



"What Do We Do About Asperger's and Bullying? How Do We Stop It?"

By Kerri Stocks

I believe just like we manage outbursts and meltdowns instead of controlling our children's different reactions to their environment, bullying also needs to be investigated a bit and yes, analyzed. So we can work out the best way to manage different situations that children inevitably may experience throughout their school years.

Throughout this article I will be defining what 'bullying' is; what adults could change in themselves that may bring a new and empowering future for the child, and some strategies that will assist the child over time in developing a strong self esteem.

Hope you enjoy!

Definition of bullying; repeated acts over time that involves real or perceived imbalance of power with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullying>

I am sure that as a parent you have been told at one time or the other that your child's perception is well..... 'Off, incorrect, err, wrong, mistaken, etc.' when a parent reports incidents that had occurred at the school.

When you hear this it will show you where the educators mind is set; basically they see your child as the one who got it wrong and the bullying did not take place or they have minimized it within their mind that the incident was 'nothing big'.

This annoys me a bit because every single person on this planet has a different perception to the other person. It does not mean they are necessarily wrong or adding things in to mess the 'fact' up; it is just the way

they have heard it or seen something. Unfortunately though your child has a label and so they will be doubted first and foremost.

I wonder why it is so hard for an adult to say; "I can see your child was very upset about that incident we will see to it and make sure it does not happen again"; and hopefully they are honest and stick to the promise, instead of regurgitating such useless judgments or pushing 'their' perception into the incident.

This article is to empower both you and your child so you can walk through life not relying on certain 'professionals' that will drain you of the power that you and your family should be enjoying...

Defining 'bullying';

- Intentional aggressive behaviour that is done to deliberately hurt another individual.
- Repetitive – not a quick shove, even though that can be upsetting for a kid (and the child who pushed needs to be told off.) But if we look at boy's behaviour, they are physical beings that express differences through physical rather than verbal expression. Whereas girls are more hurtful verbally and can go under the radar. So basically if the 'bully' keeps the specific behaviour ongoing ('ongoing' is more than once)!
- Verbal harassment
- Physical assault
- Emotional
- Written abuse
- Exclusion from activities
- Exclusion from social situations
- Or the subtle behaviours – manipulation and coercion (I am also sure a lot of you parents have met 'professional' adults that are really good at this one!) - oppression, domination, exploitation, etc.

'Bullying' can also be referred to as; 'Peer abuse'.

A 'bully' usually harasses another individual due to the shift in power, be that in ways of; stronger physically; more socially powerful and basically they are able to dominate the other individual.

There would appear to be two states of 'bullying';

- Direct 'bullying'
- Indirect 'bullying'.

Direct 'bullying'= shoving, pushing, grabbing, slapping, spitting, hitting, tripping, kicking, pulling hair, shaking, pinching, throwing things etc; and on the more serious side; stabbing, cutting, etc.

Indirect 'bullying' – also known as 'social aggression'= spreading gossip, threatening, insulting the individuals clothes, hair, shoes etc. Attacking verbally the other people who want to play with the victim, excluding from social interactions, refusing to socialize with the victim, name calling, teasing, arguing others into submission

I am sure we again have met 'professional ADULTS!' who have argued with us quite unprofessionally until we as a parent have shut up and not completed what we have wanted to say due to being rudely over ridden and argued into quietness.

I had experienced that last year by an individual who is unfortunately an educator, yet it was good, because it showed me the person's lack of control and lack of communication skills and certainly their lack of professionalism and allowed me to not worry too much about that specific subject that my son was having issues in.

Manipulation, silent treatment, mocking, saying certain words that will trigger a response from the victim, especially bringing up past incidents that they know will get a response from the child.

Side effects to 'bullying';

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Loneliness

- Low self –esteem
- Long term emotional and behavioural problems – and so the poor individual ends up being judged for these long term affects instead of others being held accountable.
- SUICIDE

Last time I brought up the 'taboo' subject of suicide an individual became quite distressed telling me I was wrong. Please take note, unless we discuss openly different topics they will sit quietly and fester.

This brings even bigger issues. Suicide is real, it happens and it can happen to ANYONE! Yes it is uncomfortable, upsetting, disturbing etc, but it is a reality.

And children regardless of label or lack thereof do not have the ability to realise that what is being said is; untrue, false, lies etc. They do not have the ability – usually this ability is learnt and grown over time until they are an adult themselves – to separate truth from fiction.

And so the child can feel so alone – especially with the way certain adults dismiss and minimize how the child really feels – and the child then feels the only way to stop the useless or painful feeling to remove themselves from this planet.

I was going to explain what is possibly going on inside a 'bully'. Yet I really don't want to waste space in this article, I think we have heard them all...

Being bullied themselves, sad home lives, building their own self esteem. Yet please take note that it is preferred reference that bullies actually do not suffer low self esteem very often, quite the opposite –by demeaning others.

Though I will write this one on adults since parents struggle with specific educators – as mentioned above – adults bully due to...

Having authoritarian personality, along with a strong need for control and domination – that would make a school room fun for an individual with that type of personality wouldn't it, especially when they have free reign over children!

Basically individuals 'bully' because they are feeling empowered by doing it!

Some interesting findings;

- Adults really need to see the incidents in the child's perspective, NOT AN ADULT'S PERSPECTIVE.

This I feel is where things can go wrong. You see if a child comes to you and says; "such and such took my hat!" an adult's response would most likely be; "Go get it back and stop crying!"

Gee that is showing the child a safe person to go too, doesn't it?

Yet if you reduce yourself to a child's mind and perspective, how on earth is a child to retrieve their hat without a certain amount of adult intervention to stop the hat being taken again?

How is this child to retrieve the hat from an individual who either works in a herd mentality and so has a little posse with him or her, how is the child meant to face this group and ask for their hat back?

Or what if a child is kicked in the shins?

One response I have heard was; "Just walk away".

What a pathetic response from an adult who was in a position to make an amazing positive impact on the 'bullying' incident, no wonder the 'bully' keeps doing what they want and the 'victim' feels useless.

As an adult we can just walk away, leave or ignore situations that make us feel uncomfortable.

Children are not given that freedom and so what we as adults feel may work for 'bullying' will not due to the perception these 'theories' are based on; adults perceptions.

- So basically until adults look at all incidences concerning children in a child's perspective the same responses, actions, outcomes will keep happening, at the expense of the child's future self – growth.
- Children won't tell due to feelings of shame, embarrassment and sometimes hope – they hope it will stop.

Yet with the explanation above, no wonder you hear adults say after the fact; "We just did not know it was that bad".

They could have known had they made themselves open to the child, stopped dismissing the incident as something small and irrelevant or stopped treating the incidents as disturbing 'their adult time'.

Our son never walked through the door and told us outright what was happening to him at school. It was instead shown to us in his behaviours, words and also he would take the 'bullying' for so long until he just balled up in a corner crying, that is the only time he let it out.

When I hear professionals/parents say; "I didn't know the child was feeling that way." "I didn't know it was that bad". "I didn't know they would hurt themselves", etc, I say; "Open your eyes and shift your mind set and get in touch with how your child is feeling and what experiences are REALLY happening to your child.

It was not easy for me to share with strangers that my son attempted suicide – a long time ago, 3 times in actual fact – and still to this day both he and I have to put up with judgments and others feeling they must watch him and observe because he may be a 'potential' threat, gee aren't we glad for these 'do gooders'.

Yet it was a reality in our lives and I know we are not the only ones and so by opening our 'door' allowed other parents to come forward to share their burden of their child's low self-esteem, self harming and suicidal ideologies.

It is amazing and sad that other people are living behind their closed doors along with them living with their potential shame, fear, embarrassment due to others sitting high and judging other parents instead of focusing on their own families issues.

I feel the difference with our family is we got right to the core of our son, found out what was really causing him so much pain that he did not feel he deserved to be on this planet like everyone else and it freed us up to be able to enjoy our son and freed our son up to enjoy his time on this earth.

So now suicide is not a problem, will it come back?

Who knows yet we are not wearing blinkers nor are we remembering him in those times and keeping him there due to our ignorance, we are aware that people change, evolve etc.

Administrations such as; schools, government, management etc are no different to any other group of adults around the world; rather than see what is right below their noses they make believe that everything is precisely how they wanted it to be.

I have walked onto playgrounds and the dynamics are so obvious yet you still hear educators say; "We saw nothing" or "Didn't look that way to me" – see adults do push their perception onto others, not just our kids!!

I hope by that bit above you can start to see how your energy is best put into your child rather than chasing your tail with administrations that are so shut off from the reality of the experiences on a playground.

Strategies to teach your child; please remember all things take time to be absorbed, processed, so this will not work over night, if it does that is great! Yet keep doing it, keep re-enforcing it and your child has a talent to learn in rote like manner what truth is and how to empower themselves instead of waiting for the administration to wake up.

- EYE CONTACT – practice with your child to lift their head up and make eye contact, if eye contact is too hard that is okay but try to teach them to look at the "bully's" nose, cheeks, top of the forehead etc and get them to hold their head straight up instead of hanging it. Teach them by hanging their head it assists in re-enforcing the 'bullies' belief that they can bring fear to another individual.
- COUNTERACT THE NEGATIVES – a child does not have the ability to work out what is truth and what is a lie. So each day let your child express the crap they have experienced during school time and then you tell the child the truth.
- COUNTERACT THE NEGATIVE INTERNAL DIALOGUE – usually when a child is being bullied they then internalize this dialogue and well we all know that we will believe ourselves – and so your child is genuinely believing this destructive dialogue. You need to tell your child the words to put in place of the 'useless lies' he or she is being told. So how do we do this?
- TEACH SOME GOOD COME BACK LINES – obviously not ones that will get your child in trouble nor lower your child to the level of the 'bully' but teach your child how to throw some questions back to the 'bully' so the

'bully' becomes stuttery, caught off guard and teach your child to keep putting forward challenging questions.

Teach your child to challenge with questions;

"Why do you say that?" – The trick is to keep saying it when the 'bully' responds. This will either get boring for the 'bully' or as my son says, they soon walk away.

"How do you know?" – Again keep repeating it when the 'bully' responds.

"Sorry, did I ask for your opinion?" – This one slows the 'bully' up a bit since they usually do not expect a response so confident.

"Is this why you come to school, to bullies others?" – transferring back on to the 'bully'.

Basically what we are trying to do is transfer and challenge the 'bullies' behaviour.

By giving the same response the 'bully' is not getting the response wanted or expected and so they most of the time move on.

If they see a quiet strength in your child they are not getting the much wanted satisfaction they usually receive and your child is showing that the 'bully' is not affecting them.

Of course when they come home it usually is a different picture but at least they are in a safe zone where you can help them work through their internal pain.

- WISE UP – tell your child the response the 'bully' is hoping for and teach how not to give the response back, this leads to your child keeping their power.

Some examples;

- Child has been told they are fat. Challenge the question by asking the child to define fat, show them what 'fat' really is; a raw lump of blubber, so the child has to say no they are nothing like the raw lump of blubber that is also known as fat, they are much, much more. Tell them their abilities.
- Explain how 'bullies' use the same sentences on every other child because all 'bullies' have figured out over years what upsets greatly and

basically what drags any person down, that is why the 'bullies' script does not vary from when we were kids and so on.

- What the 'bully' is saying is false lies and even the individual 'bully' does not believe it or care about it, he or she just wants a response and that response is to get the victim child reduced below the 'bully'.
- If they have told your child he or she is ugly. Ask your child to define 'ugly', so once your child has rattled off what 'ugly' is you will soon find out that it is nothing like your child, so you can use that to counteract the negative input from the peers. Pull up some silly photos on the net and ask your child if they look like that, make it light hearted so the child is soon giggling. Even Shrek himself was considered ugly when in fact he was not.
- By counteracting what is being told stops the flow of negative dialogue becoming imprinted into your child's head.

Some useless administration Band-Aids;

- Tell the 'bully' "STOP, I don't like that!" – Oh please, the bully is doing it so your child does not enjoy it, so telling them is just cementing the bullies need.
- Go to a teacher – Unless a teacher has the ability to be compassionate and understands differences of perceptions (in a way that they do not see only your child's perception distorted, that they really see how the incident has affected the child genuinely) will this one actually work.

If they are not, the child will be told the same old regurgitated rubbish; "Walk away, No big deal, Stay away from the bully".

See how it is transferred onto the 'victim' to be the one to fix it all, when it should be dealt with on the 'bully' level. A child will lose respect for an educator and will feel they cannot rely on them.

"Zero tolerance Bullying Policy" – Oh please!

Usually you will find this statement having approximately a five branch process before the 'bully' even feels a negative consequence to his or her action – basically the bully has to bully five times approx before they get in trouble!

Also a German theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg worked on the 'uncertainty principle'. To make it simple and not to go into the research papers I have been reading, it shows that there is no such thing as zero tolerance. It doesn't exist. You basically can't be 100% sure of anything no matter how hard you try. Accidents/things/variables..... happen.

So when you read this sort of stuff in an admin sheet, be wise to not get your hopes up. Please remember you and other parents can lift children's spirits up and sometimes you really cannot rely on the Administrators to do this or be pro-active against 'bullying'.

Usually it is the adults who had minimal 'bullying' or adults who were lucky enough not be affected by 'bullying' that minimize the affect 'bullying' can have on other individuals and sometimes they are the ones in the seat that can have the best affect for victims, yet due to minimizing it, these incidents keep going.

So decide who you can trust, there is always one educator who is real and have a chat to them, express your concerns and see if you both can work out a successful plan.

Not all of us can afford therapists and really I know I don't want to wait a month to talk about what happened weeks prior, so start building your own strategies, empowering you and your child while the administration keep chasing their tails!

This is not brain surgery for goodness sake and the same patterns have been around for years because the 'professional' keep focusing on changing the victim instead of putting the 'bully' in their place.

Don't wait for the 'professionals' to get it right, you start yourself, you are all amazingly intelligent and again you hold the one thing no one else does; compassion towards your child.

Just like parents at home control the environment and can stop specific behaviours that are unproductive, so can the educators stop 'bullying' straight away with an empowering plan developed that ALL members must abide by.

Here are also my three statements from the site that maybe some educators need to ask themselves if they can achieve;

- Educators help all students feel successful. (Basically they do not throw their hands up and say; "it is the child, I cannot do anything", they take on the challenge to assist the child in any way to become successful.)

Bullies punish students for being unsuccessful.

- Educators highlight good behavior.

Bullies make examples of poor behavior.

- Educators are proactive; they create classroom environments that minimize student misbehavior.
- Bullies are reactive; they blame students for the lack of order in their classrooms. (With this one I can feel your heads nodding! Easy to blame a child, isn't it.)

I believe there are three elements needing to be focused on within the school environment to minimize or eradicate 'bullying';

- The 'bully' – they need to know predictable consequences to their actions. Same thing happens each time – with ALL faculty members, yet the consequence has to be something that will really get inside the 'bully' to make them think twice. Along with being taught how to function around peers without 'bullying'. Basically even though they do not have a label, they certainly need assistance in socializing!
- Surrounding kids – this is a strong element to work on. There are power in numbers and so if the other children can be taught to not tolerate 'bullying' of any kind and being empowered to either walk away or challenge the 'bully', the 'bully' ends up standing alone and will soon realise that behaviour is counterproductive for him/her to keep doing.
- The 'victim' – strategies of how to not give the 'bully' the pleasure of seeing the possible effects of the 'bullying' getting to the child. Again the 'bullies' power is reduced and the expected response is not there.

****Remember some kids are not aware that they are the brunt of the joke and so may not know what is okay and what is not. Embrace your role as a parent yet remember you are speaking to a child and tell them what other**

kid can do to others that is not right. Be brutally honest and this way your child is armed and aware of some stupid things other kids may do to get entertainment.

I'd love to hear your comments on this on Dave's blog. You can comment at http://parentingaspergers.com/blog/?comments_popup=1424

Thanks,

Kerry Stocks