Why do they pick on me?

Practical strategies which school students on the autism spectrum and their parents can use to detect, manage and prevent school bullying

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Friday 1st August 2014, 1.25pm, Room 6A.
Who am I

- PhD Candidate at Flinders University
- My research focuses on adults with Asperger syndrome
  - In particular education, employment and relationship experiences
Today’s presentation

- **Section One**: An overview of the literature on students with ASDs and school bullying.
  - Types and definitions of school bullying
  - Reasons why students with ASDs are bullied
  - Long and short-term impacts which school bullying has on adults with ASDs

- **Section Two**: Classroom specific and school wide anti-bullying programs.

- **Section Three**: Strategies which teachers, students with ASDs and their parents can use to reduce school bullying.
Section One

An overview of the literature on students with ASDs and school bullying
Definitions of school bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawkins (1996, p. 603)</td>
<td>Bullying is the intentional, unprovoked abuse of power by one or more children in order to inflict pain or cause distress to another child on repeated occasions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olweus (1993, p. 9)</td>
<td>A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nansel et al. (2001, p. 2095)</td>
<td>A student is being bullied when another student, or a group of students, say or do nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she doesn’t like. Any form of verbal or physical hurtful behavior, such as name-calling, punching, repeated teasing, kicking, hitting, spreading malicious rumors, pester, socially isolating can be considered bullying if the peer persists with it after it is apparent that the victim is traumatized by what is being said or done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Moore and Hillery (1989, p. 431)</td>
<td>Bullying is longstanding violence, mental or physical, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself/herself, in the actual situation.</td>
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### Commonalities of school bullying definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defining characteristic</th>
<th>Characteristic example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imbalance of power</td>
<td>A social, emotional, or physical power differential between the bully and victim. For example, “the student who is exposed to negative actions has difficulty defending himself or herself” (Olweus, 1995, p. 197).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to cause harm</td>
<td>A systematic or thoughtful intent to cause emotional or physical harm to a victim (Olweus, 1993, 1995; Rose et al., 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>The victimization is repeated across victims (i.e., multiple victims) or time periods (i.e., one victim over a period of time; Garrity et al., 2002; Olweus, 1995).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unequal levels of effect</td>
<td>The bullying results in a traumatic experience for the victim and the bully maintains a lack of concern or blames the victim (Olweus, 1995; Rose et al., 2011).</td>
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Types of aggression that may be defined as bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying type</th>
<th>Type clarification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Includes shoving, tripping, aggressive fighting, and damage to personal property</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Includes teasing, threats of violence, intimidation, abusive language, mimicking, and discriminatory remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Includes lies, rumor spreading, ignoring, and isolating the victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Includes sexually explicit language and/or sexually abusive actions</td>
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The cyber domain

- Bullying has recently included cyberspace.
  - Bullying attacks can occur over Facebook and email.

Reasons why students with ASDs are bullied

- Limited peer interactions
- Limited ability to build friendship networks
- Limited communication abilities
- Restricted range of interest


Impacts of school bullying

Victimization from bullying can result in a series of negative long- and short-term impacts

- Poor academic commitment and achievement
- School avoidance
- Socially undesirable behaviours, such as: smoking, drinking, physical fighting, and substance abuse
- Developing mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation

Section Two

Classroom specific and school wide anti-bullying programs
Anti-bullying programs can be school-wide or classroom-specific.

Anti-bullying programs include:

- Olwes Bullying prevention program
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies
- Peacebuilders Project
- Resolving Conflict Creatively Program
- Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways
- Second Setup
Section Three

Strategies which teachers, students with ASDs and their parents can use to reduce school bullying
Strategies to reduce school bullying

**Students with ASDs**

- Students with ASDs need to play around others because safety exists in numbers.
- Students with ASDs need to report bullying.

Strategies to reduce school bullying

**Teachers**

- Staff development and training courses. These courses should focus on the:
  - Characteristics of bullies and victims
  - Prevalence and types of bullying

Strategies to reduce school bullying

**Teachers**

- Teachers should enforce a strict ‘zero tolerance’ policy.
- Establish a buddy system to help students with ASDs.
- Teach children with AS specific areas where they are most vulnerable to being bullied.

Strategies to reduce school bullying

*Parents and/or Teachers*

- Role play bullying situations in which the student with an ASD are specifically taught to respond to bullying.

Strategies to reduce school bullying

**Teachers**

- If acts of bullying take place, they must be investigated.
- Activities should be designed to include all children.
- Educators should avoid elimination games.

Questions & Comments
References