

COUNSELLOR'S CORNER

Many children engage in behavior that adults may consider less than ideal, including calling each other names, engaging in physically rough horse-play, and teasing each other. How children handle these kinds of interactions depends on factors such as their own temperament and their level of social skill development. As well, media influence can have an impact on normalizing violence in a child's view.

It is important to understand that, although all bullying consists of some kind of aggressive behavior, NOT ALL aggressive behavior is, nor should it be, categorized as bullying. What, then, is considered bullying? It is the nature of the relationship and the intention of the interaction that drive the definition. An internationally accepted definition is as follows:

A PATTERN OF REPEATED AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS WITH NEGATIVE INTENT,
DIRECTED FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER, WHERE THERE IS A POWER
IMBALANCE.

There is such a thing as normal peer conflict that can be differentiated from bullying.

NORMAL PEER CONFLICT	BULLYING
Equal power between friends	Imbalance of power between friends
Individuals often play together	Individuals rarely play together
Happens occasionally	Repeated negative actions
Accidental	Purposeful
Not serious	Serious with threat of physical or emotional harm
Equal emotional reactions	Strong emotional reaction from victim and little or no emotional reaction from bully
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power, control or material things
Not trying to get something	Attempt to gain material things or power
Remorse – will take responsibility	No remorse – blame victim
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve the problem

Some children may respond to conflict situations aggressively because: 1) they lack problem-solving skills; 2) they don't know how to be assertive and over-react out of frustration; 3) they have the kind of

temperament such that they lack impulse control (which is an age-related issue, as well). Their aggression is a function of frustration and skills deficits, not a bid for power; therefore, they would not be categorized as bullies.

Teachers and parents can help children develop the range of skills needed to handle frustration and conflict effectively. There are many programs in the School District which are available and taught by teachers and counselors that promote the development of social and interpersonal skills, problem-solving, impulse-control, and assertiveness. For more information about this topic contact Ms Gregorash, the school counselor.