



Mental Health Minute

Brought to you by your Cummins Behavioral Health Systems, Inc.
staff of Wayne Township
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Every day in schools and communities children are teased, threatened and tormented by bullies. The feelings experienced by victims of bullying are painful and can have lasting effects. Bullies, if not stopped, can progress to more serious, antisocial behaviors. Recent incidents of school violence show that bullying can have tragic consequences for individuals, families, schools and entire communities.

What is bullying?

- Repeated or potential for repeated behavior
- Unwanted, aggressive behavior that is intentional to harm
- Real or perceived imbalance of power, such as size or popularity

Types of bullying:

- Physical -hitting, kicking, shoving, breaking objects, gestures
- Verbal -name calling, taunting, teasing, sexual comments, threatening
- Social/relational- exclusion, rumors, embarrassing others
- Electronic/written communication-mean text messages/emails/posts, embarrassing pictures, spreading rumors

Children who are bullied tend to...

- Be quiet, cautious and sensitive
- Be insecure, lack confidence
- Perceived as “being different” from peers
- Perceived sexual orientation
- Have a difficult time making friends, poor social skills

Children who bully tend to...

- Have positive attitudes towards violence
- Be aggressive and are easily frustrated
- Think badly of others
- Show little empathy for victims

Effects of bullying:

Kids who are bullied...	Kids who bully others...
Decrease in academic performance	Decrease in academic performance
Increase in school absences (skipping, dropping out)	Increase in drop out rate
Increase in depression and anxiety	Increase in criminal behavior (fights, vandalism, etc.)
Decrease in self-esteem	Increase in drug and alcohol abuse
Increase in aggressive behavior	Increase in early sexual activity
Increase in suicidal thoughts	Increase in abusive relationships

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Helpful Tools:

- **Create a safe environment at school.** Have clear, positive school-wide expectations that are taught to students
- **Active Supervision.** Monitor the “hot spots” in the building. Increase teacher proximity and positive acknowledgement.
- **Provide acknowledgement and reinforcement.** Regular, frequent and positive acknowledgement for student displays of appropriate behavior.
- **Classroom community building activities.** Maximize teachable moments to build empathy and model respectful behavior.
- **Teach your children how to be assertive.** Encourage students to express their feelings clearly, say no when they feel uncomfortable or pressured, stand up for themselves without fighting, and walk away in dangerous situations.
- **Stop bullying when you see it.** Adults who remain silent when children are bullying others give permission to the behavior and thereby encourage it.
- **Teach students what is bullying.** Students must be able to identify what bullying is and know steps to take to report it.
- **Tell students to take action when they see bullying behavior.** Tell them to speak out against the bully and inform a teacher if the behavior doesn’t stop.
- **Communicate clear policies and consequences.** Have appropriate responses/consequences to both the identified bullies and targets.
- **Data collection.** Monitor and track bullying behavior in order to make data based decisions.
- **Team up.** Involve all school staff and parents. It takes everyone working together to create a safe environment.

Treatment:

There is no specific treatment for bullying, but rather the symptoms that manifest in connection with bullying are treated in therapy. For bullying victims, typical symptoms they experience include depression and anxiety. Being a victim of bullying can result in difficult emotions such as anger, shame, anxiety, and isolation. Therapy can help victims of bullying notice, share, and process painful feelings, which left unattended can negatively impact one’s personal well-being. Treatment recommendations would include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). In severe cases of bullying, symptoms can manifest into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One thing to remember is that treatment isn’t specific to just the victims. Services are also appropriate in addressing those that bully. In working with the bully, it’s about addressing their understanding about the impact their hurtful behavior has on others. It is also helpful to explore reasons for why they bully, learn new skills for communicating positively with others, and/or address personal experiences that may have contributed to their bullying behavior. Often bullies have unresolved personal wounds that contribute to their bullying behavior, and addressing these emotional wounds or identity/social issues in therapy can be an integral step towards stopping bullying behavior. Please don’t hesitate to follow up with your Cummins staff if you have further questions.

References:

1. Image from <http://ok.gov/sde/ags/bullying-frequently-asked-questions>
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6. www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov
7. <http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/bullying-prevention-intervention-indiana>
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