

THE BULLY-VICTIM RELATIONSHIP

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- **The relationship between a bully and their victim is often complex, shaped by power imbalances, emotional struggles, and social dynamics.**
- **It is not just a simple case of one person being aggressive and another being passive—it involves deeper psychological and social influences that keep the cycle of bullying going.**
- **Understanding this relationship is crucial in addressing and preventing bullying.**



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WHY DO BULLIES TARGET CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS?

Victims of bullying are often targeted for various reasons, including:

- **Being Different:** Those who stand out due to appearance, behavior, interests, or background may be seen as easy targets.
- **Low Self-Confidence:** Bullies often prey on individuals who appear unsure of themselves or struggle with assertiveness.
- **Lack of Social Support:** Victims who do not have strong friendships or a support system may be more vulnerable.
- **Emotional Sensitivity:** Individuals who react strongly to teasing may unintentionally encourage further bullying.



THE POWER IMBALANCE

At the core of the bully-victim relationship is an imbalance of power. The bully asserts dominance over the victim, using physical strength, social status, or psychological manipulation to maintain control. This power dynamic can manifest in different ways:

- **Physical Power:** The bully is stronger or more aggressive, using force or intimidation.
- **Social Power:** The bully has higher status, popularity, or influence, using social exclusion and rumors to harm the victim.
- **Psychological Power:** The bully manipulates, blackmails, or gaslights the victim, making them feel powerless.



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BREAKING THE BULLY-VICTIM RELATIONSHIP

Addressing this dynamic requires intervention and education:

- **Building Empathy:** Encouraging both bullies and victims to understand emotions and the consequences of their actions.
- **Encouraging Assertiveness in Victims:** Teaching victims confidence, self-defense (verbal and emotional), and problem-solving skills can help them stand up for themselves.
- **Providing Support for Bullies:** Helping bullies understand the root causes of their behavior and guiding them toward healthier ways of expressing themselves.
- **Creating Stronger Social Networks:** Encouraging positive friendships and supportive school or work environments can reduce bullying incidents.

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- The relationship between a bully and a victim is not equal.
- The bully uses their power—whether it's physical strength, popularity, or something else—to repeatedly hurt someone who can't easily defend themselves.
- This can include insults, gossip, leaving someone out on purpose, or even physical violence.
- Because of this, the victim often feels helpless, scared, and alone.
- Over time, it can lead to serious problems like anxiety, depression, or completely withdrawing from others.

THE ROLE OF EMPATHY IN UNDERSTANDING BOTH SIDES





Empathy—the ability to understand and share the feelings of another—is a powerful tool in addressing bullying. It helps break the cycle of aggression and victimization by fostering emotional awareness, compassion, and connection. When we develop empathy for both the bully and the victim, we move beyond punishment and blame toward meaningful solutions that promote healing and positive change.

UNDERSTANDING THE VICTIM THROUGH EMPATHY

Victims of bullying often feel isolated, misunderstood, and powerless. Empathy allows others—whether teachers, peers, or parents—to truly understand the emotional toll of bullying and offer the right kind of support.

- Recognizing Their Pain: Many victims suffer from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Instead of dismissing their feelings as overreactions, it's important to acknowledge their suffering and reassure them that their emotions are valid.**
- Encouraging Open Conversations: Creating safe spaces where victims feel heard and understood can help them regain confidence and trust in others.**
- Empowering, Not Pitying: While it's important to offer support, treating victims as helpless can reinforce their sense of powerlessness. Empathy should focus on helping them regain their strength and resilience.**





UNDERSTANDING THE BULLY THROUGH EMPATHY

While bullies are often seen as villains, many of them engage in aggressive behavior due to deeper personal struggles. By applying empathy to their situation, we can address the root causes of bullying rather than just the symptoms.

- Recognizing the Causes of Their Behavior: Many bullies act out due to personal insecurities, past trauma, or struggles at home. They may use bullying as a way to gain control, mask their own pain, or seek attention.**
- Seeing Them as Individuals, Not Just "Bad People": Labeling bullies as inherently cruel can make it harder to rehabilitate them. Instead, understanding that their behavior is often learned or influenced by their environment allows for more effective intervention.**
- Offering Support Instead of Just Punishment: While discipline is necessary, bullies also need emotional guidance, counseling, and alternative ways to express their emotions. Empathy-based programs can help them develop positive social skills and break harmful patterns.**



HOW EMPATHY CAN TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

Empathy isn't just about individuals—it can change entire schools, workplaces, and communities by fostering a culture of kindness and mutual understanding.

- **Promoting Empathy Education:** Schools that teach empathy through storytelling, role-playing, and social-emotional learning create students who are more aware of how their actions affect others.
- **Encouraging Bystanders to Act:** When people empathize with victims, they are more likely to step in and support them instead of remaining silent. Empathy motivates action.
- **Creating Restorative Justice Programs:** Instead of only punishing bullies, many schools now use restorative justice methods where bullies and victims engage in guided conversations to understand each other's feelings and work toward healing.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO BUILD EMPATHY

- **Encourage Perspective-Taking:** Asking students or employees, “How would you feel if this happened to you?” can help them think critically about their actions.
- **Use Literature and Media:** Stories, movies, and real-life accounts of bullying can help individuals see the world through someone else’s eyes.
- **Practice Kindness and Active Listening:** Teaching people to listen without judgment and show kindness in everyday interactions fosters an environment where empathy thrives.





- Empathy means trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes.
- When we try to understand both the victim and the bully, it's easier to see why things are happening.
- It doesn't excuse the bullying, but if we understand what's behind it, we can help the victim better and maybe even stop it from happening again.

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CHAPTER 3:

The Consequences of Bullying



**Filanthi Bampali, teacher,
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Bullying is more than just an unpleasant experience—it has serious and long-lasting effects on individuals, families, and communities. Whether it occurs in schools, workplaces, or online, bullying can lead to emotional, psychological, and even physical consequences that impact both the victim and the bully. Understanding these effects is essential for raising awareness and taking action to prevent bullying.

Pavlos - Thaleia - Nikos

GR



Psychological and Emotional Consequences

One of the most significant effects of bullying is the emotional damage it inflicts. Victims often experience deep emotional distress, which can manifest in various ways:

Low Self-Esteem and Self-Worth:

- Victims of bullying often begin to doubt their abilities and value, leading to feelings of helplessness and inadequacy.

Anxiety and Depression:

- Constant harassment or intimidation can lead to severe anxiety and depressive disorders, making it difficult for victims to enjoy daily life.

Suicidal Thoughts and Self-Harm:

- In extreme cases, persistent bullying can lead to self-harm or suicidal tendencies, especially if the victim feels there is no escape from their suffering.





ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL CONSEQUENCES

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Bullying affects performance in school and the workplace, often leading to long-term consequences.



Decline in Academic Performance: Victims may lose focus, skip school, or drop out altogether due to fear and stress, impacting their future opportunities.



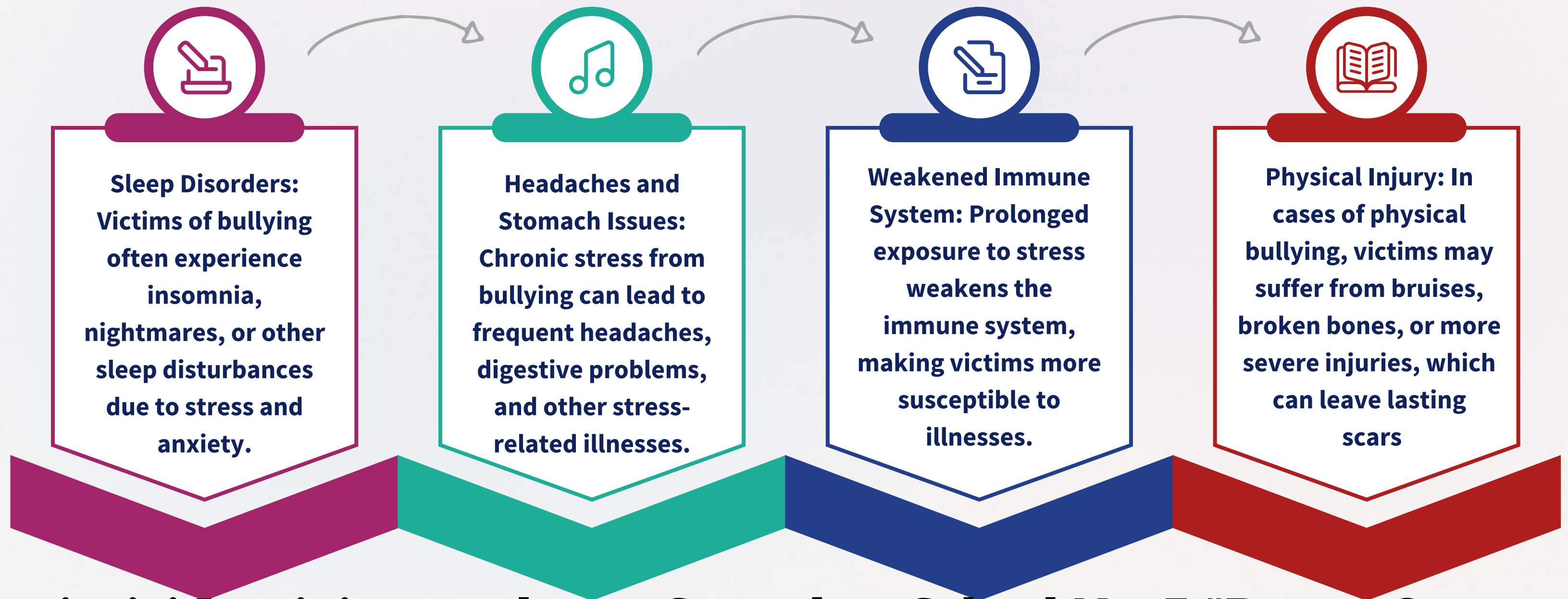
Workplace Struggles: Employees who experience bullying at work may suffer from decreased motivation, absenteeism, or even job loss due to an unhealthy work environment.



Future Career Challenges: A history of bullying (either as a victim or perpetrator) can affect long-term career success. Victims may struggle with confidence in professional settings

PHYSICAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Bullying doesn't just affect mental well-being; it can also have serious physical effects.



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Social Consequences

Social Isolation: Victims may withdraw from friends and family, leading to loneliness and a lack of emotional support. **(Natalia, RO)**

Difficulty Forming Healthy Relationships: The fear and mistrust developed from bullying can make it hard for victims to form meaningful relationships in the future.

Aggressive Behavior in Bullies: Many bullies grow up to struggle with interpersonal relationships, finding it difficult to interact positively with others due to their learned aggressive tendencies. **(Eva, RO)**





Conclusion



Bullying has far-reaching and long-lasting consequences that impact individuals, families, and society. While victims suffer from emotional, academic, and physical distress, bullies also face challenges in forming healthy relationships and maintaining stable lives. The effects of bullying extend into adulthood, shaping future interactions and opportunities. Recognizing these consequences is crucial in the fight against bullying, emphasizing the need for early intervention, education, and supportive communities that foster kindness and respect.

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PRACTICAL EXERCISES TO INCREASE EMPATHIC ABILITY IN CHILDREN





Building Your Emotion Vocabulary



Description:

The leader introduces the exercise by saying that having a vocabulary of words for different emotions, is helpful for making sentences that communicate empathy.

Many feeling or emotion lists can be found on the internet.

Emotions can be separated into categories of pleasant and painful feelings.

For example, pleasant emotions are: happy, excited, peaceful, relaxed, calm, hopeful.

Examples of painful emotions are: fear, anger, guilt, sad, empty, low self-worth, and despair.

An acronym can be used to help remember a list of words.

For example, the acronym FAGSELD is a way to remember the painful emotions listed above.

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



Distinguishing Emotions and Thoughts



Description:

In this exercise, group members are asked to make three sentences beginning with “I feel” followed by a feeling word such as happy, sad, frustrated, or other emotion. Examples: “I feel happy when it’s time to play.” “I feel excited when I get to do math.” “I feel sad when my friends have to go home after visiting.”

More information: Remember that a thought, instead of an emotion, is expressed if “I feel” is followed by the word “that” rather than a feeling word. The phrase “I feel that....,” really means “I think” or “I believe.” If you begin a sentence with “I think” followed by an idea such as “I think this subject is interesting” or “I think this group is fun,” you are communicating a thought instead of an emotion.

Post-Exercise Discussion: What is the difference between a thought and a feeling? A thought is an idea. A feeling is an emotion.

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



Making Sentences for Empathy



Description:

Practice making sentences that communicate empathy using this form and words from the feeling list. Fill in the blanks, followed by checking to see if you are accurate:

"You feel _____ because _____. Is that accurate?" Scenario examples:

Here are examples of two scenarios followed by examples of sentences that show empathy and checking for accuracy.

1. Jill has a frown on her face and says her best friend just moved away. Empathic reflection: "Jill, you feel sad because your best friend just moved away. Is that what you feel?"

2. Dad is very quiet when he comes home from work and says he just lost his job. Empathic reflection: "Dad, you feel worried because you lost your job. Is that what you feel?"

Post-Exercise Discussion: 1. What questions do you have about writing a sentence that shows empathy? 2. Why is it important to check to see if you are accurate?

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



Role Reversal



Description:

In the Role Reversal exercise, empathy skills are increased when individuals are asked to imagine he or she is someone else who will be interviewed in pairs. The group is divided into pairs, and each person takes turns telling the other person basic personal information in answer to a brief set of questions. Then each person imagines he or she is the other person and speaks to the group in the first person as if he or she is the other person. Mary interviews Rosie and then presents herself as if she is Rosie by saying, "My name is Rosie. I am 12 years old," etc. Then Rosie does the same by saying, "My name is Mary. I am 12 years old," etc. Accuracy is important for building empathy skills in this exercise. The following is a list of basic questions for collecting basic personal information: 1. What is your name? 2. What is your age? 3. What is your favorite color? 4. How many brothers and sisters do you have? 5. Where did you go on vacation? 6. What do you like to do most?

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



The following is a list of basic questions for collecting basic personal information:

- 1. What is your name?**
- 2. What is your age?**
- 3. What is your favorite color?**
- 4. How many brothers and sisters do you have?**
- 5. Where did you go on vacation?**
- 6. What do you like to do most?**

DISCUSSIONS

Post-Exercise discussion:

- 1. What was it like hearing your partner speak as if he or she was you? Was he or she accurate?**
- 2. What was it like being your partner? What did you feel or think when you were being someone different than yourself?**

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



Becoming Another Character



Description:

In this exercise, members are asked to break into groups of three to do the following:

1. Write the dialogue for and then enact a scenario for three people: a victim, a bully, and an observer.
2. Each group enacts the scenario three times. Each time the scenario is enacted, each person rotates to take on the role of a different character.
3. After all scenarios are enacted with each person rotating to each role, each person then discusses what it was like to take on the role of each character, what emotions were felt, and what thoughts came up in each role.

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



Post-Exercise Discussion:

- 1. What emotions did you feel as the bully?**
- 2. What emotions did you feel as the victim?**
- 3. What emotions did you feel as the observer?**
- 4. What decisions have you made after doing this exercise?**

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



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"Walk in Their Shoes" - Role-Play Exercise

Objective → Help students understand others' feelings and practise empathy-related vocabulary.

Materials → Picture flashcards (happy, sad, angry, scared, shy, excited), simple situation cards

STEPS

Warm-Up (5 min)

Show emotion flashcards and ask:

"How does he/she feel?"

Review feelings: happy, sad, angry, scared, etc.

Situation Cards (10-15 min)

Prepare simple cards like:

- "Anna has no one to play with."
- "Ben had a fight with his friends."
- "Maria got a good mark."
- "Tom is new in the school."



In pairs, one student reads the card and acts out the emotion. The other says:

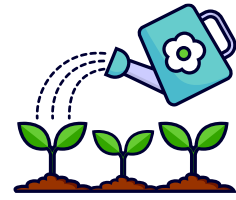
"I think he/she feels ___ because ___."

Then, they switch roles.

Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning



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Class Reflection (3–5 min)

Ask “How can we help someone who is sad?”

“What can you say to a new student?”

“What can you say to someone who is angry?”

“How do you feel when someone helps you?”

“What can you do if you see someone crying?”

! Encourage kind and empathetic suggestions.



Key concept(s)

Activity

Planning