

Bullying:  
Where do we go from  
here?

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Is the definition  
important?

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YES

WHAT MAKES IT BULLYING IS WHEN THERE IS A  
POWER DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE PARTIES.

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### What it isn't: I feel like someone is being mean to me, over and over again.

- ▶ "Bullying" has lost a bit of it's meaning to our kids.
- ▶ Kids/Students who are actually experiencing this type of treatment are the ones who suffer
- ▶ We need better and more thoughtful words to describe what's going on before jumping right into "bullying".
  - ▶ Am I in repeated conflict with someone?
  - ▶ Am I doing something that could be interpreted as conflictual?
  - ▶ Could what I'm interpreting as confrontation be an interpersonal problem that could be mediated and solved?

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### What seems to be the deal breaker?

- ▶ Kids can and do somewhat expect unpredictable and confusing behaviors from peer interactions.
- ▶ **What disorganizes our kids emotionally is when they cannot reliably predict if an adult will effectively intervene to help them and make a situation better.**

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### Being in between a rock and a hard place:

- ▶ The resounding thing I hear from kids on reporting this issue, is doing so makes matters worse.
- ▶ They would rather deal with the bullying behavior than the increase in aggression (likely even more subtle and passive).

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A Plan for both directions

FOR KIDS ON THE RECEIVING END AND GIVING END OF THIS TYPE OF AGGRESSION

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Strategies

- ▶ Foundational skills:
  - ▶ Aggressive (passive or directed) communication is indicative of a lack of foundational communication skills.
  - ▶ Assertiveness training and learning about communication styles, reinforcing healthy ones.
  - ▶ **Strong vocabulary and verbal acumen does not mean you have good interpersonal skills.**
- ▶ Awareness building for our kids. What gets under our skin and our plan for dealing with it.
- ▶ Impulse control vs Distress tolerance
- ▶ How do I stay ok? What remains true of myself? What core values are under attack (as the one being bullied and the one who is bullying).

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Developing a community and non-judgmental place to land when our kid is the one who is being aggressive

- ▶ We as parents/guardians/important adults to these children have the opportunity to take accountability for the impact aggressive behaviors can have
- ▶ Push to make your child "make it right!" and reward efforts to do so.
- ▶ What need is being met by bullying/aggression/conflict?
- ▶ What secondary gains exist in either direction

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## School System and Family System Working together CLOSELY

- ▶ Having clear and rigid consequences around engaging in these types of behaviors (this is more developmentally appropriate than impressing upon kids that it's the right thing to do).
  - ▶ X=Y
  - ▶ Developmentally, our kids might not be in a place to connect with the "right" and "wrong" of it
  - ▶ REPEAT: Be aware of secondary gains in either direction
  - ▶ Adults effectively aligning on the situation (on all sides)

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Q&A

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