

Impact of bullying and cyber bullying on adolescents



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Introduction

It has been long believed that bullying is a part of growing up and since they are only children, they do not know that they are possibly causing harm. This is not the case, bullies act with the sole intent to inflict mental and or physical harm to their chosen victim for their own personal gratification. Bullying and Cyber Bullying are becoming major issues in our society and the problem is ever increasing. Since rapid advancement of personal communication devices especially smart phone and applications that use social media, it has become simpler for bullies to access their victims twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This occurs covertly, no one is the wiser unless the intended victim speaks up, this rarely occurs. How do we as educators help address the issue of bullying, harassment and cyber bullying, so it does not have a negative effect on the student's academic and social achievements. How do we as a society, stop this culture of abuse that is affecting a generation of teenagers. It is the duty of educators to support students who are being targeted and to help them to discover the tools on how to survive, this dark side of growing up in today's society

The Digital Society

In society, technology is paving the way we communicate with the world around us. The number of people joining and participating in social media is growing on a daily basis. We have adopted this technology into every facet of our lives, from work, to school, to the home. Adolescents today are growing up in this ever-changing digital world, but are we as their guides, giving them the tools to survive in it. According to Federal Justice

Department in the United States of America each month one out of four children will be targeted for abuse by their peers, either in the playground or via Personal communication devices. What is bullying, how can we recognise it?

Types of Bullying

The definition of bullying can be quite broad, the NSW education department as the repeated physical, social, verbal, and psychological abuse defines it. It involves the constant abuse of power by a group or an individual by one or more people. Physical Bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, pushing, anything that affects the victim's body, this does include sexual abuse or the destruction of a person's property. Verbal Bullying is name-calling, insults, teasing, and intimidation, homophobic, sexist, and racist remarks. Other styles of bullying is covert bullying, it is harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the victims back. It is intended to destroy someone's social standing or to cause humiliation. It includes lying about the person, spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging other to socially other to socially exclude someone. Cyber Bullying is a perfect example of covert bullying tactics. This type of bullying takes it to a completely new level of cruelty by using digital technologies. By using mobile phones to harass their victim, setting up defamatory websites or facebook pages, spreading rumours via social media sites such as facebook, myspace, instagram, snapchat. Previous generations of teenagers who have been the victims of bullying were able to seek refuge from the daily torture at home, now thank to mobile phones and social media <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

the bullies have destroyed this refuge and get access to their victim anytime they want. Bulling can be a public incident or private, and in some cases only known to the parties involved. So if it is only known to the people involved, how do educators combat it?

Glamorization

Bullying in schools is an often-glamorized in Hollywood movies depicted in high school teen comedies, for example Mean Girls, a movie about social acceptance, isolation and gaining a self worth from the pain of others. What they do not show are the effects of bullying on their intended victim. Bulling is not a mutual disagreement or an isolated incident of social rejection or nastiness. It is not a random act of aggression or intimidation. The oxford dictionary definition of harassment is the ‘ unwanted or warranted conduct on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, which has the purpose or effect of either violating the claimant’s dignity, of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.’ This is when it can get confusion as all bulling is harassment, but not all harassment is bulling. So how do adolescents tell the difference?

Target Acquired

The bullies target students who are not part of an established social group at school, such as new students or those who suffer from health or learning disabilities as well as students who have trouble fitting in socially, as well as jealousy. For bulling to occur there needs to be a power difference between the two parties; unfair fights where the person who bullies has an advantage or power over the person who is being victimized. Bullying is not the same as <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

a disagreement, it is about the abuse of power. The effects of bullying can be short term and long term effects for the victims. Although severe long term effects can be avoided by someone intervening as soon as possible. The intervening party does not have to be a parent, teacher or adult in a position of authority, it is more effective in eradication of bullying, if one of the victims classmates steps in to stop it. Why did we as a society, think that this behaviour was harmless?

Long and Short Term Effects

The effects of bullying can be quite broad, they can range from falling grades, depression, anxiety; an increased sense of loneliness, sadness, isolation, there can be changes in sleep and eating patterns. Activities that the victim once enjoyed, suddenly they do not want to be involved. Sadly, these issues do not rectify themselves and can continue into the adolescents, life after school. The long term effects can include a higher risk of depression and issues with a low self-esteem later in life, there is links that teenagers that bullied in their teens are more likely to have problems with drugs, alcohol and promiscuity. In some extreme cases, bullied teenagers have attempted and succeeded in ending their lives, to end their suffering. As this issue continues to grow, schools have been trying to implement a Zero tolerance policy on all types of bullying. School needs to be a safe place for all students, as a safe place gives students the ability and the confidence to learn. Bullying and cyber bullying can turn the classroom environment from a place of knowledge to a living nightmare, which students end up dreading. Bullying is the cause of up to 15% of all school absenteeism. It does not only affect a victim's attendance, but it can also affect their ability to focus and

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participate in the classroom. There is also a high probability of the victim dropping out of school, so they do not need to confront their bully any longer. The victim's ability to focus is continually compromised; they worry about what the bully will do next, where the bully will be during the lunch break.

The Digital World

The internet and social media use have grown in the past ten years. Adolescents have access to the internet and personal communication devices in their bedrooms away from parental supervision. In previous years, the only way adolescents had to communicate with the outside world from their home was the telephone in a communal area and a desktop computer again in a communal area. Parents were able to monitor everything that was being said or sent to their teenager. Social networking websites have become increasingly popular among teenagers, as a place where they can meet friends and new people, communicate and exchange information. The type of relationships for teenagers have evolved to a level that has never been experienced on this scale. Social media is the main contributor of this change. Adolescents have the facilities to communicate with people, young and old from all over the globe. For the first time in our history, geographical barriers are no longer a issue for communication. No longer waiting on the postman for letters, worried about different time zones to make a phone call, adolescents have instant results with the use of social media. There has been a positive outcome due to Social media; teenagers who are active on social media sites are more social and well - adjusted than their not connected peers. This technology are tools for today's adolescents, it <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

develops social bonds, their identities, and an ability to communicate with others including teachers, classmates, absent parents. “ Teens who spend their time on social networking sites are actually the healthiest psychologically according to new accumulating evidence from a report from Psychological Science. (N. Murashev, May 2011) Even so, the destruction these devices are used for, negates any positive attributes.

Social Networking

Social networking has created new ways to communicate, share information and meet new people. Even with all the positive possibilities associated with social networking. Like with everything, there are risks that are associated with the use or misuse of this technology. It stay safe online teenagers need to know the risks and how to protect themselves online, from bullies and predators. People are able to be anonymous, anominity gives people a sense of freedom, they can be whoever they want to be, freedom to say and do without any consequences. Bullies are able to use the personal information posted online to gain an insight in how to torture them. Cyber Bulling is a methodical, planned method of violence and torture, affect teenagers. As mentioned earlier, it has the potential to lead to anxiety, depression, self harm, and even suicide. The Cyber Bullies use social media, text messages and email to harass their victim. The bullies tactics are to send mean messages, start disparaging rumours, posting hurtful comments and unflattering pictures, altering images to depict the victim, these can be through social media sites, emails and text messages, these can be done by direct contact or public comments or private messages to others about the victim. According to Cyber bullying statistics: Over half of adolescents and <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

teenagers have been subjected to online bullying, the same amounts of adolescents have engaged in cyber bullying. More than half of young people do not tell their parents or teacher that they have experienced cyber bullying. The best way to stop cyber bullying is to educate adolescents about the consequences of cyber bullying and what they need to do to stop it occurring if they are ever bullied. Bullies like to act covertly, it is where they gain their power, by opening up communication channels, and bullies can no longer hide in the shadows of the online world or the playgrounds. Unfortunately, most adolescents do not feel comfortable talking to parents and teachers about their experiences of being bullied. However, why does it stop, victims of bullying telling their true friends. Why are their friends staying silent as well? We drill into young children when in early primary school, not to tattle tale. Have we made a rod for our own backs, by teaching this? We should be drilling into them, which if someone is hurting you or your friends tell your teacher, tell the world. If you bring light onto the subject, bullies can no longer hide in the shadows or behind a computer screen.

Consequences or lack of

Bulling is going to be a continuing issue within the education system. The law cannot keep up with this every changing cyber world. Even though it is starting to catch up to the technology, there are now serious consequences if caught cyber bullying. Depending on what was done during the bullying, consequences can range from punishments at the school level to criminal charges. It is the repetitive nature of bullying that is the cause of the anxiety to the victims, the anticipation of bullying becomes as problematic as the actual bullying. The consequences of bullying were once name calling and <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

possible push and shove in the playground. In recent years, the consequences of schoolyard bullying have taken a more serious turn; more and more frequently, bullied students are turning to violence. Bullies adolescents feeling that there is no other option, retaliate in a deadly manner, attacking their persecutors and any other students and teachers. These tragedies have caused more awareness and fear among, parents, other Adolescents, educators, as well as the Police Force about the effects of bullying. The response of the education system and law enforcement has not been fast or strong enough for the families of bullying victims who had felt they had no other choice, than to end their lives to end the torture.

Conclusion

There is no quick fix, to this epidemic, if at all. Educators and parents can only protect the victims, if they speak up. There is no way to eradicate bullying from our society; it is engrained within Australian society. However, as educators we can try to bring it out from the shadows. Name and shame bullies, have it part of their permanent record, most bullies will continue the behaviour into adulthood, especially if they got away with in as a teenager. Bulling is no longer contained to the schoolyard, bus, or train, it enters our homes, and it destroys lives, families, futures, and communities. Victims feel isolated, unsupported; it is one the main reason why dropout rates are high. Bulling is causing a generation of young people to have low self-esteem, depression issues not only while the abuse is occurring but into their adult life. Teenagers who are bullied are more likely to develop future academic problems and psychological difficulties. School should offer support groups for the ones being bullied on and the ones doing the bullying. There should <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-on-adolescents/>

be harsher penalties, as these adolescents know what they are doing and know that their choice to bully will hurt someone. No one should have to feel like the only way to deal with a situation is to harm themselves or others. Bullying is doing them more harm than good. They need to know that there are different ways to handle a situation like talking about it with friends, families, and teachers. We must step up and help others know how to deal with this issue. There is no reason to let anyone friend or stranger get picked on. We need to provide an inclusive environment for adolescents to stand up and prevent bullying in their microcosm of a community. It will spread to the wider community. Let's turn on a light.

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