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Brief

Child **TRENDS**®

ASSESSING BULLYING:
A GUIDE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM PRACTITIONERS

Kathleen Sidorowicz, B.A., Elizabeth C. Hair, Ph.D., and Alyssa Milot, B.A.

BACKGROUND
Conflict among peers is common, and not necessarily a bad thing. Disagreement, teasing, and conflict are part of growing up, and children and adolescents need to develop skills to resolve these clashes.[1] However, bullying, an extreme form of peer conflict or teasing, can be physically and psychologically harmful.[2] Therefore, it is important for programs to be able to identify bullying, and to promote positive peer conflict resolution techniques for children and adolescents.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF BULLYING?
- Traditional Bullying: Bullying refers to a type of aggression that is intended to harm others, that often takes place repeatedly over time, and that generally occurs when the perpetrator has power over the victim. Bullying can be physical (hitting), verbal (name-calling), or psychological (rumors or exclusion).[3,4,5] Bullying tends to elicit strong emotional reactions from victims and less or little emotional reaction from perpetrators. Bullies seek and attempt to gain power, control, or material things and show no remorse for their actions. Moreover, they blame victims and put forth no effort to resolve the problem.[6,7]
- "Cyber bullying": Cyber bullying refers to aggression using the Internet and technology, such as sending mean messages, posting hurtful statements about an individual, or pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.[8] Cyber bullying can take place over e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, Web sites, or through text messaging.[8]

HOW COMMON IS BULLYING?
- According to the National Survey of Children's Health, 24 percent of parents report their child bullies or is cruel to other children at least some of the time, and 35 percent of parents report that they are concerned about their child being bullied at school.[9]
- Twenty-eight percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported being the victim of some form of bullying at school in the previous 6 months in 2005. Nineteen percent reported being made fun of or called names, and 15 percent reported being the subject of rumors.[10]
- According to the National Promises Study designed by The Search Institute and Child Trends with America's Promise Alliance, parents of youth ages six to eleven report that

bullying at school is so common that less than half of their children can be said to experience a safe school environment.[11]
- Boys are more likely to participate in physical forms of bullying, such as hitting and inappropriate touching, whereas girls are more likely to participate in relational forms of aggression, such as starting or perpetrating rumors, or ignoring or excluding others.[5]
- Hispanic and white adolescents report greater frequencies of involvement with bullying than do black adolescents.[3]
- Bullying behavior is most common in early adolescence and decreases as individuals reach middle and late adolescence.[5]

WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY TO BE A BULLY, A VICTIM, OR BOTH?
- Victims are more likely to be children or adolescents who may be labeled as more physically weak than their peers; may have fewer friends and smaller peer networks;[12] may be gay, lesbian or bisexual;[2] and may be overweight or obese.[13]
- Perpetrators are more likely to have conduct problems and be involved with fighting at school.[5,14]
- Youth who both bully others and are bullied themselves have been found to exhibit the strongest behavioral risk factors, including experiencing social isolation, being academically unsuccessful, and having parents with permissive attitudes towards teen drinking.[3] These youth also display the most social/emotional adjustment problems,[3] including anxiety[15] and aggression.[15,16] They may use aggression as a retaliatory weapon in response to bullying,[16] often causing them to start fights, act provocatively,[15] and engage in disruptive behavior.[3,15]

HOW WOULD I KNOW WHEN CONFLICT HAS TURNED INTO BULLYING?[17]
Below are warning signs that a child or adolescent in your program may be experiencing bullying:
- Has physical cuts or injuries;
- Seems afraid to go to school or to the program;
- Has lost interest in school or in the program;
- Has trouble sleeping; and
- Appears anxious, nervous, or distracted.

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY PROGRAM OR MY SCHOOL TO REDUCE BULLYING?[17]
- Talk to the child or adolescent to let him or her know that you care and are concerned.
- Intervene consistently and never ignore suspected bullying; immediately stop the bullying and refer to school or program rules against bullying.
- Help ward off bullying and victimization by promoting a sense of community among students; build community by encouraging cooperation and teamwork, recognizing that schools and out-of-school time programs that have a greater sense of community are more likely to have students who exhibit pro-social behavior.[18]
- Encourage pro-social behavior, that is, selfless acts performed with the intention of helping others, including sharing, rescuing, and comforting,[19] with the understanding that this behavior fosters empathy, self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward school.[18]
- Urge program participants to become active in leadership roles to prevent bullying and victimization.[20]

- If the child has problems but is not experiencing bullying, help to identify other causes of distress.
- Discuss bullying and pro-social behavior at meetings with parents and guardians.

ASSESSMENTS FOR BULLYING

The following questions can help assess the prevalence of bullying, victimization, and pro-social behavior of children and adolescents in your program.

The Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ) For Children (Shortened 12-item scale)[21]
This questionnaire was designed to assess three dimensions of how students interact with their peers: students' tendency to bully others, students' tendency to be victimized by bullying, and students' tendency to be pro-social and help others.

- The Tendency to Bully
  - How often do you…
    1. Enjoy upsetting other kids[1]   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    2. Like to make other kids scared   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    3. In a group, tease others   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    4. Fight kids you can easily beat   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
- The Tendency to be Victimized
  - How often do you…
    1. Get picked on by other kids   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    2. Get made fun of   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    3. Get called names by other kids   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    4. Get hit and pushed   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
- The Tendency to be Pro-social
  - How often do you…
    1. Enjoy helping others   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    2. Help harassed children   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    3. Like to make friends   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often
    4. Share things   ☐ Never ☐ Once in a while ☐ Pretty often ☐ Often

Teachers and parents frequently do not see bullying occur, and many children may be afraid to talk about it. The questions below might be used to help adult caretakers be more alert to problems that the children can encounter.

The Search Institute and Child Trends designed a national survey for youth ages 12 to 17 with America's Promise Alliance that examines physical and mental health and academic achievement. The questions below can aid in your assessment of students' bullying behavior during the last 12 months.

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[1] This item was modified to include "other kids" as a reference group to make it consistent with the other items.

- How often do you think your child is [you are] bullied by classmates?[2]
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very often

- How often does your child [do you] get picked on or made fun of for reasons like her/his [your] race, sexual orientation, or religion?[2]
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very often

- How often does your child [do you] get picked on or made fun of for reasons like how she/he looks [you look] or the clothes she/he wears [you wear]?[2]
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very often

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BULLYING[22]

- Take A Stand, Lend A Hand. Stop Bullying Now! Campaign
  For comprehensive resources geared specifically for children, parents, and out-of-school time programs, go to http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.
- Committee for Children, Steps to Respect Program and Second Step Program
  The Steps to Respect program takes a whole-school approach to bullying, bringing staff, students, and families into the picture. The Second Step violence prevention program helps youth from preschool through Grade 8 learn and practice vital social skills, such as empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and cooperation. For more information, go to http://www.cfchildren.org/programs.
- PACER Center's Kids Against Bullying
  For an interactive website with information directed at children in kindergarten through 5th grade, go to www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org.
- PACER Center's National Center for Bullying Prevention
  For resources on promoting bullying awareness and effective strategies for responding to bullying in your program, go to http://www.pacer.org/bullying/bpaw/index.asp.
- Bullying.org Canada Inc.
  For various resources and specific lesson plans and ideas to use in your program, go to www.bullying.org.
- The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
  For a model bully prevention program recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, go to http://www.clemson.edu/olweus.

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[2] This was originally designed as a parent report item. However, teachers and/or workers can respond or young people can answer this question with slight revisions, as shown in brackets.

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