

Knocking Out Bullying:

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Abstract

Harassment of children by other children, has become a major issue in schools today. Children under the age of 18 are being physically, emotionally, and verbally abused by other children their age. The increase in technology also increases the threat of bullying, by increasing pestering online. Parents, students, staff, administrators, and the community need to work together to put an end to bullying, to help children to obtain an enjoyable and successful school career. By putting an end to bully, we will make our world a safe and healthy environment for all to enjoy.

Many people think going to school, the park, events, or even just logging on to the internet are no big deal, just everyday events. However, to some children it is much more. It can be terrifying for students to walk down the hall, go to the bathroom, change clothes in gym class, or log on to talk to friends. They do not know who is waiting for them just around the corner to take out some aggression on, or just to use them for pure entertainment. Bullying and cyberbully has become a major issue and without proper prevention techniques children will be at risk of physical and emotional abuse.

“For two years, Johnny, a quiet 13-year-old, was a human plaything for some of his classmates. The teenagers badgered Johnny for money, forced him to swallow weeds and drink milk mixed with detergent, beat him up in the restroom and tied a string around his neck, leading him around as a ‘pet’. When Johnny’s torturers were interrogated about the bullying, they said they pursued their victim because it was fun.” Bullying is usually represented in many different ways such as: physical contact, verbal abuse, or making faces and rude gestures. It can also be as simple as spreading rumors or even just excluding someone from a common group (Olweus, 2001).

A recent survey was done in two schools in California and one school in Arizona; it detailed how students in grades three through six felt about being bullied or bullying other students. It stated that nearly 90% of these students said that they have been bullied. Nearly 59% of the students said that they have bullied other students. Some statements taken from the students were: “Other students make me cry,” “I want to stay home from school because students are mean to me,” and “I am hit or kicked by other students.” Some of the “bullies” statements were as follows: “I am mean to other students,” “I push or slap other students,” and “I say mean

things about a student to make other kids laugh." Though the the information is not nationwide it still shows that bullying is bigger problem than most people realize (Hitti, 2007).

In schools, bullying usually occurs in areas with minimal or no adult supervision. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs in PE, exploratory classes, recess, hallways, bathrooms, school buses and waiting for buses, classes that require group work or after school activities. However, public places are not the only place children have to fear anymore, bullying has expanded.

Children are not even safe at home, now they are even being bullied online. Another example of bullying is Cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying is defined as a child, preteen or teen that is tormented, threatened, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet" ("Stop Cyberbullying," 2004). To be classified as cyber bullying, both the bully and the person being bullied must be under 18 years of age. However, this changes when a child informs an adult and they get involved, it is then known as cyber-harassment or it can also be known as cyber-stalking ("Stop Cyberbullying," 2004). Though many people believe it is just children being unpleasant, however, in reality this is a very serious and dangerous situation with children being malicious and cruel.

Cyberbullying is usually instigated by a student who feels "anger, a sense for revenge, and frustration" ("Stop Cyberbullying," 2004). Many children who play the role of the bully, do this for pure entertainment, to pass time, and because of access to technology without supervision. Some Internet bullies even do it to boost their own ego and lower their victims. This breaks the victim down, in some cases; cyberbullying has led to the deaths and suicides of young children ("Stop Cyberbullying," 2004).

A common mistake is confusing cyber bullying with sexual cyberbullying. According to stopcyberbullying.com Sexual cyberbullying involve “adults trying to lure in children into offline meetings” (“Stop Cyberbullying,” 2004). This concept can also be known as luring by a sexual predator or sexual exploitation. There are certain instances when cyberbullying and sexual exploitation can cross paths. An example of this is when cyberbullying is started by a minor and attract predators who love the harassment (“Stop Cyberbullying,” 2004). This can cause many problem and can also lead to future problems.

A problem with trying to prevent this type of bullying is the fact that schools have limited ability to stop it. “Schools are often sued for exceeding their authority and violating the student’s freedom of speech” (“Stop Cyberbullying,” 2004). An effective way for schools to help is for them to teach how a student may lose their IM account if a situation with cyberbullying occurs. The only true way to prevent this type of bullying though, are through the parents. Supervision and control while using the internet are vital so that the Internet is used properly. Also, parents need to be opened with their children so that their children feel like they can trust them and go to them for problems on or off line. (“Stop Cyberbullying,” 2004). Without aid from parents Internet bullying will only get worse and occur more frequently.

Once cyber bullying occurs it is known to happen again, so it is very important that if guidelines were not in place to begin with that they are immediately put into effect. Educating students on how to avoid cyberbullying will aid in nonparticipation and will aid in knowledge for students to be “held accountable for their actions” (“Stop Cyberbullying,” 2004). Children need to be informed so that they are aware of the consequences of bullying.

“Bullying is one of the most underrated problems facing children today and is becoming one of the biggest problems in schools and is a reality in the lives of all children, whether they

are bullies, victims, or witnesses” (Cornish). Teachers, students, support staff, parents and administrators need to work as a team to take action against bullying. Bullying can seriously affect a child emotionally, physically, and in their academics also. To improve the education experience for everyone, it is important to have an effective bullying prevention program (“Guide”, 2002). For a program to work effectively it must involve the entire community as well as all the families.

Penn State has suggested a few strategies to consider, such as using a method call the Plan and Make Consequences Clear Method, another method is the Safeguard Honesty Method, and the third is to simply create a bullying policy. Each of these has been proven effective in the past among many schools, while each have their own strengths and weaknesses (“Guide” 2002).

The Plan and Make Consequences Clear Method is an effective strategy for schools because it outlines what the school needs to do before and after bullying occurs. It includes a policy or rules outlining how teachers and school staff should address the issue of bullying in the classroom and how the situation is dealt with after it has happened (“Guide”, 2002). This strategy makes the students aware of the consequences of bullying which helps them to understand what their penalty will be if they do break the rules.

The Safeguard Honestly Method makes students feel safe when reporting bullying. The teacher, administrator, or other school staff must respect the victim and comfort them while dealing with the situation (“Guide”, 2002). This makes the student at ease and reassured them that they have people on their side. It also helps them open up more then why feel as though they can trust the person whom they are talking to. Trust is vital in this method.

Enforcing a bullying policy, however, has proven to be the most effective and work best. The policy should be a school-wide policy that defines bullying, outlines how teachers and

school staff should address the issue in the classroom, and explains how incidents will be dealt with after they happen. To make all students aware of the policy, teachers should go over it with every class and, if necessary, an administrator should address it school wide. This helps the when students move on to a different school such as junior high or high school because they already know what to expect. None the less, what is important is that some sort of method is set into place.

Whatever strategy is chosen, teachers and school staff need to clearly define all forms of bullying. Students should be aware of what they should be looking out for. Also, when forming any strategy, make sure to involve all members of a school community including students, parents, teachers, and non-teaching staff. Make all of them aware of any types of bullying problems not only in the schools but throughout the community as well. By enforcing a policies it will truly make a safer environment for students.

Without proper prevention techniques, children will be at risk of physical and emotional abuse from bullying and cyberbullying. Children need to feel comfortable in their schools, community, and home, if they cannot feel safe in these places then where can they? They need that sanctuary. Today's children are tomorrow's future; we need to teach safety now so tomorrow we can feel protected.

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