

- Be a Friend -



Bullying can happen anywhere and to anyone. It is a problem that affects millions of people each day. Once overlooked as a typical challenge of childhood, we have begun to see the long-term harmful effects of bullying.

Bullying can lead to depression, anxiety, low self esteem, and decreased academic performance for anyone, regardless of ability.

The Facts:

People with developmental disabilities are more likely to be victims of bullying because bullies see them as especially vulnerable because of physical or intellectual limitations.

Bullying of people with disabilities is rarely reported, especially in children with communication disorders.

57% of students with an intellectual or developmental disability are bullied.

People on the autism spectrum are 3 times more likely to be bullied than their peers.

34.6% of people with disabilities will experience physical or sexual abuse.

People with developmental disabilities have the highest rate of violent victimization.

Bullying

Bullying is when a person is picked on over and over again by one person or a group of people with more power, either physically or socially. Two of the main reasons people are bullied are because of appearance and social status. Bullies pick on the people they think don't fit in; because of how they look, how they act. People with disabilities may have difficulty getting around, trouble communicating and navigating social interactions, or may show signs of vulnerability and emotional distress. These challenges can make them be perceived as different, and increase their risk of bullying and aggression from peers.

Bullying at Home

People with disabilities not only face a greater risk of bullying in public, but many also face it at home. Cyberbullying is on the rise as the use of technology, including cell phones, the Internet and social media, are used to harass, stalk and humiliate people. People with developmental disabilities who tend to spend larger amounts of time on the computer for social interaction are especially at risk from online bullies.

Lack of Support

One reason people with developmental disabilities are at higher risk for bullying is lack of peer support. Having friends who are respected by peers can prevent and protect against bullying.

Bullying Becomes Abuse

About 70% of people with disabilities have reported that initial bullying has eventually crossed the line and lead to them experiencing physical abuse.

- How You Can Help -

Today, people with developmental disabilities have more opportunities to be involved in their communities, experiencing new situations and interacting with a wider range of people.

You can help create a welcoming community where all people of all abilities are valued and respected.



Families Can Help

- Make sure family members understand bullying is not okay.
- Talk about bullying, the different ways someone can be bullied and what they should do if they see someone being bullied.
- Set a good example and show family members what behavior you expect from them in social situations.
- Learn the signs of bullying to help prevent a family member from the harmful long-term effects.
- Implement "The Stop Rule" in your home. If someone has had enough of rough verbal or physical play, he or she can say, "Stop!" to immediately end the activity.
- Avoid labeling people and make sure your actions show others how to interact with people of different abilities.

Communities Can Help

- Make conscience efforts to make community activities accessible and inclusive.
- Make people with disabilities feel welcome by asking their opinions on community issues.
- Develop and distribute anti-bullying materials and encourage local media and websites to give public service announcements.
- Raise awareness through community events and activities. Consider hosting open forums like group discussions with community leaders, businesses, parent groups, and churches.
- Advocate for bullying prevention policies by working with local schools and organizations throughout the community.
- Work to introduce bullying prevention to groups that work with kids.

Schools Can Help

- Engage all students in high-interest activities and make sure everyone has the ability to participate.
- Give general up-front information to peers about the kinds of support children with disabilities need, and have adults help show peers how that support is given and how they can be involved.
- Peer support is an important factor against bullying. Creating a buddy system for children with different needs.
- Reward positive, helpful, inclusive behavior.
- Develop peer education, team-building, and leadership activities that foster friendships, build empathy, and prevent bullying.

Like many people in abusive situations, a person with a disability may not see they are being bullied or abused, or may have a hard time communicating about abuse they are experiencing.

Signs of Abuse:

Signs of physical abuse may be subtle, like not wanting to talk to anyone, or may be more visible, like unexplained bruising, broken bones, or other injuries.

With all types of abuse, the person may have trouble sleeping or a sudden change in mood that cannot be explained. The person may act aggressively or be less confident. They may seem scared of certain people or situations and refuse to go places where they know the abuser will be.

If You Suspect Abuse:

1. If possible, get them to a safe place.
2. Get the person any needed medical attention immediately.
3. Report to law enforcement.