Often children who are having a hard time relating to other children can learn some social skills with pets. Under close supervision, bullies may learn to care for and show affection to a dog or cat.
- Work with families to determine ways they can show warmth and affection to their children, and seek to develop a more consistent set of discipline. Sometimes it is helpful for families to become more involved in community activities and become friends with other parents.



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Suggestions for working with victims:

- Often victims, particularly those who have been victimized many times, are withdrawn and are afraid of social interaction. These children often profit from social interactions with younger children, where they may be less afraid to open up or show some leadership.
- Practice with kids some strategies of ways they can respond when being bullied. Help them identify times when they are likely to be harassed, and see if there are ways to avoid those situations. Determine the exact nature of the bullying behavior, and help them practice some things to say or do. Here are some strategies

Specific strategies:

- Laugh or ignore comments or teasing. Bullies delight in you being scared and getting a big reaction. Eventually they will leave you alone.
- Tell them to buzz off or shout GO AWAY!! Say it as angrily as you can and walk away immediately. Practice in the mirror.
- Stay with a crowd – bullies usually pick on kids who are alone. Suggest that children walk to school or sit on the bus with someone who can protect them.
- If you are alone with a crowd that picks on you, ask him or her why she is mean to you.
 - For both groups, it is helpful to pair them up with children who are neither bullies nor victims, as they can be great teachers of appropriate behavior.

What schools can do:

- Get an accurate assessment of the problem. An anonymous survey is a very effective way to learn about the true nature of a problem at a particular school.
- Maintain higher visibility. Most schools report that most of their bullying problems disappear when playgrounds, bathrooms, etc., are properly monitored. Supervising recess is especially important.
- Have students develop class rules about bullying that are then consistently reinforced. It is important to start this in very early grades to gain a handle on the problem before it gets out of control.

- Conduct in-service training for both teachers and parents. Stress that bullying is not just boys being boys or high spirited behavior but potentially damaging for both victims and bullies. Bullying is not something that people grow out of, but one of the first signs of more serious problems. It is also important to remember that verbal harassment can be just as scary and intimidating as physical attacks.
- Have serious talks with bullies, and make them realize that you are aware of their behavior and are not going to tolerate it. It is also important to develop ways to help them learn more positive social skills.

What families can do?

- Create a safe environment for your children to tell you about being bullied. Many times kids are embarrassed to tell their parents what happened, thinking that their parents will blame them. Sometimes kids at school pick on other kids or say mean things to them. Does this ever happen to you at school?
- Reinforce the idea that if they are being bullied, it is not their fault. Don't make your child feel like a wimp. The person that is picking on you is the one with a problem, not you. Bullies pick on people for no real reason, but it is just because they have problems of their own, not because of anything you have done.
- Don't teach your kids to hit or fight back; it will only make things worse. Here are five steps that are good to suggest:
 - Ignore
 - Move away
 - Ask to stop
 - Tell firmly to stop
 - Tell an adult.
- Notify teachers whenever an incident happens, be prepared to be persistent until some action is taken! Ask the teacher: Would it be possible to have the class get involved in a discussion about bullies, or to separate my child from those who are bothering them?
- If your child is unwilling to report another child's behavior to a teacher, offer to make the complaint yourself. Stress that it can be done in a way that is confidential