

Bullying and ASD



Bullying

Bullying is different from good natured teasing. The victim will be distressed. A bully intends to harm their victim and directs negative actions toward the victim again and again. Typically, there is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim, for example, large versus small, alone versus with others.

Types of Bullying

There are several different types of bullying:

- Physical bullying (e.g., hitting, tripping, grabbing belongings, etc.)
- Verbal bullying (e.g., teasing, threatening, name calling, gestures, etc.)
- Social bullying (e.g., exclusion, rumours, embarrass in front of others, etc.)
- Educational bullying (e.g., sarcasm, being over critical, favouring or humiliating students etc.)

“...there is currently an epidemic of bullying in schools...”

Possible Effects of Bullying for the Victim

Bullying can have devastating effects for the victim. These include embarrassment, low self esteem, anxiety and depression, headaches and stomach pain, social isolation and loneliness. Victims of bullying may be avoided by others as they do not want to be seen as a victim and also bullied. School work may suffer as a result of worrying about the bullying and missing school. Victims of bullying may seek revenge on bully using violence. In the very worst cases, some victims of bullying may turn to suicide.

An Epidemic

According to the DVD “Being Bullied: Strategies and Solutions for People with Asperger’s Syndrome”,

there is currently an epidemic of bullying in schools. Up to three quarters of children experience bullying at some stage in their schooling. 85% of this bullying takes place in front of others. Because of such bullying, thousands of children miss school each day.

Bullying and ASD

Almost all children on the Autism Spectrum will experience bullying, and they are more likely to be targeted than neuro-typical children. The same

victims tend to be targeted again and again. According to the DVD “Being Bullied: Strategies and Solutions for People with Asperger’s Syndrome”, in some cases, teachers can contribute to the problem by blaming the victim and by being apathetic.

Children with ASD are Easy Victims

This is because children with ASD have minute differences such as motor issues, sensory difficulties, special interests, social impairments and the use of odd language.

Solutions to Bullying as Suggested by “Being Bullied” DVD:

- Encourage victims to enlist bystander support
- Reassure victims that as they get older, people get nicer
- Reassure the victim it is not their fault
- Encourage the victim to empower themselves and increase their self esteem by pursuing interests and hobbies (e.g., martial arts)
- Help victims to prepare witty comebacks to common putdowns
- Educate school about ASD and how children with ASD react to bullying
- Encourage school to create a bullying policy
- Anonymous student questionnaires for information on bullies and victims



- Ask the teacher to identify several popular children to mentor children with ASD
- School bully register to keep track of incidents
- Anti-bullying assemblies
- Teach bystanders that bullying is wrong
- Help bullies to use their power to help others rather than to harm

For more information, contact Altogether

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References

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