



Common Misperceptions and Facts About Bullying

In spite of the significant impact that bullying can have on a target, it often continues to be viewed as acceptable behavior. There are many misperceptions that adults may have about bullying, all of which can lead to minimizing the behavior. A few of them include:

Misperception: Boys will be boys.

FACT: The implication is that bullying is okay—it is natural for boys to be physically or verbally aggressive. However, research indicates aggression is learned behavior, not a natural response.

Misperception: Girls don't bully.

FACT: Research shows that girls can and do bully. While they do not physically bully targets as often as boys, they will often use verbal and social bullying. Bullying for girls escalates during the middle school years.

Misperception: Words will never hurt you.

FACT: Studies have shown even though words don't leave bruises or broken bones, they may leave deep emotional scars that can have lifelong implications. Children learn at a very early age that words can hurt other children.

Misperception: Bullying is a natural part of childhood.

FACT: There is nothing natural about being bullied. Bullying is often considered a normal part of childhood because it is such a common experience. Physical or emotional aggression toward others should not be tolerated as a consequence of childhood.

Misperception: Some people deserve to be bullied.

FACT: No child's behavior merits being hurt or harmed in any manner. Instead a child who is different from others deserves to be treated with respect and consideration.

Misperception: Bullying will make kids tougher.

FACT: Bullying does not make someone tougher. Research has shown it often has the opposite effect—lowering a child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Bullying often creates fear and increases anxiety for a child.

Misperception: Telling a teacher about bullying is tattling.

FACT: Children need to know the difference between tattling and telling. The secrecy of bullying only serves to protect the bully and to perpetuate the behavior.

BULLYING FACT SHEET

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Misperception: It was only teasing.

FACT: Most children are occasionally teased; teasing in which the parties are not hurt is not considered bullying. Teasing is bullying when a child with a disability does not understand they are being teased and the intent of the action is to hurt or harm.

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“These negative behaviors influence their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships. There also appears to be a strong relationship between bullying other students and experiencing later legal and criminal problems as an adult. In one study, 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades 6 – 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.”

Dakota County Website www.co.dakota.mn.us
Preventing Youth Violence and Bullying



Bullying can have serious consequences. Children and youth who are bullied are more likely than other children to:

- Be depressed, lonely, anxious;
- Have low self-esteem;
- Experience headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, poor appetites;
- Be absent from school and dislike school; and
- Think about suicide.

See *Bullying Among Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Needs* for more information.
www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

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