

The Truth About Bullying

By Craig Miller

Bullying can happen at any age in a variety of circumstances. Whether you call it bullying, teasing, or harassment it is still bullying. Bullying is when someone keeps doing or saying things to have power over another person. It can be in the form of: calling names, saying or writing nasty and inappropriate comments, leaving you out of activities, not talking to you, verbal or nonverbal threats, teasing or looks, taking or damaging your things, and physically hurting you. In essence, bullying is to make you feel uncomfortable, scared, intimidated, or to force you to do or say things against your will. Bullying can come from people you call friends, peers, authority figures, parents, your spouse, siblings, or from anyone through words or actions that often catch you off guard.

Bullying is harmful no matter when or where it happens and should NOT be considered a part of growing up, being accepted, parenting, teaching, or from interaction with people at work, home, school, church, and playground or with any activity. Warning signs you may be bullied is when you don't want to attend the activity, withdrawing and isolating yourself, taking alternate routes to your destinations, feeling lonely, unhappy, frightened, unsafe, physically sick, not a good person, or thinking there must be something wrong with you because of what others are doing or saying.

Since hurting people tend to hurt people, the act of bullying is usually an immature response to life. Bullying comes from people that are insecure, envious, scared, angry, or just plain mean because of deeper woundedness in their own life. Bullying is their way of getting attention, looking tough, building their ego, getting even, or letting out emotion, such as anger.

Helpful hints about bullying:

- If you feel hurt, offended, or treated with disrespect, take your feelings seriously.
- The bully is always more insecure than what you feel, so don't take it personally.
- Bullies want attention and want to get a reaction out of you, so try to decrease your reaction.
- Your best reaction is no reaction or a short remark that can decrease your involvement-such as, "That's your opinion," as you walk away.
- Practice with someone how to ignore an offensive comment or think of neutral responses.
- Frequently remind yourself, "I am worthwhile, smart, and capable."
- Telling a parent, friend, teacher, boss, or counselor about the bully is not tattling, you are giving someone else responsibility to help an insecure hurting person so he/she does not repeat it with you or others.

- If a person says, “I’m only kidding,” after hurting you, it wasn’t a joke, it’s bullying. You can respond with, “It wasn’t kidding to me. Please stop it.”

No one deserves to be bullied and you do have choices to the situations. Most importantly, don’t keep your feelings inside. Always talk about your bullying experience with someone and share how it made you feel. If you believe the bullying experiences are affecting how you sleep, feel about yourself, or how you feel about life, seek professional counseling to work through those feelings and learn ways to handle the situations.

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