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Beware the Bully

One of the struggles students experience is with peers who bully, tease or harass. Many school shooting scenarios in the recent past have involved students who were bullied by fellow students. The issues of bullying are often complicated, traumatic and overwhelming to manage on top of the other adjustments that a young person has to make.

Types of Bullies (with help from WiredSafety.org)

- 1) **Inadvertent:** Students who engage in this kind of bullying don't set out to bully others. They are often caught up in a social situation or may be fulfilling some role they feel they "have" to play. These bullies don't always realize the impact of their behavior. An example may be hazing as part of a sports team or a group of students teasing someone in their hall about his or her clothes.
- 2) **Vengeful Angel:** These students are a kind of reverse-bully. They attempt to right the wrongs that were done to them and protect others from bullies. The popular film *Kickass* and the iconic comic book *Batman* highlight this kind of behavior of avenging wrongs through vigilante violence. An example may be a group of students that attack an individual for making homophobic remarks to one of their friends.
- 3) **Mean Spirited:** Social placement and expectations reign supreme in this type of bullying. Bullying occurs in a group and often through very mean and direct verbal attacks against another student in a seemingly lower social position. The movies *Heathers* and, more recently, *Mean Girls* highlight this kind of behavior. An example on campus may be a group of students in a fraternity or on a sports team who intimidate and bully others from a position of power and social elitism.
- 4) **Power-Hungry:** Students who bully in this manner seek to control others by fear. They desire a reaction from their target and look to cause harm or gain things they want. This type of bully is often what may come to mind when hearing the word "bully." This is the schoolyard bully who knocks books out of students' hands. On the popular television show *Glee*, football players who throw slushie drinks at the members of the glee club demonstrate this behavior.
- 5) **Revenge of the Nerds:** Familiar (and repugnant) to generation X, today's students may have to Google *Revenge of the Nerd* to get this reference. This type of bully has often been the victim of schoolyard or power-hungry bullies in the past and now is looking for ways to collectively "get back" at their tormentors. They may use computers or social media to cyber-bully their victims.

What to Tell College Students about Bullying:

If you are the target of any of the bullying behavior mentioned above, it is important to seek help and support. This may involve talking to a school administrator in the conduct or judicial affairs office or even the police in more extreme cases. A student can typically request a "no-contact" order from the school. Keeping a log of attacks (where, when, what happened) can be helpful when pursuing this course of action.

The target of bullying behavior should understand the nature of stress and how this constant teasing can lead them to feel trapped, overwhelmed and powerless to make a change. Counseling may be an option for the student to have some additional support. A counselor or psychologist would encourage the student to avoid disconnecting from others (common among those who are bullied) and also assist them in talking to their family and friends about the situation.

One other resource that can be helpful for the target of a bully is having some academic accommodations from school administration and faculty. As you can imagine, the fear and stress that can occur when a student is bullied can make it difficult to keeping up with homework, studying and tests.

Tip of the Week authored by Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D., SCOPE President & Senior Vice President for Professional Program Development, The NCHERM Group, LLC. brian@wearescope.org

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