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What Is Bullying?

One definition for bullying is:

A repeated behavior that may be physical, verbal, or psychological, where there is intent to cause fear, distress, or harm to another and that is conducted by a more powerful individual or group against a less powerful individual or group that is unable to stop this from happening.

There are many definitions from around the world; however, most researchers agree the definition should include the following points in some way:

- Power imbalance
- Repeated behavior
- Deliberate or intentional behavior

Types of bullying include:

- Physical bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Threatening
- Property abuse
- Emotional bullying
- Cyberbullying

Physical Bullying

- Hitting, pinching, biting, pushing, pulling, shoving, slapping, punching, strangling, kicking, intentional bumping, tripping, scratching, throwing things
- Being touched or held when someone doesn't want to be

Verbal Bullying

- Calling people names
- Spreading nasty rumors
- Teasing someone in a mean and hurtful way
- Being sarcastic in a hurtful way
- Making racist comments about someone and their family
- Making rude comments or jokes about someone's religion or beliefs
- Making comments about the way someone may look or behave that are hurtful
- Commenting about someone's body in a way that is mean and hurtful

Threatening

- Making someone fear that they are going to be hurt
- Making things up to get someone into trouble
- Pressuring someone to do things that they don't want to do
- Stalking

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Property Abuse

- Taking things away from someone
- Damaging someone's belongings
- Stealing someone's money or belongings

Emotional Bullying

- Ignoring someone or keeping him or her out of group conversations (known as exclusion)
- Leaving someone out by encouraging others not to have anything to do with him or her
- Spreading lies or stories about someone
- Trying to get other students to dislike someone
- Trying to get other students to harm someone

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group uses information and communication technologies to intentionally harm a person who finds it hard to stop this bullying from continuing.

For example, when a person:

- Sends or posts nasty or threatening emails or messages to someone on the Internet, for example, by using Gchat or their mobile phone
- Posts or sends mean or nasty comments or pictures about someone to websites, for example, through social networking sites or to others' mobile phones
- Deliberately ignores or leaves someone out of things over the Internet
- Pretends to be someone else online to hurt another person

"Cyberbullying can happen through text messages, pictures, video-clips or emails and so on being sent directly to a person, but also when these things are sent to others or posted on the Internet, about that person" (CHPRC, 2009).

Young people who engage in cyberbullying exhibit the same behavior as those who bully; however, the medium through which the bullying occurs is different. There are many ways that students can be cyberbullied. These include:

- Harassing or abusive emails and phone messages
- Making silent or abusive phone calls
- Spreading rumors via email or phone messages
- Sending someone offensive texts
- Posting insulting messages on the Internet
- Creating virtual personalities to harass others
- Pressuring others to share secrets or photographs that they would otherwise not share
- Sending embarrassing pictures to others via the Internet or mobile phone
- Online aggression including flaming, impersonation, denigration, trickery, outing, and exclusion

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Why is bullying harmful?

Both bullying and being bullied can have significant consequences on physical, social, and mental health, with a notable impact on academic achievement and social development. According to ACBPS (2009), these young people may be more likely to have:

- Low self-esteem
- Poor assertiveness skills
- Poorer health
- More physical complaints
- More interpersonal difficulties
- Higher levels of loneliness
- Suicidal ideation
- Increased anxiety
- Academic difficulties due to social exclusion
- Peer rejection
- Depression and negative self-perceptions
- Dislike of and wanting to avoid school
- Feelings of loneliness

Students who engage in bullying behaviors are also more likely to:

- Be aggressive
- Be impulsive
- Be insecure
- Lack empathy
- Have poor personal and social skills