

BULLYING: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

by:

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Bullying is defined as a form of violence against youth, which involves unwanted aggressive behavior from an individual or a group of people. The issue of bullying, particularly in school settings, gained more and more attention the past couple of years. As individuals become more aware of the issue, they are more likely to speak up and take action to support and protect victims of bullying.

Being the subject of bullying is an absolutely horrible thing to experience. The harassment takes a toll on many aspects of a person's identity. What is more heartbreaking, is that, even when the bullying ceases, the scars and the trauma will remain for a very long time. In fact, in some cases, the victims carry their trauma all their lives.

Bullying can affect the mental, physical, and emotional health of the victims which can impact their social lives within and even outside of school premises. The bullying can cause social isolation and exclusion. Bullying has an impact on a person's subconscious and self-esteem. The victims usually place the responsibility on themselves rather than the perpetrators; they see being harassed as a sign that they aren't good enough or that they deserve such treatment because they are somehow inferior than others. This is why some cases of bullying are fatal because the victims start to question their very existence, which unfortunately ends with thoughts of suicide and self-harm.

But why do bullying even happen? What is the motivation of the act?

Bullying stems from a power imbalance, whether perceived or real, in terms of social rank, wealth, physical strength, or size. People bully because they believe

aggression is the most efficient method to acquire what they want, even if it only works for a short time, or because they lack the social skills to do so without damaging others. Bullying is also a means of establishing authority, and it is a bleak start to social hierarchy.

Bullies are not born that way, though. Bullies are the product of incorrect upbringing and environmental influences. Almost all children at some point in their early life shows aggression towards other children their age or even towards the parents/guardians, if not handled properly, the child will grow up thinking that being angry and throwing hands is the way to get what they want. Environmental influences are also a huge factor in a bully's psychology. If a child grows up in a home where violence is exhibited constantly, they will associate it to being normal. Sadly, it is the common motivation of many cases of bullying.

The perpetrator usually comes from dysfunctional families with history of domestic violence and/or abuse. The child that commits the bullying are being abused at home so he/she projects the pain to other people. Obtaining the feeling of dominance that they do not experience in their own homes.

That does not justify any of the bully's action, nor it invalidates the suffering of the victims, however, it opens a conversation that needs to be discussed. Anti-bullying should not just be anti-bully, the effort also needs to be exerted towards assessing and considering the root cause of the action and help both sides.

Because at the end of the day, punishing the bully only solves the problem temporarily, but if they are assessed and given the proper support or help they need, it will set them towards the path of healing and improvement.

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