Bullying…Children Hurting Children

Terms
- **Teasing**: Teasing is a provoking behavior that encourages reaction and interaction. It combines hostility, humor and ambiguity. It has less hostile intent than bullying; however it can progress to bullying.
- **Bullying**: Bullying is a form of aggression where one or more children repeatedly and intentionally intimidate, harass, or physically harm a victim who is perceived as unable to defend himself or herself.

The Problem
It has been estimated that 10% of our children in America will be the victims of a bully during their career or at school. Most of the time bullying goes unreported because of fear or repercussions. Boys are more likely to be involved than girls. In one study 14% of boys and 9% of the girls have reported being either the bully or a victim of a bully. According to another study 8% of 8th grade students stay away from school at least one day a month because of fear of another student.

The long term consequences of being the victim or being the bully are huge and should not be ignored. Some victims go to school with constant anxiety and fear. This affects their ability to be successful in school endeavors. This often leads to depression and suicidal ideation. In extreme cases the victim will be drawn to violence themselves, if not toward themselves then toward others.

Bullies are much more likely to be convicted of a crime and find themselves in jail. In one study 60% of boys who were labeled as bullies in grades 6 to 9 were convicted of a crime by age 24. 35% had 3 or more convictions by 24 years of age, whereas only 10% of boys who were neither bullies nor victims were convicted of a crime by 24 years of age.

The Bullies
Bullies tend to be more aggressive and feel more positive about using violence to dominate those non-bullies. Bullies tend to be physically stronger than their peers. They have a strong desire to dominate and enjoy being in control. Bullies crave social influence.

The Victim
Victims tend to react in a more passive manner. They tend to be physically smaller and weaker than their counter part bully. Often they have learning disorders, or a physical feature that makes them stand out, like wearing glasses or being overweight. They will cry or withdraw when confronted by a bully.
One-third of children in special classes have been the victim of a bully. They have a negative view of themselves, and often view themselves as failures, feeling stupid, ashamed and unattractive.

**Warning Signs of a Child Being Bullied**

- Somatic complaints like headaches or stomachaches.
- Problems sleeping.
- Irritability, poor concentration, refusal to go to school, school failure.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Self-mutilation.
- Violence.

**Where does it Occur?**

Bullying occurs wherever children gather. At school it is most likely to occur where there is the least supervision, in the lunchroom or on the playground. It often occurs on the bus or on the way to school or home. In older grades bullying can easily occur between classes in the hallways.

**What to do if your Child is a Bully?**

- Attempt to resolve the conflict by asking for a meeting between both families.
- Ask the school to observe your child and give better supervision to prevent him or her from acting out.
- Supervise your child more closely to observe and prevent bullying. Discuss whatever you observe with your child.
- Clearly tell your child that it is not okay and you will not tolerate bullying behavior. Have clear negative consequences for this type of behavior.
- Teach negotiating techniques.
- Consider seeing a counselor or therapist to assist your child in developing empathy for others.
- Many times a bully is also a victim in the “food chair” phenomenon. Discuss this with your child.

**What to do if your child is a Victim?**

- Listen to your child; do not over react, allow the child to fully tell you their story and what is happening to him or her. Let them tell you how they feel.
- Talk about what makes people become a bully and that it is wrong.
- Report the events to the school and ask for greater supervision to protect your child. Consider asking for a meeting of the parents.
- Talk with your child and role-play to assist in developing strategies to project a sense of confidence. These include standing straight up, making eye contact with the bully, holding arms and hands relaxed, and speaking in a strong voice.
- Encourage other friendships.
- Work on self-confidence. Consider Karate or other similar activities.
- Consider seeing a counselor or therapist to improve self-esteem and learn techniques to survive bullying.