

BULLYING

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Introduction

Imagine a child who every single day asks herself if her life is worth living. She is not fighting a war, she is not dying of a horrible disease she is simply being bullied. This child goes to school every day and is ridiculed in front of her whole school and teachers, and nobody says anything. She doesn't tell anybody because she is afraid that people will call her a tattletale and think she is weak and can't take care of herself. She is larger than most, but not even obese. As she walks through a door people holler at her "Are you sure you will fit through there?" When she walks through a hallway people move aside and pretend to be smashed against a wall. She has lost hope, pride, self-esteem and most importantly happiness. If you are not happy, why take care of yourself? Why try hard at school? Why do anything?

Bullying is a worldwide problem. Just in America 13 million kids are being bullied this year, which is about 1/7 of the child population in the US. This could be your friend, your sibling, your child or even you. Bullying is the most common form of violence experienced by children and teens. If a large percentage of our population is going through this problem shouldn't we do something to change it? It is time to take a stand and stop this.

Explain the issue

Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior that happens within school-aged children. For it to be considered bullying it must be repetitive. Also, there must be an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim. Bullies use the imbalance of power to their advantage because if the victim doesn't fight back or say anything they can keep going and do whatever they want. If all of these things are happening this person is being bullied.

Most people think that bullying is only when a person physically hurts another. That is not true. Think about a time in your life when someone has said something to you that really impacted you negatively. Now think of a time when somebody has hit you. Don't they both hurt? Furthermore, bullying can be physical or verbal. Physical bullying includes: punching, hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or damaging people's possessions or making rude/inappropriate hand gestures. Verbal bullying includes: teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm to the person or their possessions and cyber bullying. Both types of bullying hurt, which one hurts more depends on the person.

Bullying is a worldwide issue. There are 1.9 billion children in the world. 1/10 of these children are being bullied today. That is about 200 million kids. 13 million of these kids are being bullied right here in America. That is about

1/7 of the kids in America. That means in a class of 25 students 3 or 4 kids would be bullied! 1/10 is a huge part of our population and 1/7 is even larger. Bullying can happen to anyone and anywhere that is why we have to stop it.

Many people have different opinions about bullying. For example, 25% of teachers think that bullying is not wrong use excuses like, "Kids will be kids". This would lead a person to think, that the other 75% think it is wrong and will intervene when they see bullying, but studies show that teachers only intervene 4% of the time. On the other hand, over 2/3 of students think that their school handles bullying poorly or doesn't do anything about it. They have reason to think this because as I said before teachers only intervene 4% of the time. It is very important to have adult help because the most effective way to stop bullying is for adults to express that it is not OK and intervene when bullying happens. Bullying is a serious problem and it takes the whole community to end it.

Current Events

As I said before bullying is a local and global issue. This is the story of a girl who very well might have been your next-door neighbor. There was once an eight-year-old girl, let's call her Natalie, who had what you would call "the perfect life". She hadn't really experienced pain or loss. Her whole life was smiles and laughter. When she got to her third grade class she felt confidence and told her parents she wanted to go in on her own. Her parents reluctantly waved 2bye and she went in. The first day she made many friends, but she noticed that every time she talked to someone there was a pang of jealousy in the girl that sat across from her. Natalie pushed this thought aside and pretended not to notice. When she got home her parents noticed that Natalie, usually all cheery was acting strangely. As the days went on, this kept on happening. Finally, one day the jealous girl, let's call her Samantha, started acting nicely and wanted to be Natalie's friend. Natalie was glad and went back to her old cheery self, at least for now.

One day Natalie was walking around the playground when she got punched in the stomach and shoved into a wall. Natalie in pain stood up, determined not to cry. She looked up at the aggressor and was shocked to see it was Samantha. Natalie asked, "Why did you do that?" Samantha answered in a tone that seemed like she was trying for Natalie to know she was lying "I thought you were Jake". Natalie said "So you would do that to Jake?" Samantha said smirking "I was trying to tickle him" Natalie said "Well, that's not how you tickle people." That very day Natalie told her parents. Her mom immediately took action contacting everybody who had a responsibility (teacher, counselor, etc.) at Natalie's school. For months nobody moved a finger, dismissing it as 'kids will be kids'. Natalie broke down and stopped answering back. With all the power in Samantha's hands she took all of Natalie's friends by telling horrible lies about her, physically and verbally abused her ... over and over.

Months later, when the school finally took action, Samantha continued the abuse in times and places where she could not be detected. As all bullies, Samantha was persistent and systematic. She would make sure that her physical

abuse would not leave visible marks. She blatantly lied whenever questioned and even pretended to be the victim. Most children in the class knew the situation but were too afraid to speak up in fear of becoming Samantha's next victim. This horrible, vicious cycle, continued until the end of the school year. This girl's identity is secret but you may imagine her as a friend, a sibling or even yourself. Even when all of this was happening not once did Natalie break down and cry. Not once did she lose interest in school and most importantly, not once did she bully others. I believe that she is here to show that even if you were bullied you can be strong and later live a normal life. Nobody should go through this especially not an 8 year old.

This could have gone much worse if Natalie hadn't sought the help of her parents and hadn't stayed strong. If you are being bullied you not only have to go through the horrible situation that is bullying but you are at more risk of depression, anxiety, increased feeling of sadness and/or loneliness, extreme changes in sleeping and eating patterns, no interest in activities you used to like/enjoy, health issues, worsened school grades or achievements and miss, skip or drop out of school while being bullied. Also, studies show that in 12 out of 15 school shooting incidents, the shooter had a history of being bullied. We don't know why a person who has been through so much pain in his or her childhood would cause extreme pain upon someone else. Maybe they do it to feel in power, maybe they do it out of sheer resentment towards the world, we simply don't know. Bullying is a horrible problem with extreme side effects that's why we have to stop it.

Methods of Change

Since bullying is such a huge issue there are many organizations that are trying to help both locally and globally. One organization is "The Bully Project". Their website is: <http://www.thebullyproject.com> This organization made a movie called "Bully". This movie is a documentary that tells stories of several teenagers who were bullied to the point of some of them committing suicide. It interviews parents, friends and school officials and it records bullying incidents and the reaction of the students and adults. The goal of this project is to have 10 million kids watch their movie so they can raise awareness. Although this organization is concentrated in America it also has projects in Singapore, Philippines, Taiwan and Japan. Also, you can watch the movie from anywhere in the world! As a result, it has become an international organization.

Now you may be wondering, "What can I do to help this organization?" If you want to start small you can watch the movie on your own or with a couple of people. Secondly, you can go to a screening of the movie near you, where you will be able to discuss the movie with others. Thirdly, you can host your own screening of the movie where other people who are passionate about this issue will go and watch it. Then, you will enter in the number of people who came to watch it which will get this organization closer to their goal of 10 million people. Additionally, you can follow this organization on social media.

Call for Action

Bullying is a huge issue that spans all over the world. Some organizations are:

Organization	What they do	Link
The bully project	They started with the documentary "Bully" to raise awareness on this issue. As the organization grew they created a website where you can find a local screening of the movie, read others bullying stories, post your own bullying experience, learn how to start your own anti bullying movement and they have tools for teachers parents etc.	http://www.thebullyproject.com
Stop bullying	This is the government's anti bullying website. They have comprehensive information on bullying including facts, stats etc. They also have training programs to catch bullying on the spot.	http://www.stopbullying.gov
Pacers National bullying prevention center	They have many videos and stories to help kids fight this battle. They also provide, resources for students, parents, educators etc.	http://www.pacer.org/bullying/about/
Stomp out bullying	This website is the leading anti bullying organization in the US. They focus on reducing and preventing bullying.	http://www.stompoutbullying.org/index.php/about/
International bullying prevention organization	Quoted from their website: "The mission of the International Bullying Prevention Association is to support and enhance quality research based bullying prevention principles and best practices in order to achieve a safe school climate, healthy work environment, good citizenship and civic responsibility."	http://www.stopbullyingworld.org/index.php/about-ibpa-28

After all this information about what these big organizations are doing you might be wondering, "What can an average person like me do to help?" First, choose an organization that you like. Depending on your choice you can donate

your time, money or support. But in my opinion, what is most effective is to be active when you witness an act of bullying. If you become an ally you are helping to stop bullying. Lots of help can be done through organizations, but stepping in and stopping bullying will effectively change the life of the victim and might even stop the bully.

Conclusion

Bullying destroys the life of over 200 million children. Together we can stop all the Samanthas in the world and make a better life for all the Natalies. Let's start now!

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