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**Bullying:
What We Know – and Can Do**

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NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention
www.njbullying.org, (908) 522-2581

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**Olweus
(all vay us)**

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Traditional View

'boys will be boys', 'girls are mean' 'it's a dog-eat-dog world' 'life is cruel' 'rite of passage' 'people are like that' 'you have to get tough' 'competition builds character' 'you can handle it' 'life isn't always fair'

= inevitable, the nature of children/people, growth experience, strengthening

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Modern view – bullying is created by adults

- modeling of bullying behavior
- acceptance of bullying as normal
- inaction when bullying occurs
- exposing persons to social systems in which bullying is rewarded or implicitly accepted.

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Definition Of Bullying

A person is being bullied when:

- he or she is exposed repeatedly to negative acts by a peer or peers
- there is intent to harm
- there is an imbalance of power so that the person who is being bullied has a difficult time defending himself or herself.

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Bullying may involve either:

- direct actions (e.g., hitting, name-calling, texting)
- indirect actions (e.g., avoiding, social exclusion, spreading rumors, texting others, altering a website)

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Prevalence

- most common serious problem of the school-age child, and common in adult settings as well (social clubs, workplaces, prisons, e.g.)
- wide world occurrence
- middle school years peak period
- impact 100%

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All persons affected (the Bullying Circle):

- as bullying or bullied
- as bystanders (active, passive, 'upstanders')
- feel afraid, powerless, guilty, diminished empathy
- tension, numbing, fears of openness and self-expression
- wide range of lasting negative effects

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Gender differences:

- males more likely to bully (males, females)
- males more likely to be bullied by males than females
- in females, 'relational aggression' more common (manipulating relationships for negative effects on a peer) (males also engage in this)
- female victimization more likely to persist, perhaps more harmful effects

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Those who bully :

- use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- difficult relationships with peers and at home
- be less empathic and more impulsive
- have authoritarian parents/family backgrounds

but . . .

- have good self-esteem
- adequate academic and work performance
- good social skills
- and are often popular (especially with adults)

Bully/Victims:

- A small number of children **both** bully and are bullied
- And tend to have more problems

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***Characteristics targeted for bullying :**

- looks (e.g., obesity shortness)
- Race
- gender identify and expression
- poverty (family income)
- religion
- disability (e.g., learning differences / special health needs)
- other characteristics (shyness, sensitive/emotionally expressive, less strength/athleticism, family conflict)

**Any perceived difference.
Any child may be bullied.**

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What To Do

Whole School Model - Dan Olweus

- school the most common site
- change the culture of schools
- *adult* initiated and led (children involved)

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Bullying Prevention Program

School-Wide

- Administrative support
- Coordinating group/staff discussions/training
- Assessment, baseline and ongoing (surveys, reporting system)
- Positive staff-staff and staff-student relations
- Proactive effort to identify all incidents/relationships
- Supervise high-risk areas (schoolyard, lunchroom, school bus, team activities, locker room, cyberspace)
- Consistent rules and sanctions (well-known to students, staff, parents, community)
- Involve Parents
- Activate peer bystanders

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Bullying Prevention Program

Classroom

- Clear, consistent rules
- Regular meetings
- Collaborative learning ('jigsaw' – Aronson)
- Curriculum integration (all subjects)
- Proactive work on relationships
- Parent involvement

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Bullying Prevention Program

Individual

- Proactive information-gathering on vulnerability and relations
- Meeting with each child who was bullied and parent (regret/apology, take responsibility, absolve)
- Meeting with each child who bullied and call parent (4 questions: what you did, harm it did, your problem, next time?)
- Consequences for the bullying child (reasonable, invariable, escalating), then (post-incident) reflection/empathy
- Assure and arrange increased support for the bullied child.
- Active monitoring after incidents to ensure the bullied child's safety

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**Seven Measures Which
Positively Impact Bullying**

1. collaborative learning models
2. friendship circles
3. mentoring to strengthen school engagement
4. diverse clubs/activities
5. proactive diversity education
6. staff-student positive relations
7. staff-staff positive relations

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**What Schools Can Do
Strengthen School Climate**

- emphasize warmth, engagement, inclusion, community
- positive relations and shared understanding between staff
- increase positive staff-student interactions not favor some
- support /inclusion for all (diverse clubs/activities, proactive education, increase support for vulnerable groups)
- welcoming students to school
- staff-student/community 'match' (complementary diversity)
- character education (social-emotional learning)
- clear/consensus expectations ('how we do things here')

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What can parents do about bullying? (1)

- Good relations/communication with children
- Inform yourself
- Expect/ ask/ demand adequate school action.
- Expect/ ask/ demand that owners of social networking sites and internet providers address bullying.
- Ask your child how children treat other children at school (and how your child is treated); listening is more important than advice.

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What can parents do about bullying? (2)

- When you hear children speak badly of another child, *gently* express discomfort, and empathy for the scorned child.
- Be present at your child's school; don't wait to be invited, ask to volunteer.
- Take action with other concerned parents. Meet (as a group) with school leaders; ask specifically about school's approach.

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What can parents do about bullying? (3)

- *Never* ignore bullying, don't walk by; if you can't intervene directly, report it.
- Support bullied kids in every possible way.
- Seek legal advice and government support.
- Don't accept leaders who bully, including teachers; speak out, insist on change.
- Consider changing schools, if possible, as a last resort.

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What Can Professionals Do?

- Be alert for bullying, consider bullying as a factor or even a cause of problems.
- Support at-risk children and groups through community programs, strengthened school culture, and support for parents/families.
- Challenge negative leaders, expect support.
- Expect schools to address bullying, raise parental expectations.
- Be clear about what works and doesn't work
- Advocate for stronger law.

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Systemic approach works:

- reduces bullying incidents dramatically in 1st year
- improvements in subsequent years *if ongoing*
- shown to reduce bullying substantially in well-done intervention studies in many different countries, including the U.S.

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Be clear about what doesn't work:

- Zero tolerance or '3 strikes'
- Social skills training/psychotherapy as primary modalities
- Peer mediation and conflict resolution
- One-shot (e.g., assemblies) or short-term interventions.

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OLWEUS:

Our moral obligation
to help bullied
children.

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Selected Resources

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Stan Davis' *Schools Where Everyone Belongs* (www.stopbullyingnow.com)

National School Climate Center (www.schoolclimate.org)

www.stopbullyingworld.com

www.stopbullyingnow.org (HRSA)
