

Bullying and What To Do About It

Although it's always been around, bullying should never be accepted as normal behavior. The feelings experienced by victims of bullying are painful and lasting. Bullies, if not stopped, can progress to more serious, antisocial behavior. Recent incidents of school violence show that bullying can have tragic consequences for individuals, families, schools, and entire communities.

Recognize It (for what it is)

Bullying is aggressive behavior. A child is targeted by one or more youths with repeated negative actions over a period of time. These are intentional attempts to cause discomfort or injury and can include name-calling, making faces, obscene gesturing, malicious teasing, threats, rumors, physical hitting, kicking, pushing, and choking. More subtle is simply excluding a child from the group. Generally, bullying occurs when there's an imbalance of power favoring the bully. Victims usually feel they don't have the strength to defend themselves. Make no mistake; bullying is a form of violence that shouldn't be tolerated.

See the Scope of the Problem

- The Journal of the American Medical Association recently reported that one-third of U.S. students experience bullying, either as a target or a perpetrator.
- A high level of parents (47%) and teachers (77%) report children victimized by bullies.¹
- Bullying and violence cause 160,000 fearful children to miss one or more school days each month.²
- Only a small percentage of children believe that telling adults will help. Children generally feel that adult intervention is ineffective and will only bring more harassment.³

Spot the Bullies

- They are both boys and girls. Boys bully more often and more physically than girls. Girls are more likely to use rejection and slander.
- Bullies usually pick on others out of frustration with their own lives. They target other children because they need a victim who is weaker than them.
- While they may feel uneasy about it, many children tease their peers simply to go along with the crowd.
- Bullies sometimes suffer from depression.⁴ They're often from homes where harsh punishment and inconsistent discipline are used.⁵ Sixty percent of male bullies will be arrested by age 24.⁶

Know Their Targets

- Girls and boys alike are targeted.
- Those who are physically different in race, body size, or clothing. Those with disabilities or those who are dealing with sexual orientation issues. Both groups are kids who are typically anxious, insecure, and suffering from low self-esteem. This makes them good targets.
- There are few differences among racial and ethnic groups in the numbers of students being bullied. White and black students are more likely to report it than others.⁷

¹ National Parent Teachers Association, 2001

² National Education Association, 1993

³ Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995

⁴ Pollock, 2002

⁵ Batche and Knoff, 1994

⁶ Olweus, 1993

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, 2001

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; community and professional mental health education and a newsletter for first-time parents available in both English and Spanish. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board and United Way of Central Ohio. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.