

Bullying in Children and Youth – Warning Signs

By Jeff Dwarshuis LMSW, ACSW

Here is a description of the behavioral warning signs of both victims and bullies.

Victims

1. Socially victims may appear to be isolated, unable to defend themselves, cautious, having low self esteem and having poor social skills.
2. Psychologically victims may appear anxious, depressed and impulsive with a poor ability to regulate their emotions. Depressive thinking and hopelessness in the victim can lead to suicidal thoughts and attempts.
3. Victims' behavioral warning signs of abuse are a loss of interest in school, taking a different route to school, having physical injuries, withdrawing from family and school activities, emotional upset after receiving a call or email or using derogatory statements about specific kids.

Bullies

1. The bully's primary characteristic is a persistent expression of contempt towards someone he or she sees as being different, inferior or not deserving of respect. The bully's abusive behavior is not a single act but an on-going pattern of abuse towards another individual.
2. The most common targets of the bully are people who are physically disabled, obese, who appear to be of a different sexual orientation or in a racial or religious minority.
3. The bully will show warning signs of his or her behavior through displaying a lack of empathy, having a favorable view of violence, being aggressive towards adults, having a hard time following rules and having a need to dominate others.

Bullying happens most commonly when kids travel to and from school, in unsupervised school areas, in sports team settings that normalize aggression and over the internet.

Factors that contribute to bullying are not having anti-bullying policies, inconsistent school discipline, high teacher turnover and a lack of support for children with special needs.

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