

Recognizing and Addressing Bullying as Early as Preschool

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Outcome



To have an awareness of bullying in the preschool years and positive support strategies to help families and early childhood professionals.

Objectives



- Examine current data and research on bullying in the preschool years
- Recognize challenging behaviors that lead to bullying
- Explore positive support strategies for families and early childhood professionals

Activity

What's bullying?



Scenario

In the Block Area two four-year-old boys are building a road while a three year old is playing with a basket of small cars. One of the older boys, Ben, pushes the three year old and turns to his friend who is watching, and they laugh. "Baby!" they say together to the three year old who begins to cry. An adult comes over: "Come on now, boys. Let's all be friends here." The boys resume their play. When the adult moves away, the three year old is pushed again, and again the boys laugh. Could this be the beginning of a pattern of bullying?

Definition



- Aggressive act intended to hurt another child
- Committed by a child
- To assert greater power over another child

Snow, K. (2014). Bullying in Early Childhood. Retrieved from www.naeyc.org/blogs/bullying-early-childhood

Behaviors that Lead to Bullying

- Hurtful pre-bullying behaviors may lead to bullying when they become repetitive and intentional and involve an abuse of power.

Examples

1. Name calling
2. Making threats
3. Excluding other children from play
4. Aggressive towards other children

Bullying in the Preschool Years

In a 2013 study by Doubet & Ostrosky:

- 20.4% of children ages 2-5 had experienced physical bullying
- 14.6% have been verbally bullied
- The preschool expulsion rate is 6.7 per 1000 children
- Four year olds are expelled at a higher rate than three year olds
- Boys are more likely than girls to use physical aggression in their bullying
- Girls who are bullies are more likely to be socially isolated
- Children who are victims of bullies have fewer friends

Doubet, S. & Ostrosky, M. (2013). The impact of challenging behaviors on families: I don't know what to do. Retrieved from www.sagepub.com

Young Children and Bullying



- Extensive research shows that peer aggression is more common in children ages 3-5 than any other age group
- Young children's ability to understand bullying may also be affected by their somewhat limited understanding about motivation and intention
- Not feeling safe

Signs of a Child Being Bullied



- Is suddenly scared to go to preschool
- Complains of headaches or stomachaches for no reason
- Is clingy and whiny
- Comes home with unexplained injuries
- Is withdrawn or depressed
- Talks about one particular child doing mean things to him/her
- Has trouble concentrating
- Avoids eye contact when you ask him about school

Trauma Factors



Abuse and Neglect add facets to behaviors that may tend to lead to bullying:

- Poor modeling: physical abuse, DV
- Exposure to violence: DV, gaming or media, community violence
- Lack of opportunity to be with peers or others socially or practically: neglect, isolation
- Impulsivity and /or sensory issues: pre-natal exposures, developmental issues or delays
- Attachment issues lead to lack of empathy, anger: abuse and pain, severe neglect

Impact in Early Care and Education Settings

2014 survey of Early Childhood Professionals:

- 80% of teachers report that challenging behaviors such as bullying affects their job satisfaction
- 21% of Directors report that teachers are not effective in implementing prevention or promotion practices

Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/what-parents-can-do-about-childhood-bullying>

Family Impact

- Shame or guilt
- Fear
- Stress
- Uncertainty of how to cope with child who is bullying/or being bullied
- Understanding how to help
- Divorce
- Loss of career
- Loss of livelihood/source of income

Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/what-parents-can-do-about-childhood-bullying>

Self-Regulation



- Behavior is influenced by a child's capacity to self-regulate relates to executive function skills
- Inability to cope effectively challenges a child's overall development across all domains

Executive Function

- Children who lack executive function:

- Inhibitory control:

Inability to be in control (Interrupting, saying inappropriate things, unable to stay still).

- Self-regulation:

Unable to control emotions (loud outbursts, remain disappointed or upset for a long period of time).

- Planning and organizing:

Difficulty with routines and transitions (transitioning from one activity to the next)

Blasco et al. (2013). The little brain that could: understanding executive function in early childhood. bullying in early childhood. Retrieved from <http://yec.sagepub.com>

Strategies

Early Childhood Professionals

- Understand the difference between a pattern of bullying and predictable preschool behaviors
- Discuss and model positive behavior and other ways young children can make friends and interact with their peers
- Set clear, consistent, and realistic expectations
- Observe and monitor interactions between children and adults
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities to meet the needs of each child (sensory processing etc.)

Families



- Realistic expectations to address the problem
- Model empathy
- Clearly state expectations in advance
- Clear consistent choices
- Use when then statements
- Positive reinforcement
- Stay calm

Community Partners



- Knowledge and availability of resources to support families
- Communicate with other community partners about what each partner will do to help prevent and respond to bullying
- Establish a shared vision about bullying in the community, its impact, and how to stop it

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www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/what-parents-can-do-about-childhood-bullying

www.challengingbehavior.org

Evaluation

