

Bullying: From the Schoolyard to a Digital Playground

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Teasing is still a part of growing up that almost every child has endured. But when does that teasing become more adverse and hurtful? The old adage of “sticks and stones” has evolved into more than the innocuous taunt; the very words can become pain. Teasing that is done continuously or when there is conscience malice to hurt is when these words can, and oftentimes do, become bullying.

By definition, bullying is the use of superior strength or influence to intimidate (someone), typically to force him or her, to do what one wants. Bullying behavior is present throughout the world and is not limited to racial/ethnic, socio-economic and cultural lines. It is estimated that 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students as reported by the National Education Association. 1 in 7 students in Grades K-7 is either a bully or a victim of bullying. 56% of students have personally witnessed some type of bullying at school. In Arizona, according to the Arizona Youth Survey, almost one third of students reported having been bullied in the past year, with nearly 5% of students bullied on average at least once a month. Eighth graders, typically ages 13 – 14 years old, are particularly impacted.

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms and behaviors that may not always be clearly defined. Most common forms are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, scratching, spitting or any other form of physical attack. Damage to or taking someone else’s belongings may also constitute as physical bullying.
- Verbal – name calling, insulting, making racist, sexist or homophobic jokes, remarks or teasing, and using sexually suggestive or abusive language, offensive remarks
- Indirect – spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumors, sending abusive mail, and email and text messages (cyber bullying).

Cyber Bullying is becoming more and more prevalent especially with technology expanding to household and neighborhoods. With a few keystrokes, name calling goes viral to the worldwide web. The definition of Cyber Bullying is – any type of bullying that is carried out by electronic medium. There are 7 types including:

1. Text message bullying
2. Picture/video clip bullying via mobile phone cameras
3. Phone call bullying via mobile phones
4. E-mail bullying
5. Chat-room bullying
6. Bullying through instant messaging (IM)
7. Bullying via websites

The consequences of cyber bullying can result in self harm, depression and even fatalities.

Bully Related Suicide

“Bullicide” refers to suicide attributed to the victim having been bullied, either in person or via social media. This term is a combination of two words and was first used by Neil Marr and Tim Field in a book ***Bullicide: Death at Playtime***. The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) reported suicide rates among 10- to 14-year-old youth has grown more than 50% in the last three decades.

The media reporting on stories involving youth suicides due to bullying over social media has increased in recent years. Many of these news stories have a common theme. Parents and caregivers stating they did not know how about these attacks via social media sites or their acknowledgement of the sites.

Social media is a staple and has become the “norm” (the usual, typical or standard) by which many of us communicate. Youth especially migrate to social media as it offers perceived anonymity and privacy. Most social media sites and applications, or apps, can be downloaded to a smartphone with a few clicks. Some have age restrictions but most are not enforced. Common sites used by youth for social media messaging are:

Twitter	Pinterest	Tumblr
Facebook	Vine	Kik
Instagram	Reddit	Ask.fm
Snapchat	Phheed	Wanelo
4Chan		

Social media allows emotions to go viral in a matter of moments. Anonymity can create hostile environments online leading to virtual aggression. What might seem like a harmless post can turn ugly in the realm of public opinion.

It may seem overwhelming to keep a line on what our youth do online and at home, but to know what is available to your teen is crucial. Not all youth are on all of these sites and technology changes quickly. Teens still need to have in-person, real life conversations with parents and caregivers on real issues.

Helpful resources:

[How to Help Your Child Who Bullies](#)

[The School Bully Can Take a Toll on Your Child’s Mental Health](#)

[Cyberbullying: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty](#)