

Bullying

Bullying is the most common form of youth violence. Bullying refers to any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or dating partners. Bullying involves a real or perceived difference in power and is repeated multiple times. In other words, the person doing the bullying, or **bully**, thinks they are more important or powerful than the person they are bullying. Bullying can be physical, emotional, or social (figure 9.7). Examples of bullying can include tripping, hitting, name-calling, teasing, spreading rumors, or leaving someone out of a group. Bullying can also occur through technology; this is called electronic bullying, or **cyberbullying**.



Figure 9.7 Types of bullying.

Influences on Bullying Behavior

People often become bullies when they have been bullied themselves, or when they have been the victim of other forms of abuse or violence. A person who is both the victim of bullying and the offender is called a *bully victim*. There are common characteristics among many bullies, and among many bully victims (figure 9.8).

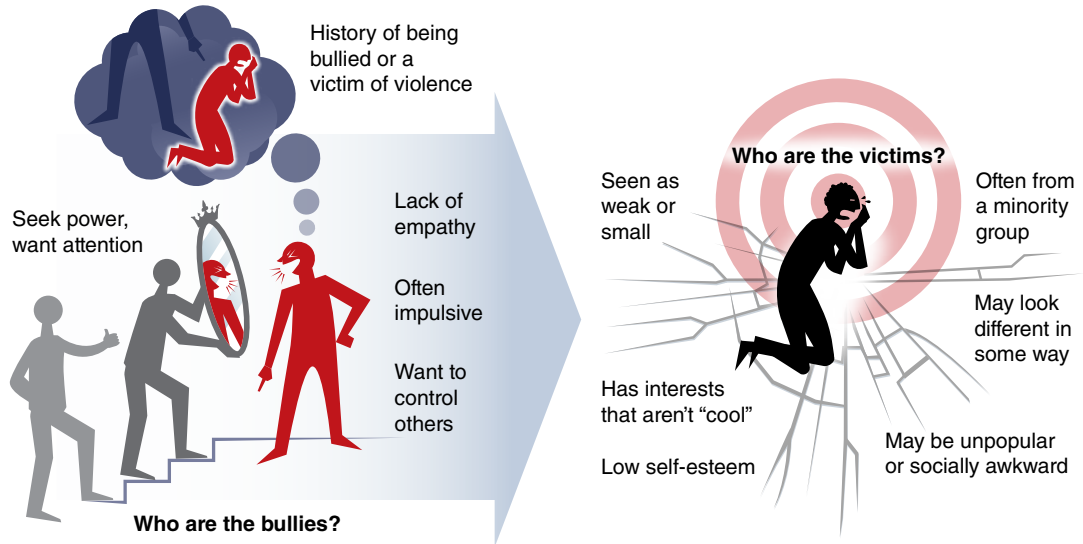


Figure 9.8 Bullies and bully victims.

Consequences of Bullying

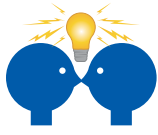
Bullying is not an acceptable social behavior. It can have short- and long-term consequences and can even lead to the suicide of the victim. Young people who experience bullying may be afraid to go to school and may have difficulty concentrating. This can lead to poorer academic performance or dropping out of school. Bullying can also lead to depression, anxiety, and sleep difficulties, and can make a person fearful or distrusting of others. This can negatively affect relationships and social support.

Recognizing Bullying

A victim of bullying may display a variety of signs, including

- anger and aggression,
- feeling lonely and being withdrawn,
- feeling sad or being depressed,
- feeling afraid and helpless, and
- being afraid to go to school or be in social situations with their bully.

Responding to Bullying



If you are being bullied, it is important to do something to try to stop the behavior. Remember, you want to work toward an assertive, not aggressive, communication style in these situations.

If you respond to aggressive behavior with more aggression the situation will get worse. When someone is assertive, they express themselves effectively and stand up for their point of view while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others. When someone is aggressive, they don't consider the rights and beliefs of others. Here are some tips to help you be assertive when standing up to bullying or other forms of peer violence.

- **Speak up and tell someone.** The most important thing you can do if you are being bullied is to tell someone. A coach, teacher, school counselor, or other trusted adult is a good choice. Use your school reporting system if you have one. Remember that you are valued and that no one deserves to be bullied. Advocating for strong school policies that prevent bullying can also be a good way to turn a negative experience into a positive outcome.
- **Ask the bully to stop.** Use assertive communication to firmly and confidently ask the bully to stop. Use a calm, even tone of voice, make eye contact, and be honest and direct. Being assertive with a bully works best when it is done early, before the bullying becomes aggressive or excessive. It is also helpful to tell an adult about the situation and to be assertive with others around you who will support you.
- **Don't respond; instead walk away.** If it is possible, avoid the bully and walk away from verbal comments. Bullies want to get a response, especially fear. If you remain emotionless in your expression and walk away from the situation you are preventing them from getting what they want.
- **Avoid a physical confrontation.** Whenever possible avoid fighting back if a bully shoves or pushes you. If a situation turns violent, self-defense may be necessary. Otherwise, don't stoop to the bully's level but be stronger and better than they are.
- **Stay close to friends and adults.** Avoid being isolated or alone when the bully is around. Staying near teachers or monitors during lunch breaks and walking with friends between classes can help. You are more likely to be bullied if you are alone.

