

Bullying – a social epidemic essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Society has become more aware of the harmful results of what once was thought of as just a period of growing up, to a social epidemic of sorts. What used to be considered just a part of adolescence has now escalated into what some experts have agreed is an epidemic within our society.

Who should be held responsible and what can be done to stop this continuous practice of bullying. Bullying and teen suicide have officially been linked, and now it is more important than ever that we find a solution to this problem. Bullying - A Social Epidemic Statistics have shown that what was once was considered and accepted in society as a form of growing up or adolescent pranks, has a direct correlation to the suicide of young people who are victims of these childish pranks. Bullying is now being viewed as a social epidemic and is no longer considered just words in a nursery rhyme. Bullying has always been a problem since the beginning of time but there are now more ways to bully than ever before.

Technology has unleashed a whole new way of bullying called cyber-bullying and the media tends to sensationalize these events in order to receive higher public ratings. In the writer's opinion, this type of bullying is far more insidious than your every day run of the mill case of face-to-face bullying. In order for society to take up the cause against bullying, bullying must clearly be defined. However, if you over-generalize the definition to include name-calling, you could probably say that every child is being bullied every day.

In an article entitled Overcoming Bullying Behavior, bullying is described as "one or more individuals inflicting physical, verbal, or emotional abuse on another-includes threat of bodily harm, weapon possession, extortion, civil

rights violation, assault and battery, gang activity, attempted murder, and murder” (Clore, p. 5). This description of bullying should make society stand up and pay attention. So which social categories are affected by this epidemic? Not only that victim’s who are being bullied, but also ducators, families, race and religion, and even gay and lesbian people are affected.

However, it is the author’s opinion that schools and educators face the largest hurdles in overcoming and conquering the consequences of the bullying epidemic. Some may argue that it begins in the home; with parents being aware of whether or not their child is either a bully or the victim of a bully. In an article written by Dulcinea Norton-Smith (2008), she believes that it is not the fault of the parents if their child is a bully. She indicates that if a parent believes in spanking as a form of discipline, and your child has been bullying others with physical violence, then you may need to re-evaluate whether your child is getting a different message from your smacks than you had intended. According to an article in the Gallup News Service, thirty-two percent of parents fear for their child’s physical safety when the child is at school. Thirty-nine percent of parents with a child in grade six or higher are more likely to say they fear for their child’s safety.

Twenty-two percent of parents whose children are in grade five or lower fear for their child’s safety (Service, 2001). With statistics such as these, where are the teachers when an act of bullying is going on? Do we as parents have the right to believe that the school educators should keep our children safe while out of our site? The writer believes that the answer is a resounding yes. Despite these frightening and staggering statistics, the issue of bullying still is largely being ignored as a serious problem (Fried, 1996). It is a proven fact

that teenagers who display bullying tactics as children have a greater probability of winding up participating in illegal activities as well as belonging to violent gangs (Vitali, 2007). It is everyone's responsibility to heighten the awareness of the bullying and the possible affects to our young people.

The author believes that public schools and educators in particular should be held to a higher standard. Because we are required by law to send our children to school, it is not unreasonable to demand that the school provide an atmosphere free from threats and intimidation from those who practice, what may very well be, a deadly form of bullying. If it can be proven that a school official was allowing this type of behavior to happen and not intervening, then the school should be held criminally negligent. In order to improve the situation it would make sense that all schools be required to implement the programs that have been proven successful in stopping the bullying within the schools. Dr. Olweus is a pioneer and founding father of research on bullying problems.

Dr. Olweus has long seen school safety as a fundamental human right. As early as 1981, he proposed enacting a law against bullying in schools so students could be spared the repeated humiliation implied in bullying. His approach involves positive school, group, and home climate; clear behavior expectations and consistent penalties for aggression; and adults spending time with students (Olweus, 2010). This type of approach has proven to significantly reduce student reports of being bullied and bullying others. So why do we not require implementation of these types of approaches in our schools? Are we as a society too concerned about being politically correct? A

recent statistic shows that 86% of kids who were picked on or bullied turned to violence in the schools.

It should also be noted that some of the violence is turned inward, thus creating bullying suicide (Carney, 2005). This statistic alone should reinforce the need for anti-bullying requirements in schools. The writer believes that educators and school officials should all be trained in recognizing signs of bullying and be able to act accordingly with no interference. It appears that society has finally become more aware of the harmful results of what once was thought of as just a period of growing up, to an epidemic of sorts.

So what is the answer? Should these bullies pay a price of jail time for their actions? Should teachers and parents be held responsible for identifying the signs and acting on those signs? The writer believes that educators and parents should be held, to some degree, responsible if the physical signs are obvious yet ignored. Remember, bullies tend to look for weaknesses in their victims. In order to eliminate one of the largest weaknesses in our children, parents must increase the child's self-confidence. If a child has high self-esteem, the likelihood of them being affected by bullying will go down.

Educating parents on how to build self-esteem and dealing with anger and relationship conflicts with their children would be additional methods of dealing with bullying. Bullying is a complex problem with no easy solutions and many contributing factors. Bullies come in many shapes and sizes; some are themselves victims of abuse, others have problematic behavior patterns, still others do not know how to deal with anger effectively.

All have limited skills in dealing with relationship conflicts according to Suellen Fried and Paula Fried (Fried and Fried, 1996). Children are products of their environment, parents, teachers, and their peers. If we do not take the time to stop, watch and act, then we are at fault. We, as society, must take aggressive actions to stop this on-the-rise social epidemic.

The writer believes that the first step is action through education and prevention. We must implement strong bullying preventions in our schools, educate our teachers, make the children feel safe when in school, and allow the teachers to take appropriate action when they see the signs of a bully. The wounds from bullying can run deep, and the consequences can last a lifetime. The hardest part of dealing with bullying is dedicating the time.

But if we as parents and teachers take the time upfront, it may be the best investment we can give our children in schools today.