



# MANAGING BULLYING BETWEEN ATHLETES

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# The Basics

- All 50 states have a version of a bullying law meant to protect children at school.
- Bullying does not usually stay within the confines of one environment.
- Bullying can occur with any age group, even adults.
  - *Bullying peaks in middle school between the ages of 11 and 14.*
  - *If bullying occurs in the high school years, it has a higher propensity to involve criminal activity such as sexual assault, stalking, or cyber crime.*
- Any person can be bullied. However, those who are LGBTQ, special needs or overweight have a higher likelihood of becoming a target.
- Any person can be a bully. There isn't a profile that indicates one person over the other is or will be a bully. However, those who bully are manipulative and often have the ability for others to do their work for them.

***It's no longer bullying if it involves a crime***

## Defining Bullying

*“Repetitive negative behavior that a person feels unable to defend against or control.”*

- *There is a power imbalance*
- *The one that bullies is either physically, socially, or intellectually stronger than the target*
- *Bullying can be perpetrated by one person or by a group*
- *Intentional harm that hurts, harms, or humiliates*
- *Unsolicited and unwelcome*
- *Unequal emotion reaction\**

***Bullying is NOT  
Teasing***

# Bullying Power and Control

## *--Based in Tactics of Abuse*

- Social Status
  - *Impacting social status with peers*
  - *utilizing the target to inflict harm on others*
- Humiliation
  - *Name calling, discriminatory language*
  - *Forcing the target to debase themselves in public*
  - *Altering photos*
  - *Divulge personal information to the masses*

***Bullying is entrenched in the core principles of abuse.***

# Bullying Power and Control

## *--Based in Tactics of Abuse*

- Coercion and Threats
  - *Threatening future physical harm*
  - *Threatening harm if the target speaks to authorities*
- Social Isolation
  - *Deliberately excluding and using it as a way to humiliate*
- Economic Abuse
  - *Demanding money, stealing possessions*
- Minimizing and Blaming
  - *Shifting responsibility to the victim*
- Technology
  - *Cyber, texting, photoshop*

# Knowing the Difference Between Teasing and Bullying

## Teasing

- Often has a sense of play
- Does not involve race, gender, sexual orientation, appearance or intelligence/skill
- Usually an isolated event
- Everyone participates on equal ground
- Does not involve a gang mentality
- Does not involve cyber humiliation
- Will stop when adults intervene

## Bullying

- Clear power imbalance
- Intent to harm
- Discriminatory language
- Establishes power
- Involves other people
- Can be criminal in nature
- Involves an element of fear
- Any means necessary game



# Bullying and Technology

- Texting is the most common form of technological bullying
- Photo altering is one of the most common practices among those seeking to bully
- Humiliation is the primary goal of cyber bullying
- Anonymity by the bullies creates the most damage for the victim
- Many behaviors online can be considered criminal if threats are involved or photos of a sexual nature are shared and needs to be reported.

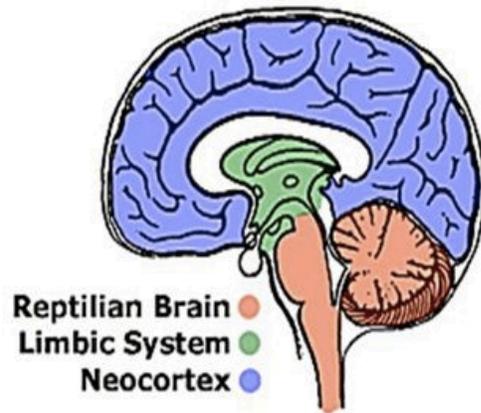
**Cyberbullying has no boundaries!**

# The Damage of Bullying

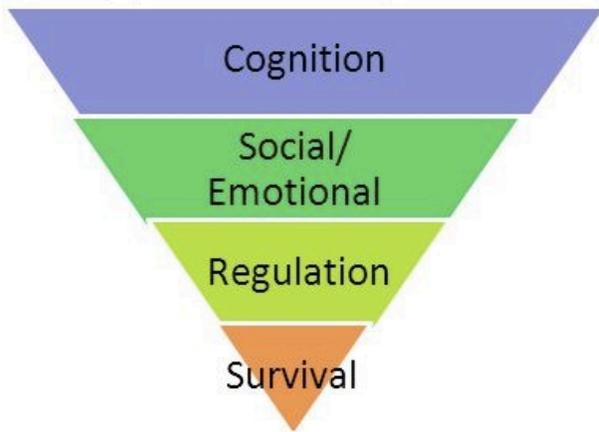
- Psychological-
  - *PTSD*
  - *Depression*
  - *Anxiety*
  - *Suicidal Ideation*
  - *Loss of interest in activities/school*
- Team environment or social environment is eroded
- Loss sense of trust among the victim, bystanders and parents

# The Traumatized Brain

## Trauma & Brain Development



### Typical Development



### Developmental Trauma



Victims of children who were severely bullied were found to have significant shrinkage in the corpus callosum. This makes it difficult for victims to process and respond.

Stress hormone cortisol is higher in bullied boys, meaning that their stress reaction system is in overdrive, while the girls cortisol is below normal hampering their stress responses.

# The Signs of of an Athlete Being Bullied in a Sports Environment

- Not having friends on the team
- Reports of cruelty from teammates
- Being afraid to go to practice or games
- A sudden loss of interest in the sport
- Unexplained injuries that are non sports related
- Lost equipment (grips, team jacket, etc.)
- Aggressive behavior or temper tantrums at home
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach-aches, trouble sleeping, or a loss of appetite
- Signs of anxiety depression, or low self-esteem, like a player saying she's no good at her sport

*Diminishing Team  
Productivity*

# Managing Bullying

- Listen
- Believe
- Contact the parents involved
- Investigate
- Consequent if necessary
- Be Consistent and fair
- Respond
- **Document**

*Do not use the word “bullying” for every negative action that takes place*

# Interview Process

## The Target

- Fear
- Bewilderment
- Emotional
- Lack Trust
- Shame/Embarrassment
- Fear of being labeled a snitch
- Often give vague or misinformation

## The Bully

- Extremely manipulative, will gaslight the interviewer
- Lies
- Will often blame the target/victim
- Bullies use “never” and “always”
- Bullies have a sense of superiority
- Often lacks empathy

**This isn't tv and you aren't interrogating.  
These are children you are dealing with.**

# Behaviors of Bullies When Confronted

- Ability to manipulate perception of authorities (Eddie Haskell Effect)  
*"I have no idea why she's crying. All I wanted to do is help."*
- Moral Justification  
*"He needed to understand that he was fat and needed to lose weight."*
- Backhanded Apologies  
*"I'm so sorry, I didn't realize he would take it so seriously."*
- Gaslighting Mentality  
*"They remembered how it went down incorrectly."*
- Uses words of Absolute  
*"Everyone, No one, Always, Never"*
- Blames the Victim
  - *"That's not what happened. She approached me first."*

# Effective Questioning

- **What and How...Not Why**

- *"What" and "How" questions are good for a discovery of information. "Why" shuts people down and elicits a response of defensiveness. It implies they did something wrong.*

- **Avoid Yes/No Questions**

- *Yes and no questions lead to incomplete information and gives a person a reason to say, "I've already answered your question."*

- **Use Who, what, where, when, and how questions**

- *"When did you realize your backpack was stolen?"*
- *"Who do you believe was involved?"*
- *"What do think is a better solution than bullying your teammate?"*
- *"How do you feel when you come to practice?"*

- **Avoid would, should, is, are, and do you think?**

- *Questions such as this almost always lead to "yes/no" answers. You only want to use these words if you want direct answers.*

- **Ask follow-up questions**

- *What do you mean? Could you explain further?*

# Other interviewing techniques

- Avoid making assumptions
- Suspend judgment
- Wait for the answers.
  - *Do not lead!*
  - *Use the power of silence to your benefit*
- Always ask follow up questions
- Play dumb
  - *"I don't understand. Could you explain that again?"*
- Have water available
  - *Water allows for silence and will calm down an anxious child*
- Show that you care
  - *Lean in, sit on their level, and make eye contact*

Promise Confidentiality to the victim and those reporting, but do not promise freedom from consequences for those involved. You can't guarantee that.

Do not bring the  
Bully and the Victim  
together to find a  
mutual resolution.

# The Worst Things You Can Say to a Victim

- What is/was your role in this?
- Standing up for yourself will make you stronger.
- Are you sure?
- This seems so unlike them.
- I'm sure they didn't mean it.
- Why did you let them treat you that way?

**Why don't you take the night off.**



# Talking with the Parents

**Document  
Everything!**

- All primary parents involved need to be included
- Direct evidence helps with both sets of parents
  - *“We saw” and “we heard”*
  - *Using direct statements such as, “We have been made aware that your child did in fact send the original text message.”*
- Do not bring the target’s parents and the parents of the bully together to find a resolution
- Offer progressive consequences for the kids who bullied
- Suspend judgment based on assumptions of parenting skills
- Explain the rules and consequences of bullying a teammate
- Don’t allow the parents to blame other children.
- Use “We” to show that you are working as a team

# Setting Policy

A good policy will have the following elements:

- Prohibiting Statement
- Definition
- Reporting
- Investigation/Inquiries
- Consequences
- Staff Training
- Parent and Athlete Training
- Cyberbullying as a separate component

Thank you!  
For more information please contact  
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