

BULLYING

Most people have experienced bullying of one type or another in their lifetime. Bullying can be a one time incident but more commonly it is a repetitive behavior. Bullying can be defined as intentionally inflicting injury or discomfort upon another person through physical contact, words, or other means in order to attain a personal end, goods, services or a sense of power. Bullying can be overt such as pushing and shoving, or it can be subtle, such as an implied threat.

Some examples of bullying are:

- Saying hurtful or mean things
- Making fun of others or otherwise belittling them
- Using mean or hurtful nicknames
- Completely ignoring someone
- Deliberately excluding someone from a group of friends
- Hitting, kicking, pulling hair, or pushing someone
- Threatening physical aggression
- Telling lies or spreading false rumors
- Sending mean notes
- Trying to get someone to dislike another person
- Making false promises



Being bullied can make a child feel weak, stupid, inadequate, worthless, hurt and angry. These feelings can develop into emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety, low self-esteem and/or behavioral disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder.

Research has shown that cognitive therapy can help children feel better about themselves by repairing self-esteem and teaching them ways to cope with anger. Cognitive therapy says that a person's emotions are based on their thoughts or beliefs. Rational beliefs are those that are logical and evidence-based. Irrational beliefs are those that may seem logical at first, but with closer attention are not. For example, a child may be called a chicken for not wanting to steal something. He feels scared and does not want to get in trouble. So it initially seems logical that since he is scared he believes he must be a chicken. But looking closer, it becomes clear that choosing to do the right thing, standing up to others, is actually brave. A child can learn that being scared does not make one a chicken; fear can be normalized and a child can understand that fear is a feeling that can help us make intelligent choices.

Cognitive therapy gives the child the ability to accurately view the situation and end up feeling good about him or herself. Therapy teaches bullied children to identify irrational beliefs and replace them with rational beliefs. Therapy can also help children learn assertiveness skills so that they can apply their new beliefs in day to day life.

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If you know a child experiencing the devastating impact of bullying, you know a child that already has the ability to become stronger and thrive. At Youthville Family Consultation Service, we believe in change, and that it can start with one person.



Chelsea Armstrong, LSCSW is a Clinical Supervisor and Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Brigham Young University with a minor in psychology and her Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Utah. She provides clinical supervision in addition to direct clinical services. Chelsea specializes in treatment of sexual abuse, self-harming behaviors, depression and anxiety using Theraplay[®], Motivational Interviewing and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). She serves ages seven and up.

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