Developing Inclusive School Communities: Addressing Bullying of Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Associate Professor Verity Bottroff

Acknowledgments:
Phillip Slee, Kathryn Michaelsen, Jo Zeitz, Jon Martin, Alison Wotherspoon & Channel 7 Children’s Foundation
Table 4: School behaviour profile of the student participants
Table 3: Multiple diagnoses of the student participants
Students’ Profiles: Developmental

• Average to above IQ with significant variation across sub-tests - in particular coding.
• Social-emotional development - on average 6 years behind peers.
• Receptive language difficulties - on average 5 years behind peers.
• The disparity between social and intellectual development places students at risk of isolation.
Dynamic Model of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Psychiatric syndromes & personality disorders eg
- Delusional
- Paranoid
- Depressive
- Anxiety

Stress

Internalisation
Anxiety
Low self esteem
Paranoid ideation

Externalisation
Destructiveness
Physical assault
Self injury

Secondary
- Ritualistic behaviours eg insistence on sameness
- Poor sensory integration
- Poor consensual validation of ideas about other people
- Oddities of expressive social behaviour

Tertiary

Primary

Deficit in processing information:
- People's feelings, motives, behaviour and social contexts
- Receptive and expressive language
- Executive function skills involving weak central coherence
Family Profile (N=20)

- **Primary Carers:** 6 single parents (1 foster Mo)  
  Paternal Grandparent: 2

- **Family reports father with AS:** 12  
  - 6 little or no contact  
  - 1 suicide  
  - 1 in detention

- **Prescribed antidepressants:** 18 mo, 3 Fa

- **Families with sibling/s with disability**  7 (17)  
  - 3 ASD  
  - 3 Learning disability/ ADHD  
  - 4 Language disorder (same family)
SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS – 1 in 5 Aust children is bullied regularly at school

(Weekend Australian Magazine Jan 29-30, 2005)
Research by Rigby & Slee (1999) & Slee (2000) of over 25,000 students from more than 60 schools (catholic, independent & state) confirms that:

- between 1 in 5 and 1 in 7 students report being bullied “once a week or more”
- more bullying occurs in primary than secondary schools
- in primary schools bullying is highest in the lower years
- in secondary schools bullying is highest in years 8 & 9
- males typically report being bullied more than females
- generally verbal forms (e.g. name calling are the most common)
- physical bullying is the least common & declines with age
- students more likely to experience bullying from individuals rather than groups.
NEGATIVE PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES OF VICTIMISATION & BULLYING

Eg. Hawker & Bolton (2000) carried out a meta-analytic review of 20 yrs of research & concluded that victimisation & bullying are associated with:

- loneliness
- anxiety
- depression
- low self esteem
- poor social self concept

IN ADDITION VICTIMISATION & BULLYING ARE IDENTIFIED AS AS AT RISK FACTORS FOR:

**suicide** (National Advisory Council for Youth Suicide Prevention, 1999)
• **Punish bullies: Teacher Survey** (SA -7 out of 10 teachers believe punishment for harassment /bullying)

• **Taunts too much for teenager:** A Geelong West teenager who “suffered from Asperger syndrome – took his own life on Saturday after suffering constant taunts... the family confirmed school bullying had haunted the youngster.”
VULNERABILITY TO VICTIMISATION

- Learning Disability (Nabuzoka et al., 1993)
- Lack of friends (Rigby, 1996)
- Socially ineffective (Chazan, 1989)
- Emotional immaturity (Besag, 1989)
- Speech impairment (West, 1991)
- Clumsiness (Olweus, 1978 – 75% of boys who were victims)
- Disruptive & off task behaviour (Perry, et al., 1988)
- Failing to show normal distressing reactions (Perry, et al., 1998)
Because children with AS stand out and are alone more often than their typical peers, they are at greater risk for bullying & shunning at a time when peer acceptance is most critical.

Heinrichs 2003
There is astonishingly little research on bullying and children with Asperger syndrome.

Heinrichs 2003
American study (Little 2002)

400 middle-class mothers’ perceptions of peer and sibling victimisation among children with Asperger syndrome (AS) and nonverbal learning disability (NLD) aged between 4-17 years.

Results: 94% of parents reported that their child had been bullied by a peer at least once in the previous year.

Compared to studies of the gen. population, children with AS & NLD are:

• 4 times more likely to be bullied
• twice as likely to be hit or kicked (in their privates)
• twice as likely to be hit by their peers or siblings
• experience high levels of peer shunning that increase with age & peak at high school.
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STUDY: VICTIMISATION OF CHILDREN WITH ASD IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS (Cole, 1997)

- **Participants:** 430 children, 8-16 years from 16 schools, including 16 with Autism or Asperger syndrome.
- **Peer Nominated Inventory** (Perry et al, 1988); **Dev. Behav. Checklist** (Einfeld & Tongue, 1994).

**RESULTS:**
81% of ASD were extreme victims Vs. 8% of 414 students (33% of chn with special needs Vs 8% of classmates in Nabuzoka, 1993)

Autistic behaviours, followed by communication disturbance were sig. correlated with victimisation.

- **Survey:** to families of 1,676 students diagnosed with ASA at school.
- 363 returned (22% of target group).

**Every student has the right to feel safe at school:**

- 70% of respondents reported bullying

- Daily bullying **36%**
- Weekly bullying **20%** = **56% at least weekly**
- Monthly 3%
- Sporadic 41% = **44% at least monthly / sporadic**

- **56%** of all bullying reported was **physical**
- **30%** verbal
- **14%** emotional
Qualitative comments (6-11 yrs)

- Not believed when he reports bullying; told he is making it up (6 yrs).
- She regresses terribly when bullied. The school is unable to understand the dramatic effects of this, for example, nightmares, regression of speech and bedwetting (7 yrs).
- Had to change school because of bullying (9 yrs).
- Despite all our expressed concerns bullying is dealt with at class level and this is ineffective (9 yrs).
- He was told he was gay and bullied (10 yrs).
- Monitored eating times were too hard to free up a teacher so she was bullied and food stolen (10 yrs).
- My son is called ‘the bully’. More like cracking up under pressure and taking it out on anyone who happens to be around (11 yrs).
Qualitative comments (12-15 yrs)

• Bullying is a big issue, not just children, but staff (12 yrs).
• ...bullying will always be a problem; teaching the victim not to react to the buttons being pressed (12 yrs).
• Now suffering bullying again (had changed schools in yr 5 due to excessive bullying & the issue ignored). Seems to be human nature as heart breaking as it is for parents (12 yrs).

• He has been bullied on a daily basis and it varies from subtle to severe. It is a bit better now, less physical. The school has made excuses like: “they are teenagers”; “they are a difficult group”; “X provokes them”. Things that have happened on a daily basis include: name calling; putting his bag in the bin or hiding it; laughing at him; screaming when he touched them; not wanting him in a group. He says; “they are repulsed by me. I know because they show it all the time. They think that I am the lowest form of life”. Now seen by him as “a fact of life”; “they can’t help it” (15 yrs).
CONCEPTUALISING THE PEER GROUP: A study of adolescent boys with Asperger syndrome (Macklin, 2004)

7 students (13-14 yrs) with Asperger syndrome in Yrs 8 & 9 across 2 Secondary Schools (4 in a special class; 3 mainstream)

Structured Interview Schedule

• 1. Concept of a friend.
• 2. Current personal experiences of friendship.
• 3. Awareness & identification of peer groups within schools.
• 4. Current personal experiences with a peer group.
• 5. Reasons for peer groups.
• 6. Understanding of peer group dynamics.
CONCEPTUALISING THE PEER GROUP: RESULTS

• Bullying & harassment
  Qs. 1 & 2 – friends do not harass; annoy; beat up.
  Qs. 3, 4 & 5 peer groups (especially with special class) – “the hit parade of harassment.”

• Friends (protectors) & Peer Group (protective function)
  Stick by you if you get paid out/beaten up; like “nomads” – moved on when others tried to harass; safer to be in a group – the “outcasts” or “people that aren’t anything”.

• Masquerading
  “Making up” responses – lack of experience & knowledge, e.g. inconsistencies ( “forgotten who friends were”/ “sister’s friend, his friend” because “it runs in the blood”.)
SURVEY OF STUDENTS
Please complete section A before starting section B

SECTION A

INSTRUCTIONS: Your parents may read the questions to you or you may answer the questions yourself:

1. How many years old are you? ___________

2. Are you male or female? ___________

3. What year are you in at school? ___________

4. Now please colour in the face most like you at school.

[Six smiley faces: a, b, c, d, e, f, g]

5. Do you like school? (Tick one box)
   - yes
   - Sometimes
   - No

6. How many good friends do you have at school? (Tick one box)
   - Lots of good friends at school
   - 2 or 3 good friends at school
   - 1 good friend at school
   - no good friends at school
   - I only have good friends outside of school

7. Do you know what the word "bully" means.
   - Yes
   - No

Please explain what you think a bully is: (You can get someone to write your answer for you if you want to, or you could draw a picture.)
SECTION B
Parent or older sibling then reads the following out.
Bullying and harassment is when someone hurts or embarrasses someone by hitting, pushing, teasing, spreading rumours or leaving them out on purpose to make them feel upset. It is not bullying or harassment when two people of about the same size argue or fight equally.

8. Have you ever seen bullying at your school? (Tick a box)
   - Never
   - Once in a while (once or twice a month)
   - Often (once or twice a week)
   - Nearly every day

9. If YOU have been bullied by one other student at school this year, how often did this bullying occur? (Circle a letter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every Day</th>
<th>Most days</th>
<th>One or two days a week</th>
<th>About once a week</th>
<th>Less than once a week</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>f</td>
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</table>

10. If you have been bullied how did you feel afterwards? (colour in a face)

11. If you have been bullied how long did the bully keep bullying you? (Circle one letter)
   - A few days
   - A week
   - A few weeks
   - A few months or more
   - a  b  c  d
The Channel 7 Children’s Research
(Bottroff & Slee, 2007)

**Results:** 62% of students with ASD report being bullied ‘once a week or more often’.
(significantly higher than 1 in 6 students of the general school population, Rigby & Slee, 1999).

The research also demonstrated a significant relationship between bullying and:
  - unhappiness at school
  - feelings of unsafety at school
  - lower self esteem
  - poorer coping skills.

Overall, the survey findings confirmed a small amount of international research that school bullying has a significant impact on the lives of students diagnosed with ASD.
Perceived Safety at School by Asperger Students (%)

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<th></th>
<th>Aspergers</th>
<th>Aust.pop</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>notsafe</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safesomet</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usalsafe</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alwayssaf</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of Bullying Reported by Asperger Students (%)
Who gets bullied the most?
(good at academics/sport/performing arts/special needs/troublemakers OTHER?)

“Kids who are different – look and act different”
• like to play by themselves; are alone
• are quiet
• like computers & electronics; nerds
• “try hards” ; being good is risky – causes jealously, then bullied
• un-cool; unpopular
• kids who cannot defend themselves
• anyone who is an easy target!
What do you think your school could do to reduce bullying?

More teachers on yard duty!
(especially during lunch time)

- Keep a close eye on students ("a special eye" on those who have been bullying; never turn "a blind eye").
- Notice the bullying and harassment – believe there are actual issues.
- Listen to kids more (to ALL children and not judge on previous record).
- Be quick to respond – not just warning; talk to them about what they did wrong; apologies
Reduce bullying (continued)

Retribution: Punish the bullies more!

- immediate time-out
- inform parents straight away
- send home
- send letters home to parents
- 3 strike detention
- expel
- Get all parties together, including bully’s parents and principal, so bully’s parents can hear how the bully has upset the person.
- Bully’s name mentioned in the weekly newsletter to parents so everyone can be aware of who they are – they might stop as they would be embarrassed and humiliated due to their identity being known.
- Put bullies in a separate play area - (School for Bullies!)

(“Do not hand out external suspensions to students because it is like a holiday for them, because they usually end up doing no work and doing things of leisure.”)

Reduce bullying (continued)

Educate!

About bullying
• teachers should talk to students and explain about bullying
• make bullying a regular weekly topic and do talks about it in class and assembly
• teach the 3 Rs: Responsible; Reliable; Respectable – reminders with ‘R’ used in things done wrong
• have a procedure on how to handle bullying
• every student to report if they see bullying
• more anti-bullying signs around the school

About children with a disability (special needs/autism)
• “educate more students about individuality and mental conditions”
• “help me be better understood”
• “be more patient with me”
Reduce bullying (continued)

Safe Haven

• Safe place for kids to go.
• Make a tease proof dome for everyone who gets bullied regularly.
• Nice buddy in the class and yard who likes you and wants to help.

national safe schools framework
### School Policy & Asperger Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Helpfulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68% were aware</td>
<td>49% had used the policy</td>
<td>If used 75% Found it helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32% ‘unsure’ or not aware</td>
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</table>

**Q19 If you used the grievance procedure was it helpful?**

*If not why:*

**No notice ( teachers took no notice of what was said )**

**Kept on ( the bully kept on bullying )**

**Parents had to intervene for the school to take notice**
Why the grievance procedure was NOT helpful

• Bullying did not stop!
  • Encourages bullies to do it more (or do it by proxy).
  • Someone else is always ready to start bullying.
  • Children often disobey again after a month or two.
  • WE always have to sacrifice and move.

• I believe no-one believes me.
• Don’t listen to me.
• Only worked after parents became involved.
Students with Asperger syndrome, Teachers & Schools

The survey findings indicated that:
1. They see teachers as proactive in preventing bullying
2. Most bullying occurs in the ‘yard’ and not classroom
3. Students would report to teachers if bullied
4. Awareness of school policy is not high BUT when used is effective.
What students liked about their school

- **Teachers:** friendly; kind; help me; can talk to them; “don’t treat me like I’m dumb”.

- **Students/Friends:** students are friendly; “one really nice friend”; “couple of friends”; “hang out with my friends”; …. “but only saw them at school.” (siblings/cousins)

- **Like to learn:** “improve myself”; “gaining knowledge I thought never existed.”

- **Subjects:** art; sciences; maths; tech; music; cooking; media; graphics; story writing + P.E. & Sport (footy; soccer).

- **Recess & Lunch:** spend time in library (on computers); In tech & language rooms; oval (footy); playground (sandpit).
A total school approach is needed to address this issue. From the perspective of students surveyed, there is a need to educate the school community about children with disabilities/special needs/more about individuality, so that others understand. This personal perspective has been taken up in an educational DVD:

- Definition & introduction
- Parents’ perspectives
- Family perspective
- Best practice in schools
- Photo doc: Bruce’s world
- Creative arts
- Life after school
- Policy & practice
The "P.E.A.C.E." Process

Schematic representation of the P.E.A.C.E. program to reduce bullying in our schools.

- Identification of key staff to run the program
- Surveys/Interviews of students, parents and staff
- Feedback to school regarding surveys at staff meetings
- Inservicing of key staff in policy and practice
- Developing policy and grievances procedures
- Integrating the PEACE program with other school initiatives e.g. peer mediation
- Development of lesson plans across the curriculum
- Parent Information Night
- Ongoing monitoring of the program
- Integration of review process into staff planning days at beginning of each year
- Second survey evaluation and celebration
- Implementation of lesson plans
- Launching of policy involving students, staff and parents

Time Frame: 1 year to 18 months
PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE IN REDUCING SCHOOL BULLYING

1. Policy & Practice - whole school approach - senior staff commitment- management plan - data collection
2. Classroom Management & Curriculum - active engagement of students - teacher PD - student personal development
3. School Ethos - caring environment
4. Home-School Community Links - cooperative action between parents and school
5. Student Services Teams - complementing school action
6. Physical Environment - supervision - hotspots - safe areas stimulating play areas
POD CASTING

Follow-up from a Focus Group:
Four mothers of children with Asperger disorder who have experienced bullying, in particular, covert bullying, told the stories of their sons/daughters, the impact on the family and proposed strategies for change. It also transpired during this process that the mothers identified how they felt bullied by exclusion from the social supports of the school (an area that needs to be followed up in both research & practice).

This aspect of the research project was possible by combining with a new technology project: *Coalition to decrease bullying, harassment and violence in SA schools*. This provided an opportunity to highlight the need for attention to this at risk group of students at a national level.
BULLYING
lots of grounds.

[Handwritten note: "no ballgame"]
I think people should get people to try and stop bullying.
I got pedaled here.
Lachlan

Lachlan teases me about 3 times a day. 3 times in a week.
person no me like doing it to try to ignore unice guy
DOCTOR

SMOLLY

MOLLY

BLOOD
He playing at school.
BULLYING & ASD: A PRACTICAL PROGRAM
(Weed, 2003)

Walk > Talk > Squawk  (Glew, et al., reviewed Weir, 2001)

Smile > Talk > Walk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get out Quick!</th>
<th>Tell an adult</th>
<th>Keep an adult /friend in sight next time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| STOP! Put on my Strong + Friendly mask | Smile | Talk “Yeah yeah, why say that?” | Walk |
THE BULLY PROOF PROGRAM

1. What is bullying?
2. Why/who do people bully?
3. How does it feel to be bullied?
4. Strategies to avoid being bullied.
8. Smile > Talk > Walk & Telling a trusted adult.

2. Attributing another’s behaviour.
3. Aggressive Vs. passive.
4. Prosocial responding to peers.
6. Bullying not victim’s fault & strategies need persistence.
8. Non-verbal > Assertive > Escape & Decision to tell (except physical)

Physical - ‘Get out quick’ & Tell

SMILE > TALK > WALK: Strong + Friendly = My Bully Proof Plan!

Link Magazine 2004 Vol 13/1
Intervention

Action

Thought

Feeling

Action

Reputation
School Emotion Map

Teacher

Toni
Ally

Sam
Bully

Student
with ASD

- worried
- ok
- depressed
- happy
- angry
- hate
THE BULLY PROOF PROGRAM: RESULTS

Pilot: 5 (1 female) students, 7-10 yrs, mainstream
Pre & post Structured Interview Schedule (inter-rater 96%)

- Understanding Bullying increased: e.g. near doubled appropriate responses to verbal bullying; 5 x psychological.

- Preventing Bullying Strategies
  Pre-test: 7 aggression          Post-test: 0 aggression
  9 passive                      2 passive
  2 assertive                    24 assertive

- Generalisation

  Example 1: Smile Talk Walk (STW) explained to a sibling being bullied.
  Example 2: STW used in a school conflict.
  Example 3: STW used to approach peers… No! - “OK” & walked away (no aggression). 2nd time successful!
Autism & Related Disorders Service
Michael Rutter Centre (UK)
Anti Bullying Group 2004-2005

- Specific program for students with a pervasive developmental disorder.
- 8 week program conducted from a clinic.
- Utilises a range of assessment tools: eg student & parent questionnaires; depression rating scale.
- Range of strategies: eg cognitive behavioural therapy strategies & other visual strategies to work through a range of scenarios; comic strip conversations.
- Results to be published: anecdotal feedback highlights positive results from the participants, parents & teachers.
Group for boys with ASD who are bullied

**Session 1**
Getting to know one another
Group rules
What is bullying? Why do bullies bully?

**Session 2**
Feelings and reactions associated with being bullied
Thinking about how what we think affects how we feel

**Session 3**
Prejudice and discrimination/ being different
Positive aspects of being different/having ASD

**Session 4**
What is bullying not..?
Coping strategies
Identifying poor strategies
Role-playing bullying scenarios

**Sessions 5-7**
Body language:
- How it relates to becoming a target for bullying
- How it's involved in standing up for oneself

Stress/ anger management strategies
Stress and non-verbal communication

Self-awareness and self-identity

**Sessions 8**
Overall summary of course

(Sessions 2-8 include an opportunity to recap the previous session)

*Autism and Related Disorders Service, Michael Rutter Centre*
# Feelings and Reactions to Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Feelings and Reactions</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stressed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Run away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unloved</td>
<td></td>
<td>Be very quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Sense of worthlessness</td>
<td>Like a mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Screaming (inside)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Feeling bad about self</td>
<td>Bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft inside</td>
<td>Panic</td>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Screaming (outside)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>Distrust</td>
<td>Fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling suicidal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Distracting class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like you want to die</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Harm (think or do)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knocking things over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychopathic-like you want to kill someone</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take no notice/ Ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling hard done by</td>
<td></td>
<td>Slam door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Going off on own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tell teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruin others games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ignore teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useless</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knocking over people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laughing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BEHAVIOURS: NAME CALLING “YOU’RE AN IDIOT”

THOUGHTS
- Are they going to stop? Please stop
- Am I an idiot?
- I want them to shut up
- Don’t lash out
- Don’t react

BEHAVIOUR
- Ignoring
- Looking angry, looking red
- Reacting physically, pushing, kicking

FEELINGS
- Desperate
- Upset
- Annoyed
- Angry
- Irritation
- Frustrated
What bullying is NOT......

- Joking (not teasing)
- People walking behind you
- People looking at you
- Being tripped up but then helping to pick you up
- ACCIDENTAL
- Saying sorry after an incident
- Borrowing a pen and forgetting to give it back

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Nastiness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being pushed</td>
<td>Sarcasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being followed</td>
<td>Not done with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To do something</td>
<td>bully’s intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a bully’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intention</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Nastiness can sometimes not be bullying but bullying is always nasty
Why are you bullied?

Because something is different
Because sometimes you stick out like a sore thumb
Sometimes people are bullied because of colour or because you are a refugee
You're different
Because you have Asperger's Syndrome
Because you have trouble with fashion sense
Because often on my own/ alone
Because cry/ react
Because have no friends
How is body language linked to being a target of bullying?

• Bullies often target people who are ‘different’, or stick out in some way or another. Your body language can make you stick out if you are doing something that looks ‘funny’. **This is something you can change!**

**Do list, eg**
• Look ahead (if you don’t want to look at other people, look in-between them or just past them.
• Try to walk in a comfortable and relaxed way with heels down first.

**Do not list, eg**
• Look at the ground all the time; hunch your shoulders; wave your arms or hands around.
Study from the UK

2 year program based on the ‘Circle of Friends’ program (Mann et al., 2005)

• School identified a group of 5 boys (shared role) who had originally bullied the student with ASD.
• Students took part in a ‘mentor’ role: support for student with ASD before & after school; break times; support in class with group or partner work.

Results: significant improvements for the student with ASD, eg self-concept & school enjoyment & dramatic reduction in bullying. Mentors also reported an increase in self-esteem & enjoyment of school.
• A school-wide Disabilities Awareness Week can help bring respect for people with disabilities – foster a climate where bullying is unacceptable (guest speakers who have been bullied at school)

• **Bystanders:** 84% of bystanders are more empathic to the victim & bullying subsides 50% when bystanders intervene (select peer mentors; develop an ‘honour code’)

• Develop social activities around special interests & ‘a pass’ to the library

• **Safe** haven & person

• **Leadership** roles for bullies
Please sit down and read this,
These are the last words I have to say.
This is why I've done it, please understand
I didn't want it this way.
My spirit was shot and bleeding
From the guns that were your tongue.
Just another story
Of the good that die so young.

But you continued firing,
The bullets kept on hitting.
I couldn't handle the barrage.
Yet you had no thought of quitting.

I took the weapon from your tongue,
Such a handsome firearm.
I put the barrel in my mouth
Now all is peace and calm.

I can finally take my leave of you,
So how dare you show such grief.
You cared not of my misfortune,
So don't mourn at my relief.

Kathryn Michaelsen
2 May 1990
ASD was placed on the National Coalition Against Bullying Agenda

Phillip Slee, Verity Bottroff, & Kathryn Michaelsen
Autism Spectrum Disorders, Bullying and Relationships: A school community approach to intervention
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