

Interventions Continued

Reach out:

- Teach peers and authority figures to minimize social isolation, marginalization and rejection
- By creating a community that reaches out and connects with “at-risk” youth before they hurt themselves or someone else

Safety assessment and intervention

- Adults & students should respond to all threats of violence or “at-risk” behaviors
- Not only to address the threat itself but also identify and treat underlying issues in the youth’s life that create a possibility of risk (ask!)
- Any verified, at-risk behaviors should be reported, the individual may need to be assessed (psychological evaluation)

School policies

- Schools should maintain constant readiness to counteract any tendencies toward bullying in the school environment (Speak out/Reach out)
- Schools should adopt a bullying prevention program (awareness; bullying must be kept covert)

When a student reports bullying

- How we respond will influence the way the student experiences it.
- If we act as if it is a great tragedy, they will feel justified in being greatly upset; we will therefore be promoting vulnerability rather than resilience.
- The more they react negatively, the more susceptible they are to bullying.
- We must therefore remain respectful and kind to everyone involved.
- Bullying intervention/curriculum

Interventions Continued

- Educators should IDENTIFY - TAKE ACTION - MAKE REFERRAL
- Encouraging forgiveness will cause rapid progress
 - ◊ Sadness, anger, mistrust, fear (all diminish)
 - ◊ Confidence grows/resilience

Motives of bullying:

- ◆ Uncovering bias/avoiding assumptions
 - Counselors need to ask upfront questions to identify possible bias and false assumptions.
- ◆ Bullying/teasing has nothing to do with what the actual teasing is about
- ◆ Whatever succeeds in annoying you is what a bully is going to do again.
- ◆ Anger is exactly what keeps the bullies coming back.
- ◆ Not your fault/not their fault – anger feeds into more bullying
- ◆ Resolution: We need to take responsibility, (take control and begin feeling better).
- ◆ Practicality: It is human nature to enjoy when the other person is mad and feel foolish when they are not.

References

1. SandyHookPromise.org
2. Efrain Gonzalez, LPC; Child Guidance Center
3. Clarify-HopeForChildren1
4. FirstStudentInc.-Recognizing the Signs of Bullying and How to Respond
5. Norberto Vanderhorst-Psychological Effects of Bullying/Torture
6. Lindsey Phillips-CT.Counseling.org-When Bias Turns to Bullying.

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Emotional Effects of Bullying (Identifying “At-Risk” Youth)

Anxiety:

- Fear (hyper awareness, “on edge”)
- Sadness
- Anger
- Mistrust
- Decrease in self-confidence

Depression:

- Sadness
- Poor self-image
- Feelings of stress
- Not eating/over eating
- Chronic fatigue
- Feelings of not knowing how to make things better

SOS - signs of suicide

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for ways to die
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Thinks he/she is a burden to others
- Increase use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage
- Extreme mood swings

Warning signs, responses, symptoms of bullying victims:

- ◆ Unexplainable injuries, torn clothing, or damaged/lost possessions
- ◆ Frequent headaches, stomach aches, ailments (perhaps feigned to avoid school - TRUANCY)
- ◆ Changes in eating habits
- ◆ Nightmares/difficulty sleeping
- ◆ Declining grades
- ◆ Withdrawal, (loss of interest)
- ◆ Decreased esteem or self degrading statements
- ◆ Irritable mood or lashing out on their “safe individuals” (parents, teacher, friends) with minimal prompting (misplaced anger); uncharacteristically using profane language
- ◆ Intense emotional reactions (crying easily)
- ◆ Youth is no longer mentioning the same peers they have typically affiliated with
- ◆ Overly attached or completely withdrawn from electronic devices (social media). Victims may be resistant to disclose cyber-bullying out of fear their devices will be taken; perception of punishment
- ◆ Asking to opt out of class presentations or group projects
- ◆ Cyber bullying others in retaliation

Victim Profile and Misconceptions

- ◆ Victims are not always easily spotted.
- ◆ Seemingly well adjusted youth are not exempt from the impacts of bullying.
- ◆ Often in suicide cases, it is common to hear “I never saw it coming.” “He/she was such a good kid” etc.
- ◆ Many times the victim most concerning is not the one reaching out for help
- ◆ Those engaging in attention seeking behaviors (frequently in the counselor’s office) are getting help and attention. The isolated child keeping to themselves, however, is a major cause for concern often overlooked.

When bullying happens in children of the same sex:

- There is a “wounding” of their masculinity/femininity.
- This person may find it difficult to feel safe with or trust those of the same sex (even into adulthood).

Warning signs/Risk of violence factors:

- ◆ Fascination or obsession with firearms
- ◆ Over-reactions or aggressive behavior for minor reason
- ◆ Low commitment or aspirations toward school
- ◆ Sudden change in academic performance
- ◆ Perpetrators of self-harm or violence towards others may be victims of long-term bullying and may have real or perceived feeling of being picked on or persecuted by others (self-harm, cutting)
- ◆ Extreme feelings of isolation or social withdrawal due to real or perceived actions of others
- ◆ Unsupervised, illegal and/or access to firearms, or bragging about access to firearms (ex: pictures on social media)
- ◆ Making overt threats of violence (spoken, written, pictures, videos/watching violent material, gestures) are signs that should not be ignored

Additional warning signs and signals of “at-risk” youth:

Being over aggressive and/or lacking self-control

- Lack of coping, anger management and/or conflict resolutions skills
- Committing criminal acts
- Impulsive behavior or chronic hitting
- Intimidation or bullying behaviors

Chronic social isolation

- Victim of constant social rejection
- Sudden withdrawing from people and activities
- Blaming others for own failures

Threatening behavior

- Bringing a weapon into school
- Threatening on social media
- Bragging about an upcoming attack
- Recruiting a friend to join an attack

Mental illness and/or behavioral shifts

- Diagnosed/undiagnosed mental illness
- Major change in eating/sleeping habits
- Drop in schoolwork/extra-curriculars
- Homicidal/Suicidal ideation
- Significant personality change
- Dramatic changes in physical appearance
- Suffered from adverse childhood experiences (trauma)

Antisocial behavior

- Negative role models or peer groups
- Dishonesty, antisocial beliefs and hostility toward law enforcement
- Lack discipline – repeatedly fails to follow rules
- Severe destruction of property
- Intolerance for differences in others; prejudiced
- Access/use of drugs and/or alcohol

Interventions for faculty/peers

Speak out:

- Recognize warning signs and signals
 - ◇ In behavior (especially sudden withdrawal)
 - ◇ On social media accounts (messages of hopelessness or aggression)
- Ask about suicidal/homicidal ideations
- Say Something - before it’s too late