

Preventing Bullying



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Why stop bullying?

- Bullies are five times as likely to become adult criminals as non-bullies.
- Targets of bullying are more likely to be depressed as adults.
- Preventing bullying lowers rates of vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy.


What is bullying?

The easiest way to understand bullying is through looking at these analogies:

- Sexual harassment.
- Spouse abuse.
- All involve imbalance of power; in all these forms of abuse the perpetrator blames the victim for the abuse. In all three the victim may blame him or herself for the abuse, if it is not stopped.

How has society reacted to abuse?

- ▶ Through denial "*It's not important;*" "*He didn't mean it.*"
- ▶ By blaming the victim or asking the victim to solve the problem: "*You should wear different clothes;*" "*Just GET the dinner on the table on time;*" "*He just does it because he knows it bothers you.*"
- ▶ And through comprehensive intervention including training, consequences, helping abusers change, positive peer pressure, and support for targets.




Dr. Dan Olweus, in Norway, did the ground-breaking research on bullying from 1975 to the present. His work is the foundation of all current bullying prevention interventions.

He began with a review of research on how youth become aggressive.

How children become aggressive:

Olweus found that:

- Bullies often come from homes where there is little warmth and adult attention.
- In these homes, adults discipline inconsistently, using emotional outbursts and physical discipline.



Olweus built his bullying prevention intervention by creating school and family environments that *changed* the patterns that create aggression.

Effective Bullying Prevention

“The program strives to develop a school (and ideally a home) environment characterized by:

- warmth, positive interest, and involvement by adults;
- firm limits to unacceptable behavior;
- non-hostile, nonphysical negative consequences consistently applied in cases of ...unacceptable behaviors; and
- where adults act as authorities and positive role models.” (Olweus, Limber 1999)

FOUNDATIONS OF BULLYING PREVENTION

Safe and affirming school climate

Consequences for aggression:

- inevitable,
- predictable,
- escalating

- Positive feeling tone and modeling

- Time spent with young people

Effective discipline

- Specific behavior expectations.
- Consistent consequences:
 - Inevitable
 - Predictable
 - Escalating
 - Rubric-based (based on objective standards)
- Work with parents
- Maintain positive feeling tone

A possible discipline rubric:

Behavior	1st time	2nd time	3rd time
Tease (define)	Warning	Call home 1 recess	Call home 3 recess
Push Shove	Call home 1 recess	Call home 3 recess	Call home 5 recess
Harass Punch Kick	Call home 3 recess	Call home 5 recess	In school suspension



Positive feeling tone and modeling

- Adults greet students and praise them.
- Adults spend time with students and listen to them.
- Adults talk with students respectfully.
- Adults mentor students at risk.
- Adults reward improved behavior by youth at risk.
- Adults give and accept feedback about each others' behavior with students.

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." (James Baldwin)

Bullying Prevention

**Counsel
youth who
bully**

**Support
targets**

**Empower
bystanders**

Safe and affirming school climate

**Consequences for
aggression:**

- inevitable,
- predictable,
- escalating

- Positive feeling
tone and
modeling
- Time spent with
young people

Counseling aggressive youth

We help students think about these questions after they know what their consequences are:

- *What did you do?*
- *What was wrong with that?*
- *What problem were you trying to solve?*
- *How will you solve that problem next time?*

Supporting targets:

Bullying is a loss experience:

- Loss of safety
- Loss of self-esteem: *"They bully you, then you bully yourself"*
- Loss of belonging
- Loss of control over own life

How do we support youth who are experiencing losses? We protect from more losses, comfort them and help them not blame themselves for what has happened. We don't usually tell them to pretend it doesn't hurt.



Activating bystanders

We encourage youth to:

- Support targets of bullying,
- Ask adults for help,
- And reach out as friends to isolated peers.

In other words...

Bullying prevention interventions:

- Raise the cost of bullying by removing the bully's power.
- Connect students and teachers and make kindness pay.
- Work with families.
- Help aggressive youth change.
- Change the peer culture so everyone is included.
- And protect and support targets of bullying

To learn more

- Dan Olweus, Bullying at school
- Stan Davis, Schools Where Everyone Belongs, Research Press, 2007 and Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention, Research Press, 2007
- Linda Sanford, Strong at the Broken Places

Visit <http://www.stopbullyingnow.com> for more information about bullying, or contact Stan at stan@stopbullyingnow.com

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