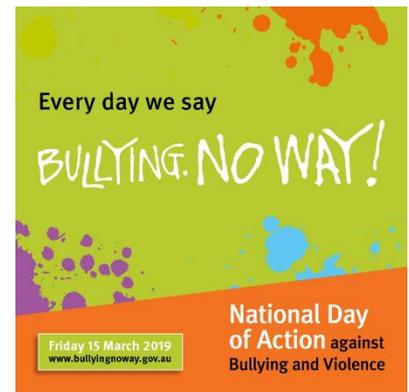


Friday 15 March is National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence...

It seems that never before has the issue of bullying and violence being so obvious in our community and so widespread.

It has become a daily occurrence on our streets and in our news reports... and in our schools we frequently see students fighting and bullying those more vulnerable.



Shocking road rage incidents are captured almost daily by car cameras and broadcast to the world.

Family and domestic violence continues in all layers of our society.

Why?

What's the answer?

These are not easy questions to answer...

I saw on a report on television of a young man who was relentlessly bullied his school peers to the point he was 'forced' to move to another school. When interviewed, he simply replied...

You know, with bullies, all the attention goes to them. There really is no support for those being bullied except to have to move to another school... And the bullies will find someone else to torment.

Victims

so, before looking at the issue of bullying further, let's agree that there should be a much greater focus on those being bullied... Let's ensure that we support them.

We have heard too many horror stories of young people, the victims of bullying, committing suicide, experiencing high levels of anxiety and depression, and other serious psychological disorders, and perhaps even 'snapping' to the point of committing the most atrocious acts of revenge.

People who are subjected to bullying and violent acts need support. They need encouragement. We should be supporting them to maintain and strengthen their self-esteem, their skills and strategies to prevent them from becoming further targets and to support them to grow to become the best they can.

Now, what about the bullies?

Let's first look at some research as to why bullies bully...

There is a traditional but false belief that bullies lack self-esteem. For most however, nothing could be further from the truth...



In fact, research has shown that many bullies have a very strong and high opinion of themselves. It has been shown that many bullies have characteristics consistent with Narcissism... grandiosity, self-importance, entitlement, arrogance and need for admiration. Narcissists typically have a very strong belief in themselves!

Bullies, like narcissists, may use their aggressive behaviour to gain personal and social reinforcement...

The sad truth is that as a society, those who dominate others have more control and social standing - we see this from research in animals, school-aged children and adults:

put simply:

bullying = dominance = higher social status = improved health and well-being

Now, there are of course many other ways of gaining dominance and higher social status if that is required, such as career, sporting and creative achievements. For those with seemingly little empathy, bullying is an easy way...

There is another disturbing aspect of bullying... Bullies are seen by many others as being 'cool'.

Think about it... When was the last time you saw a television movie where someone was being bullied and the other kids rushed in to help? Very unlikely.

I saw this recently on the news report I mentioned earlier where a boy was being relentlessly punched and kicked at a large regional high School, and the other students were just casually walking past ignoring the incident...



Why?

Further research suggests that the aggression and so 'dominance' displayed by bullies is a valued attribute marking them as the 'cool' kids. And this continues into adulthood where studies have shown that workplace bullying is synonymous with positive job evaluations and strong workplace politics.

By the way...Narcissists are frequently found to be excellent in workplace politics...they can work any policy and procedure as long as the purpose or goal is for their own betterment! These characteristics are often found in high level CEOs.



Further research suggests some disturbing research showing that bullying actually improves the physical health of the bully - and not surprisingly, this same research demonstrated that those being bullied had significantly poorer health.

And it's not just physical health...

As I said earlier, evidence from studies in the USA suggests that male bullies have a high self-esteem, while over time the self-esteem of female bullies strengthened during the period of bullying.

**Bullying not only has many personal benefits,
but also provides social reinforcement for the bully...**

These are some of the things that need to be addressed to find the solution to bullying...

However, I want to suggest a much broader and more difficult challenge in this regard, and one that was implied in the first few sentences of this Part One Blog:

I believe that bullying is an aspect of the increasingly endemic nature of aggression in our society.

What do I mean by this?



It appears that as a society we are becoming less and less tolerant of others, with an associated increase in a focus on our own needs and wants... What this may mean is that we won't tolerate others getting in our way or preventing us from having what we want or believe we should have.

TOLERANCE

This, I believe, is underlying the increase in the level of road rage that we are currently experiencing... There appears to be an overall increase in the level of stress that we, as a society, are experiencing, with an associated difficulty with managing our emotions.

Aggression is an expression of one of our primary emotions: anger

What does this have to do with bullying?

This is explained by a brilliantly simple, yet very profound saying that:

Children see, children do



Social Learning theory in psychology would suggest that bullying in our young people may be, at least in part, a reflection of the aggression that we, as adults, display in everyday life...and that our children see and absorb

Social
Learning
Theory

Does anything more really need to be said about this?

Join us next time for Part Two of our blog on bullying and violence

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