

Common Views about Bullying



BH-1

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In spite of the significant impact that bullying can have on a target, it often continues to be viewed as acceptable behavior. There are many misperceptions that adults may have about bullying, all of which can lead to minimizing the behavior. A few of them include:

- *Boys will be boys.* The implication is that bullying is okay—it is natural for boys to be physically or verbally aggressive. However, research indicates aggression is learned behavior, not a natural response.
- *Girls don't bully.* Research shows that girls can and do bully. While they do not physically bully targets as often as boys, they will often use verbal and social bullying. Bullying for girls escalates during the middle school years.
- *Words will never hurt you.* Studies have shown even though words don't leave bruises or broken bones, they may leave deep emotional scars that can have lifelong implications. Children learn at a very early age that words can hurt other children.
- *Bullying is a natural part of childhood.* There is nothing natural about being bullied. Bullying is often considered a normal part of childhood because it is such a common experience. Physical or emotional aggression toward others should not be tolerated as a consequence of childhood.
- *Some people deserve to be bullied.* No child's behavior merits being hurt or harmed in any manner. Instead a child who is different from others deserves to be treated with respect and consideration.
- *Bullying will make kids tougher.* Bullying does not make someone tougher. Research has shown it often has the opposite effect—lowering a child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Bullying often creates fear and increases anxiety for a child.
- *Telling a teacher about bullying is tattling.* Children need to know the difference between tattling and telling. The secrecy of bullying only serves to protect the bully and to perpetuate the behavior.
- *It was only teasing.* Most children are occasionally teased; teasing in which the parties are not hurt is not considered bullying. **Teasing is bullying** when a child with a disability does not understand they are being teased and the intent of the action is to hurt or harm.

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