



The Bullies and The Bullied

Modern technology has expanded the problem of bullying from within the school walls to public humiliation via Facebook, twitter, texting, etc., leaving behind a path of human destruction. Bullying is an epidemic right now; children retaliating... hurting...dying. Understanding the viewpoints from both the bullied and the bullies may be key in addressing the issue. There are extremes when the bullying becomes criminal or is due to a child's mental or social disorder. Those situations need to be dealt with in their own way; however, the following is based on everyday, common, hurtful bullying. The content of this article comes from the blog of a man who shares what it was like to be bullied as a child, as well as feedback from those that bullied.

From the Bullied: It took only seven weeks of daily bullying (at school) to make me feel worthless and full of self-hate. Because I didn't share the worst of it with her, my mother would reassure me things would get better. The bullying extended to the school bus; the bus driver never helped. Not one person defended me; teachers heard the worst of it and never offered assistance. Never once did a single kind soul put their arm around me and show me love. Never once did a teacher comfort me when they witnessed it. Never once did a classmate speak up when they heard it. Never once did anybody do anything. I was easily angered. I was mean to my siblings. I wanted to be left alone. I fantasized and prayed nightly for anything, anyone to come and kill the bullies. Nobody knew that I wanted to die; that I had horrible and constant fantasies of death aimed at others; that I hated every teacher that never did anything; that I hated every classmate who refused to say a kind word to me for fear of becoming targets themselves.

From the Bullies: • I was a bully my entire public school career. I was bullied at home; emotionally, physically, and spiritually abused (raised in a cult). I was made fun of everyday at school by other kids. The only way to gain acceptance was to bully others who were even less cool than me. I lashed out at the kids at school because it was easy to spread the misery. Somehow by bringing others down a notch, I felt like I was brought up one. I can only imagine if someone had tried to figure out what my problem was. If someone took a good look at me and realized how desperately I needed help; how desperately I needed to get away from my toxic family. Do you think kids come up with their hateful beliefs on their own? It's learned. I wish someone had taken the time to help me.

• I am a bully. I thought what I do was so funny, and now I can see the pain I am causing to others. I wish more than anything for somebody at school to really like me too. I have a mom and dad who aren't mean or anything, but at school nobody cares and nobody will ever even talk to me. I think I am a bully because it makes me feel like then there's a reason nobody cares or even knows I exist.

About the Bullies: You may need to look deeper. They may be the victim of something going on around them. Desperate and hurting individuals. Their bullying may be a symptom of bullying that they are receiving in their own lives, whether it's from their own family, or other bullies. The more they hate themselves, the more they want others to suffer. Don't hate the bullies. Hating them, or being angry with them, will always make it worse. Instead, tell them they are valuable; that you expect great things from them. Telling a bully that he has no feelings and is nothing but a mean, angry person will never stop his bullying; believing in him will. There is not a person on earth who would rather receive harsh words and pointed attacks instead of statements of true concern and affirmation. People who love themselves don't bully others. If they actually believe that somebody loves them and believes in them, they will love themselves, become better people, and many will even become saviors to the bullied. They need love and respect in order to learn how to love and respect others. Bullies grow up to be adult bullies... if we don't love them now and help them to stop, they turn into abusive spouses and parents. Not always physically, but always mentally, and it's much harder to stop an adult from bullying than a child.

About the Bullied: So many kids would still be alive right now, if somebody, anybody, would have done something. Any child who takes his own life does so under the assumption that nobody actually values having them around; they have been brutally pushed to the edge. Some bullied children receive it in small doses, some in life-ending amounts. Sometimes it's as "minor" as making fun of clothes or name-calling. Sometimes it's extreme physical or sexual abuse. No matter what kind of bullying is going on, it hurts, and it has lasting effects on our children. Part of the answer is a teacher doing more than simply telling the bullies to stop. It's a warm hand on her pupil's shoulder, a listening ear, warm words of importance, and then finding a reason for the child to come back the next day, and the next, until that child knows that his presence is cherished. Schools can dedicate time to the topic of bullying; what each child can do when they are the ones being bullied, what to do if they see people being bullied, or what they can change if they realize that they themselves are guilty of bullying others. Parents, comfort and talk to your kids, spend time with them...until they tell you the truth. Everyone needs to understand what bullied kids go through, what thoughts bullied kids think. Because it's those thoughts that lead some kids to drastic ends. If you haven't noticed, it's not generally the bullies that are killing themselves, slaughtering their schoolmates, or building bombs in their bedrooms. It's the bullied that are doing that. Many kids may want to speak up for the bullied, but are afraid of becoming targets as well. It takes courage to befriend the bullied, and to let the bully know you disapprove.

To get the complete story and its powerful impact, we encourage you to visit the following two links to read it in its entirety. It is a MUST read for teachers, parents, and youth. <http://www.danoah.com/2010/10/memoirs-of-bullied-kid.html> and <http://www.danoah.com/2010/10/bullies-their-not-even-human.html>





Providing an Education for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Many schools are finding themselves in the position of having to deal with an increase in pregnant and parenting teens. No matter how the pregnancy is viewed, the teenager is no longer a "normal" teen, she is a parent, which may lead to some challenging academic obstacles. Additionally, due to the new stress of being a parent, teenage mothers are more prone to depression and are seven times more suicidal than other teens. They may be dealing with abandonment issues from their parents due to the pregnancy, or feel isolated from their peers. Many do not have the social support they need, and most teenagers have inadequate coping skills.

If a teenager is forced to drop out of high school because of her pregnancy and inability to attend class as often as she needs to, the odds of her getting a job that allows her to provide for herself and her children is very low; the probability of her becoming dependent on welfare is much higher than a teenager who graduates from high school. While schools are cautioned against providing so much special treatment that it looks like they are condoning teen pregnancy or even celebrating it, they must ensure that pregnant and parenting teens have access to the full range of educational opportunities available to other students.



Not all schools are equipped to handle teen pregnancy, and while they have the legal right to remain at their regular school, some teens may choose to attend an alternative school which may be able to give teen mothers and expecting teens the care they would not receive at a regular high school. These schools may be more flexible to their needs, in addition to teaching them social, parenting and life skills.

Following are some tips on what schools can do to support and ensure these teens receive a proper education:

- Check into other educational options such as independent study, distance learning, home tutoring or on-line classes, especially in cases where bed rest is ordered
- Know which local organizations can provide assistance and necessary services to pregnant and parenting teens
- Be supportive of tough choices teens may need to make, such as keeping the baby or putting it up for adoption
- Provide emotional support; Reinforce their sense of self-worth

Schools are cautioned against letting students drop off the radar screen after they give birth. These new parents are likely to be more challenged than ever to get to class, so the school may need to do more follow-up and outreach to keep them from slipping through the cracks.

(Sources: www.edutopia.org; www.allvoices.com)

Dealing with the Death of a Student

Acknowledge the intensity of the loss.

The death of a student will have a profound impact on the entire school community, even those who did not know the deceased.

Do not erase the student's presence in the classroom. Often teachers question what to do with the student's desk. Sometimes it helps to ask the class for input on how to handle this. An appropriate decision may be to leave the desk for a certain length of time and then remove it.

Remember that you will also have your own feelings about the death of the student.

It is important to understand your own feelings and get support for yourself. Acknowledging your own feelings can increase your empathy for the students, as well as help to recognize your limits.

Remember that any death can reawaken feelings about a past loss.

Both students and staff who have experienced any death prior to this can feel the impact of that loss again. Sometimes feelings that surface may be about past loss and not the recent death.

What can I do to help the students with their grief?

Everyone responds to death differently. Some students may be visibly upset, while others may appear to have little or no reaction. Encourage the students to share their feelings.

Expressing feelings is better than acting them out (e.g. vandalism, violence) or attempting to numb the pain (e.g. substance abuse).

School routines, guided peer interactions, distraction and athletics are natural coping strategies that the students can use. Anger, blaming, guilt and even joking are common ways the students may try to gain control. Do not ignore these emotions, but reframe them as normal reactions to the shock of sudden loss. Teachers can disclose their own sadness about the loss to the students, if that is what they genuinely experience, and model for the students how they personally cope with painful emotions. Finally, when a death is sudden and traumatic, often the focus will be on the nature of the event before the full impact of the grief is felt. It may take weeks or months before the sadness surfaces.

What should I remember about the grief process?

The challenge of grief is to mourn the life of the person and not their death. Grief is the price we pay for love and attachment. Grief has no official time line. Mourning will be seen in different ways throughout the school year. Death is hard for adolescents and young students to understand because they are passing through different developmental stages. Allow them time for the reality of the deaths to be processed.

(Sources: www.adapp.org; www.niagaragriefcenter.org)



We **Welcome** the following new schools and behavioral health agencies to the SCIP Program.

- Crofton Elementary School; Crofton
- St. Rose of Lima Elementary; Crofton
- West Boyd Elementary; Butte
- West Boyd High; Spencer
- Addiction & Behavioral Health Services, Omaha
- Counseling & Enrichment Center; O'Neill, Norfolk, Plainview
- Hampton Behavioral Health & Family Services, O'Neill
- Kersten Borer, Woodhaven Counseling Associates; Omaha
- Oasis Counseling International; Norfolk, O'Neill

THANK YOU for your caring attitude and commitment to the success of the youth in your community!