Teen Bullying

The unfortunate truth is even while school administrators and governmental agencies are trying to decrease bullying; it’s still a very real, chronic stress in many teenagers’ lives today. Though bullying doesn’t have a static definition of what it does or doesn’t include, especially as technology continues to grow as a real context, bullying is generally defined as repetitive aggressive behavior, in which there’s a power imbalance of some sort (either real or imagined.) The adolescent years are vulnerable to bullying issues for a number of different reasons, including things such as developmental differences, the hierarchy of grades, clicks of friends, and the repetitive nature of teens being together in classes and hallways, on a daily basis. As the internet and social media play increasingly greater roles in teens’ lives, cyber bullying is becoming more prevalent.

Bullying may look different according to the context and the teen. With that said, there are some consistencies that tend to be present in bullied teens, including things such as: verbal and physical threats; rumors or public shaming; insulting and/or teasing; repetitively embarrassing someone, especially in public; negatively affecting the person, such as causing others not to talk to them or be friends; defamation; abuse of a teens’ personal belongings; and physically harm. Regardless of the particular type of bullying, it can cause teens’ significant, chronic stress which results in greater issues, including things such as teen depression, teen anxiety, and teen substance abuse conditions.



**Teen Bullying Treatment**

It’s important to understand that many times when teens are struggling, they will downplay it or even outright deny it, more afraid of being exposed than of the continued struggle. Because teen bullying is so prevalent in schools, sometimes teens unfortunately view it as normal, an inevitable part of life they have to deal with. In these cases, teens will suffer longer than they should, as they downplay what’s happening, telling themselves it isn’t extreme enough to warrant getting help.

With this said, sometimes it can be difficult to identify teen bullying as a factor in teens’ mental health and/or substance abuse struggles. Furthermore, teens might not be aware at first as to how their experiences being bullied have affected different areas of their lives. To this end, our therapists work carefully with teens to identify and address any instance of teen bullying and its effects. Through individual and peer therapy sessions, therapists help teens to explore the deeper underlying issues that are creating and/or aggravating their current symptoms. As teens learn to process the bullying and its effects, therapists will also help teens practice new behavioral strategies and techniques to deal with these situations in more healthy ways; how to perceive themselves and the bullies, in these situations, and how to reduce their own stress and remain calm, even in difficult circumstances. By working with teens in numerous capacities, therapists help teens to not only recover from the negative effects of this bullying behavior, but also to gain perspective and confidence which will benefit them in all aspects of their lives, moving forward.