DEPRESSION: MAJOR DEPRESSION & UNIPOLAR VARIETIES

The Long Term Effects of Bullying
Mark Dombeck, Ph.D.

You know how jokes are often funny because they are based in an ugly truth? I had a new realization of that phenomena while watching Bill Maher’s new stand-up comedy special “The Decider” on HBO the other night. Bill was talking about various recent sexual abuse scandals and was comparing the complaints made against Michael Jackson to complaints made against various Catholic priests with the aim of suggesting that what Michael allegedly did to his victims was gentle compared to the treatment received by victims of the priests. Seemingly out of nowhere, he started talking about a time when he was a child and was rather viciously beaten up during an incident of playground bullying. As part of his punchline, he commented that he would have gladly subjected himself to the worst abuse Michael has been accused of perpetratiing rather than having to endure that single beating.

The comment resonated with me, probably because I too was bullied as a kid, and also found the experience to be pretty ugly. I don’t think I’d ever choose to subject myself to Michael’s ministrations in order to have escaped my own bullying experiences (you gotta have standards in life), but I know I would have given a lot to have been able to stop them from happening.

The bullying I was subjected to did not occur on the playground, but rather on the school bus. I can vividly recall days when I would have to launch myself out of the school bus door and run as fast as I could up the hill to the shelter of my house. A group of older neighborhood boys would be after me for reasons that were never entirely clear. I was younger, more
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The experience of being bullied can end up causing lasting damage to victims. This is both self-evident, and also supported by an increasing body of research. It is not necessary to be physically harmed in order to suffer lasting harm. Words and gestures are quite enough. In fact, the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never harm me” is more or less exactly backwards. For the most part, physical damage sustained in a fist fight heals readily, especially damage that is sustained during the resilient childhood years. What is far more difficult to mend is the lifelong wound that bullying victims suffer which is damage to their emotional well-being.

Bullying Causes Long-Term Emotional Damage

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Bullying is Abuse

Here’s a few statements to get us started: 1) Bullying is a form of abuse, and 2) Bullying is a narcissistic sort of act. In making the first statement here, I mean to say that both bullying and traditional forms of abuse are selfish and/or sadistic, destructive, and often violent acts perpetrated upon victims who do not in any way, shape or form deserve to be treated in that manner. In making the second statement I’m suggesting that ring-leader bullies (those who organize bullying) are behaving as though the emotional and physical health of their victims is not important or is at least less important than their own desire for the thrill of aggression and dominance. Narcissists treat other people as though they were objects either to be used, or discarded, and the bully both uses his victim (for purposes of self-gratification and aggrandizement) and then discards him.

Now, children are fairly narcissistic by their very nature. Children are not born appreciating that other people are actually just like they are with their own needs and independent rights. A long period of development must occur before children grasp that the other people around them have needs and interests just like they do and need to be accommodated and accorded respect. The golden rule of treating others as you would yourself like to be treated makes no sense to a young child who has not yet matured to the point where this basic appreciation of the individuality of every person has been grasped. Instead, children need to be held in line with what amount to incentives (and sometimes punishments) for acting as though other people matter. So by saying that bullying is a narcissistic action, I’m not at all saying that all bullies are narcissists. Adult bullies who have not outgrown their childhood narcissism probably do qualify, but little kids are just going to be that way. This is why I’m not terribly optimistic that we can solve the problem of bullying in our time.

There are lots of programs designed to help schools and other institutions prevent bullying. It’s kind of a hot topic these days in a small sort of way. Hopefully the things that researchers have and will come up will help limit the scope of the problem in the future. However, I’m quite confident that it will never go away entirely. It seems to me that bullying is just one of those things that are just a part of human nature. Something that can be suppressed but not eliminated.

Where I want to go with this essay is not to talk about how to make bullying stop, but rather, to explore the sorts of damage bullies do to their victims, and to discuss a few paths through which some of that damage can be, at least in part, undone.

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self-concepts; to their identities. Bullying is an attempt to instill fear and self-loathing. Being the repetitive target of bullying damages your ability to view yourself as a desirable, capable and effective individual.

There are two ugly outcomes that stem from learning to view yourself as a less than desirable, incapable individual. The first ugly outcome is that it becomes more likely that you will become increasingly susceptible to becoming depressed and/or angry and/or bitter. Being bullied teaches you that you are undesirable, that you are not safe in the world, and (when it is dished out by forces that are physically superior to yourself) that you are relatively powerless to defend yourself. When you are forced, again and again, to contemplate your relative lack of control over the bullying process, you are being set up for Learned Helplessness (e.g., where you come to believe that you can't do anything to change your ugly situation even if that isn't true), which in turn sets you up for hopelessness and depression.

At the same time, you may be learning that you are helpless and hopeless, you are also learning how you are seen by bullies, which is to say, you are learning that you are seen by others as weak, pathetic, and a loser. And, by virtue of the way that identity tends to work, you are being set up to believe that these things the bullies are saying about you are true.

It would be great if the average person was possessed of unshakable self-confidence, but this just isn't how identity works. Identity is a social process. Other people contribute to it. Particularly when people are young and have not yet survived a few of life's trials, it is difficult for people to know who they are and what they are made of. Much of what passes for identity in the young (and in the older too) is actually a kind of other-confidence, which is to say that many people's self-confidence is continually shored up by those around them telling them in both overt and subtle ways that they are good, worthy people. This is one of the reasons people like to belong to groups – it helps them to feel good about themselves. Bullying teaches people that they are explicitly not part of groups; that they are outcasts and outsiders. It is hard to doubt the reality of being an outcast and an outsider when you have been beaten or otherwise publicly humiliated. It takes an exceptionally confident (or otherwise well-supported) person to not internalize bullies' negative messages and begin bullying yourself by holding yourself to the same standards that bullies are applying to you and finding yourself a failure. In other words, it is rather easy for bullying victims to note that they have been beaten up and then to start thinking of themselves as weak, no-good, worthless, pathetic, and incompetent. These are the sorts of thoughts that lead to depression, or, if they are combined with revenge fantasies, to anger and rage feelings.

Where the first ugly outcome of bullying unfolds rather immediately in the form of a wounded self-concept, the second ugly outcome unfolds more slowly over time. Having a wounded self-concept makes it harder for you to believe in yourself, and when you have difficulty believing in yourself, you will tend to have a harder time persevering through difficult situations and challenging circumstances. Deficits in academic performance can easily occur when bullying victims succumb to depression or otherwise become demoralized. They certainly also occur when victims ditch school to avoid bullies. The deficits themselves are not the real issue. The real issue is that if deficits occur for too long or become too pronounced, the affected children can lose out on opportunities for advancement and further study, and ultimately, employment. I've read retrospective studies where people report having left school early so as to avoid continued bullying, and this of course will have altered and limited the job prospects they have available to them as adults. Leaving school may be a dramatic (if occasionally realistic) example of how early bullying can affect one's life, but there are surely other ways that anger or depression caused by bullying harms and developmentally delays people's progress.

Inevitably, it is the sensitive kids who get snubbed out for teasing: the kids who cry easily: the
easy targets. Targeted as they are, many sensitive kids learn to think of their sensitivity as a bad thing and to avoid it, and/or channel it into revenge fantasy and anger. This doesn't much work when you are a kid (it is difficult to reinvent yourself without actually moving to a new place), and it can have negative consequences in adulthood when the same children, now emotionally avoidant or angry or cynical adults, find themselves having difficulty entering into or maintaining loving and warm intimate relationships.

A similar form of damage comes when bullied kids internalize negative attitudes concerning aspects of themselves that set them apart from others, such as their sexual orientation, minority group membership, or religious affiliation. In such cases, bullying sets up a peer pressure to reject aspects of one's self which are fundamentally not rejectable, and thus a potentially lifelong tension gets set up inside that person. If anyone out there has a better idea for how someone can end up become a homosexual-hating homosexual, or a jew-hating Jewish person or other seemingly self-contradictory person I'd like to know about it.

The following list, culled from my reading on this subject, summarizes some of the effects bullying victims may experience:

In the short term:

- Anger
- Depression
- Anxious avoidance of settings in which bullying may occur.
- Greater incidence of illness
- Lower grades than non-bullied peers
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings (In one British retrospective bullying experiences survey I came across (of unknown scientific value), 20% of the sample attempted suicide secondary to having been bullied, whereas only 3% of participants who were not bullied attempted suicide).

In the long term:

- Reduced occupational opportunities
- Lingering feelings of anger and bitterness, desire for revenge.
- Difficulty trusting people
- Interpersonal difficulties, including fear and avoidance of new social situations
- Increased tendency to be a loner
- Perception of self as easy to victimize, overly sensitive, and thin-skinned
- Self-esteem problems (don't think well of self)
- Increased incidence of continued bullying and victimization

A few interesting observations of factors that seem to lessen the negative impact that bullying has on people have come to my attention during the process of cataloging the ways that bullying can mess you up. For instance:

**Perception of Control**

A 2004 Spanish college student sample study suggests that there is a direct relationship between victim's perception of control over their bullying experience and the extent of long term difficulties they experience as a result of bullying. This is to say, that bullied students who believed they were able to influence and/or escape their bullies reported fewer negative long term effects from having been bullied than did students who felt helpless to influence their situation while it was happening. Perception of control (and not reality of control) was key in this study, as no relationship was found between the various ways that students coped with being bullied and how they turned out.

I can see the outline of a mechanism working here (where students who believed they still had control over their situations avoided developing learned helplessness and therefore had less of a chance of experiencing depression). However the study doesn't really help us to know what to recommend that people do to lessen their chances of long term problems. Remember, it didn't matter what the students actually did; it only mattered what they believed.

If we go with the idea that believing you have control over events is important then the thing to do if you are being bullied is to keep persevering in your efforts to stop the bullying as though those efforts will result in your being able to get the bullying to stop. No single thing you do may actually stop the bullying from happening, but the effect of continually working under the
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assumption that you haven't tried all options and may still get the bullying to stop may do the trick. And, of course, you might actually get the bullying to stop because of something you do or don't do.

Rather than try to control the past (which is impossible), it might make more sense for hurting victims to get themselves to focus on what they can control in the present, for the benefit of their future happiness and fulfillment. As the poet George Herbert's classic phrase wisely advises us, "living well is the best revenge".

Early Exposure

The age at which kids are first bullied seems to be important according to some research. Young children who are first bullied during their pre-teen years appear to be less negatively impacted in the long term than are children who are first bullied as teens. People first bullied as young children report experiencing higher long-term stress levels than do people who were never bullied. However, people who were first bullied as teens report more long-term social withdrawal and more reactivity to violence than other groups. There is a greater tendency towards the use of self-destructive coping mechanisms in the first-bullied-as-teens group, and an interesting but hard to make sense of sex difference, where women tend to become more aggressive as a result of their bullying experience, and men to demonstrate a greater tendency to abuse substances. I can't help but wonder if the increased independence and emancipation that teens enjoy makes them more likely to experiment with and then get locked into maladaptive coping strategies like substance abuse than their younger peers.

Social Support

Finally, multiple researchers point to the protective effect that a good social support network has with regard to bully victim's short and long term outcomes. Having supportive family members and peers around who can be confided in when one has been bullied and who can offer support and advice tends to lessen bullying's impact.

There are a number of reasons why it makes sense that a supportive social network should help, but one of them deserves to be made explicit. Namely, that when a bullying victim is surrounded by and bought into a supportive social network, they are receiving many positive messages about their worth from network members, and there are thus fewer opportunities for bullies' negative messages to find purchase and grow to take over self-esteem. If bullies can only succeed in harming people physically; if they do not succeed in harming them emotionally or harming their identities, then relatively little lasting damage can be done.

Undoing the Damage

If the primary damage that bullying causes is damage to identity and self-esteem, then taking steps to repair identity and self-esteem are in order for people looking to heal from past bullying experiences. What needs to heal, in most cases, is not the physical body, but rather, identity and self-concept. Bullied people need to learn how to feel safe again in the world (or safe enough). They need to learn that they are acceptable people who have something to offer other people. They need to feel in more control over their moods and urges. They need to feel again that if they set their mind to something that they can hope to accomplish it. These are not modest goals, by any chance, but they are the sorts of things that bullying victims need to think about working on.

I'll refer people to our topic centers on Depression and Anger Management for ideas about how these problems can be treated. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is likely to be of particular utility with regard to depression and anger that is secondary to having been bullied because mood problems that have originated in this way are very likely to have come into being as a result of victims having become convinced that they are worthless and incompetent. In the language of cognitive behavioral therapy, these would be thought of as dysfunctional core beliefs which could be addressed and repudiated using cognitive restructuring techniques that encourage people to closely examine such beliefs and dispute them when they are found to contain exaggerations and distortions (which these sorts of beliefs surely will).

Social withdrawal problems and social anxiety also can be very profitably addressed within the context of cognitive therapy. One of the really nice things about a therapy setting is that role playing can take place between therapist and patient so as to provide anxious patients with opportunity to practice and improve how they will interact in feared but desired social situations. When basic social fears and skill deficits have been addressed, it should become easier for socially withdrawn people to find the connections they need to finally feel fundamentally accepted by others.
I typically hate the overused word "empowered", but I'm going to use it here, because it really fits here. People who have been bullied have been fundamentally dis-empowered. Their feelings of personal safety have been violated and their belief in their own competency and adequacy has been brought into question. Such people may exist in a state of perpetual avoidance and paralysis. In order to feel good about themselves, they will need to break through that paralysis and engage in something that helps them feel like they are gaining in power. Not power over others, but power over themselves. No other people can do this for them. Each paralyzed person has to decide to empower themselves.

There are a million avenues one can go in to fulfill an empowerment goal, the one that is right for any given person being a function of that person's talents and opportunities. Anger can be productively funneled into a competitive endeavor (such as education, business, sports, gaming or some other means of becoming excellent) or a creative expression. Fears can be faced down and courage can be found. I, as author of this essay, cannot offer specifics on how this can be accomplished as the right path for each person will be individual, but I can say that it is more or less as simple as picking out a goal you desire to accomplish (which will assert yourself) and then deciding to make it happen. As with any self-improvement goal, it is good to start small, and to dissect larger goals into their smallest possible elements, so that each step you take on the way to a big goal is manageable. You can read more about this process in our Psychological Self-Tools self-help book.

I'll end here with an appeal for comments and contributions. Have I missed anything important with regard to being bullied, in your opinion and experience? What are your own experiences with having been bullied? How has bullying shaped your life, for better or for worse? What are the problems that you developed as a result of having been bullied, and how have you managed to address them? What messages can you give to young people who are being bullied today. What would you have done differently if you could do it over? The more people who contribute to this essay, the more useful of a resource it can become.

Updated: Jul 23rd 2007

Reader Comments

Discuss this issue with other readers in our mental health support community.

Add Comment

Bullied - Lissa - Jun 24th 2008

I was first bullied in elementary school, in grade 1. I was a small, petite child, and I was shy. From grade 1 to grade 8 and a little in highschool (but not so much), I was bullied, not in the physical sense, but in the emotional and verbal sense. It was hard to go to school, although I knew I had to go to school. There was a big group of people who hung around together (the popular crowd), they made fun of me every chance they could get, it damaged my self esteem, by grade 8 I was constantly thinking of suicide and of murder. I was so enragied. I feel alot better now a days, but I still have lingering feelings of being below others, and feeling inferior. I avoid many social situations, and I have a tendency to be a loner. I love people and I have forgiven those people in my heart, because other wise, I would still have alot of pent up anger. It has effected my social life, and it doesn't help that I was shy to begin with, it runs in my family. I feel stronger and happpier, than I ever have in my life, but I wish for more, and it hard for me to trust people. In highschool (grade 11-12) i would drink alot and smoke pot and in my college years got into harder drugs and drank alot. I'm now a sober person and I go to church, which gives me strength, although its hard for me to go to social functions. I find it easier to talk to older people and younger people. People my age, its harder for me to trust...I wish this soul crushing phenomenon would be irradiated. Why can't we all find the good in everyone and be kind? My belief is the bullies are more screwed up people than the bullied.

Lissa

Bullied For Years - Leila - Jun 22nd 2008

I was pretty much bullied from elementary school(2nd grade-5th grade)on through middle school (6-8th grade) and finally highschool(9-12th grade). I don't know what I would have done if I would not have had my friends and family. I guess in some way I am luckier than...
most. I did not take my anger out on my classmates in a violent fashion and I did not hurt myself, at least not physically.

I do however suffer from bouts of anger that scare me sometimes but I am working through it. I am finally getting myself on track after 10 years. I got my high school diploma through distance education and am planning to take the SAT’s and go on to college. Better late than never.

Cant take it anymore!!!!!!! - Graziella Zahra - Jun 16th 2008

I am a lonely 33 year old women. I was always bullied when I was both in primary and secondary school since I was an ugly ‘duckling’

Can t take it anymore!!!!

Please Help ME!!!!

Thank you for such an liberating article - Sunny - Jun 3rd 2008

I am a 30 year old female. For me bullying started when my 4th grade teacher made an ugly comment about my personal hygiene aloud in class. Every since then, I was teased about that particular incident and any other thing that my classmates could come up with. Before then, I remember having childhood friends, getting on the bus happily and just feeling normal. Right after the “4th grade teacher”, the bullying got worst. Kids would tear at my clothes and throw water on me saying that they was giving me a bath. My body developed early too, so I looked like I was older than what I actually was. I was bullied about that. Kids said that I must have been having sex with older men. Even though I knew this wasn’t true, it was very hurtful and humiliating none the less. While I still had a few friends, even they would sometimes turn their backs on me. I struggled through junior high and high school. I constantly thought about dropping out and I would find the smallest reason to miss classes even weeks at time. I felt ugly even thought others disagreed. I felt worthless, and shameful. I was talented in music playing 3 instrument very, very, well but found that I tried to not play as well as I would have liked fearing that that would be one more reason for kids not to like. There was no one I could go to to talk about how horrible I was feeling. Not even at home because I would get teased at home about being bullied at school. A few time I told my mom but her answer was always, “well, if you had of just done this…… Then……”.

when I graduated high school, I ran. I erased my mind of all the hurt I had and I moved away to the furthest college that would have me as a student. And I hardly talk to anyone that I knew in high school even now that I’m 30. I don’t want to be reminded of how I felt. Even when I see a classmate (bully or not) by chance in a grocery store or something; it is such an awkward meeting for me because, I know that they are saying in thier minds “I know her, she was pathetic in school.

what I went through might seem insignificant to some people who didn’t go throught it. But it destroyed my self-confidence, it destroyed my self-esteem. I have not accomplished what I set out to accomplish as far as an associated in science. I questions myself so badly to the point that I gave up on everything. I questioned friends loyalty, relationships, even family. It’s only been lately that I’ve come to a conclusion that bullying is the reason why I’ve been despessed and without any self-confidence for so long. I avoid all social situations even sometimes my family, my in-laws and the few friend that I still deal from time to time because being reminded or talking about old high school days are very depressing. I am still a hug work in progress and I don’t feel mature like a 30 year old should feel.

however I have a 5 year old and a 3 year old that I constantly encourage and praise so that they could be prepared for bullies because bullies will alway be around. So maybe if the feel good about themselves, bulling by any standard won’t be so damaging.

and also sometimes its not just the kids that do the bullying, you have to be aware of the teachers as well such in my case.

the article on the long term effects of bullying really is my life’s story and I am going to learn from it and gather as much information as I can to repair the damage.

Bullying and Suicide - mira simic - May 29th 2008
My son Duncan died by suicide on March 14, 2008. He was 36. He was bullied from the womb, through his childhood, especially in junior and senior years of highschool, and then when he was trying to get help for depression by doctors. He was an extremely sensitive person, he had all the requisites for a great life, the looks, the intelligence, the interesting, was accepted to Carnegie School of Electrical engineering, but he was unable to finish anything he started. The depression arrested his maturity at a young age, so he was a child's soul within a 36 years old body. He hated himself and turn the anger he felt onto himself and finally found peace by suicide. The bullying is a sociatal cancer. We are all in danger and specially our children from the suffering of individuals who cannot defend themselves and suffer in silence until they lash at sociate and/or themselves. We have to start a turn around of our brain chemistry that could be done by love towards others, education from a very early age, teaching parents how not to be toxic and addressing bullying at school in an efficient manner that is good for the victim as well as the perpetrator who also might be sufferer. This is a big fight that if not organized and carried out could destroy our society. Why let that happen? How many Virginia T'Ecsh shootings do we need to understand this problem of bullying? Please, if you would like to join an effort, write to me and let find a Hillary or Obama or another powerful person to leads us towards a better life for all. Thank you. Mira, a mother whose life has been shattered on March 14.

So its not just me! - Rachael.B - May 29th 2008

i just wanted to say thank you for posting this article, and to everyone else who commented. Reading all of this info has been great.

I dont pretend to have got over everything thats happened to me, but i think over the last few days after reading this article i have done some serious thinking. I have firstly realised that i have probably done more dammage to myself than anyone else has, through negative reinforcement over the last ten years or so. I have made some serious changes to my lifestyle, and my way of thinking, in the hope that i can turn my life around and escape what has been a massive downward spiral. I already feel much more positive, although my confidence is going to need a lot of re-building.

I hope that other people out there will take inspiration from this article and make similar realisations.

You can turn your life around, and do you know what guys . . . forget about them, there the ones who arnt worth it!!!

i was bulled by my own family - - May 28th 2008

i was very young from 4 to 13. it never went away. i have two cousins and a sister, all girls around the same age. except for me i am the youngest by 2 years. they always excluded me in every activity they did, whether it was playing house or just fooling around. i was just "too young", "i wouldn't understand anything", thats what they would tell me. what they didnt know is that they would scar me for life. i have minor depression but it affects the way i feel about them. the way i see them now. today they are just there, i dont talk to them alot, and the dont talk to me either. of course they got excited for me when i got my first kiss, or my first boyfriend, but that was pretty much it. because they wouldnt be my friends i had to make my own, i had imagenery friends, i was extremely shy. now im abit more open, but only about certain things. most people would call me the quietest girl in the class, "i dont make a peep" they say. but inside im screaming, because every time i hear that it makes me remember the past. and i just hate it.

Relationship difficulties - Ashley - May 25th 2008

I've been reading a lot of the comments and I can see that I have symptoms but I could never figure out why until now. I'm soon to be twenty but I struggle with sustaining relationships with friends I guess because in High school I was excluded from a group I used to hang around with. I used to cry myself to sleep. At one stage I wanted to end it all, I wondered why did my two parents have to meet in the first place. I feel my Dad can only contribute negativity to my life and my Brother verbally and sometimes physically bullied me constantly since I was very young. I Can't even look at him in the face, I get the horrible feeling of hopelessness, anxiety and fear when he's in the same room as me.....I feel that my bad relationship with my dad and bro may be having an effect on me being able to have a relationship. I feel that I always make excuses for never allowing a relationship to go anywhere than the superficial stage! It Irritates me to death. If anyone could tell me more about how bullying (social exclusion) can effect relationships!!
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Anger - Karen - May 23rd 2008

I was first bullied at the age of five when I started to wear glasses - just name calling, nothing physical, but I hated the name they called me and always argued back. The situation was at its worse when I was 12 or 13. At that point gangs of up to twenty other students would follow me around chanting the name I hated, and I felt I had no friends at all. Sometimes they would call me names behind the teachers' backs, so the teachers got to think I was crazy when I started to swear at the other kids. I always responded verbally and could never bring myself to ignore them, thinking they had no right to treat me like that. I couldn't understand why they singled me out when I did nothing to them. I had a really hot temper and always took the bait - they even sent me to see an educational psychologist at one point, but that was a waste of time, because the ed. psych. didn't believe what I told them.

I was never one of the crowd. I didn't wear what they wore, I always did my homework and I was small and played the violin. I don't think that my bullying experiences really affected my self-esteem, but they did make me deeply mistrust people. Even now I tend to think that people in the street are laughing at me, and I am a very angry person. If I feel that someone has slighted me in any way I can fly off the handle and be very aggressive, although I would never physically harm anybody.

Bullying is Peer Abuse - Elizabeth Bennett - May 22nd 2008

First off, kudos to the author of this article. The person who wrote this is dead on about Peer Abuse and does not "pussy foot" around the subject like society wants us to. Every bit of what was written I completely agree with. Especially when it comes to those who are more sensitive or are different.

Bullies do this because they can. Nobody stops them. Its done in secret as in any other form of abuse. The threats of telling someone.....what's the difference in this and a child or domestic abuser? It is well documented that these childhood bullies grow up to be these charming abusers. Its high time people stop excusing this and see it for what it is.....ABUSE!

As an Adult Survivor Of Peer Abuse, for 27 years I was subjected to this treatment and it is taking me a lifetime to heal from it. However, I have learned that I am not the scum of society but a good person. I do not listen to any crap from others. Or take it either.

Kudos to the author and please, if you see this occurring anywhere, please report it. Its not just kids stuff but outright abuse. As these bullies mature, they grow worse. Then they filter the workplace. Best to stop them while young and save them from themselves.

Regards,

Elizabeth Bennett

"Peer Abuse Know More! Bullying From A Psychological Perspective"

Big Brother - - May 21st 2008

I'm so glad there are people out there who truly understand that there are lasting effects from bullying even if it's not physical abuse. It saddens me to think that so much of this goes on while the adults who are supposed to protect us as children see it as harmless or as developmental.

From as early as I can remember, I was constantly teased by my older brother. He is eight years older than me and even today, at the age of 26, I get angry just hearing his name or seeing his face. I honestly do not have a single good memory of being around him. Only that I was constantly seeking his approval only to be denied and ridiculed instead. "Toughen up," was the perpetual attitude. The constant torture of being afraid in my own home with no where and no one to run to. My parents still don't see the big deal and don't understand why I became mean spirited. They think that I should just forget it, although my dad has admitted that they should have been around more often during my childhood. I always remember being teased at school too, mainly for having red hair, and later for being too skinny. I became depressed in High School and resorted to drinking at an early age. It is only now that I realize that I'm a "loner" and feel that no one understands me and get so
angry about things that I feel like I'm going to pop, all stem from my brother's need to feel powerful over a little girl.

I really hope that I can someday get over this, but I don't know if it's possible. It brings me to tears to think that a sweet little girl can turn into a lonely mean old woman. People never understand how I can be so guarded but so sensitive at the same time. My miserable childhood has only progressed to a miserable adulthood. I get angered so easily, I'm afraid of being reprimanded at work for no identifyable reason. I'm always thinking that I should be better, stronger, smarter, prettier, have a better, higher paying job...the list goes on and on.

I definitely need to find some constructive ways to cope. I think if he and my parents recognized what he did to me and apologized it would be a start. But until then I just cannot bring myself to forgive.

my thoughts - - May 7th 2008

what is a bully? someone who appears from nowhere as a new face but eventually conjures up fear in the unsuspected. projecting feelings of guilt onto his victims for his own shortcomings and making them feel smaller an smaller. there is a short bracket of time at which you can stand down these neglected children but after that you are trapped and forever there to deal with as they see fit, breathing becomes hesitant, stance is weakened. your own voice sounds unconvincing and not applicable in a court of force. you are irrelevant. you do not matter. you look like a complete failure and everything and i mean, absolutely everything is your fault.

these people are tyrants and not to be taken lightly. they are looking for a friend or an enemy, there lack of understanding and love leaves them to see things in black or white. hesitation is fake. false bravado is fake and leaves them more inspired to knock you down just to prove a point to themselves. to rid the world of all that is not real or find another comrade who understands them.

lack of self respect should never be taken as a consolation to giving the correct dealings of a bully the attention it is required.

good luck. xo

I've been bullied - - May 6th 2008

I'm 14 and I've been for almost 2 years by the same person. The funny thing is this person was my friend at first, and would always make rude comments to me and instead of me ending the friendship I allowed it to go on. So I would internalize everything. This year in 8th grade i realized I cant continue being this person's friend. I just couldnt take the name calling anymore. I thought that would make me happier but it didnt. The person ended up making me more miserable than i was when I was their friend. Everything seemed to be going wrong all at once. I felt like i had no one to talk to and it was to the point where, everyday after school I would go home and cry. I felt so alone. I eventually formed 2 eating disorders. I felt like they were the only things I had control over, but the eating disorders formed deep depression and they just fueled each other. It got to the point where I didnt want to live anymore. Soon teachers started to notice I wasnt myself, and I was very withdrawn. They contacted guidance and I refused to tell them. Finally, I gave in and told them. I felt like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. But things didnt get better soon enough. I planned to kill myself and told my guidance counselor I no longer wanted to live. So they sent me to CCIS. Which is in the hospital, and its for kids who want to or have harmed themselves or others. I was there for days and it was the most strangest place ever. However, the other kids were so nice and supportive, they were much nicer than any of the kids at my school. We could all relate to each other. When I got out I began therapy and she told me I had post traumatic stress syndrome from being hospitalized. The counselors at my school confronted the bully and it has been 2 days and no bullying has occured. It may be too soon to speak though. But, I believe that things will get better. It is harder to say that some days more than others but I have faith. I still struggle with all these problems and I want to help other kids who have the same problems I have. I think bullying is a serious issue that can have long term and even deadly results. It needs to stop. Too many kids have taken their lives over it, but I'm still here and I will not let this bully win. There are days that I still cry out of anger and pain. In this situation excepting an apology would make me the bigger person but that's something I dont think I can ever do. I will never forgive this bully for the hell they put me through and they damaged they caused me. Today I still struggle with eating problems and irritable depression.

I'm now realizing how many of the affects i have - D.J. - May 6th 2008
Im only twelve and have been constinantly bullyed my my brother throughout my life. And it is more than just brotherly stuff, it was as if he was just another kid at school who bullies me. Once I got into sixth grade I started being bullyed there, too. I told on them a couple of times but the school didn't do much and it still contined. Now I'm in seventh grade and my "friend" (he's kind of spineless) hangs out with a bunch of jerks. At lunch nobody really likes me (our grade has two lunches) except him(supposedly). So I hang out with him but all of his freinds just call me "gay" (which I'm not, though I don't have anything against people who are), "fag", "homo", "prick". etc. More than that they say "Nobody likes you" "get outta here, we hate you", and "stop following us around you annoying fag". I'm starting to realize that I'm showing most of the long term signs (and a few of the short term signs, i.e. anger and depression). Now I'm doing a paper on it and I read this article and it really hit home. BULLYING SUCKS AND NEEDS TO STOP NOW!!!!!!!!!

Thank yah. :) - Bree - May 2nd 2008

Thank yah lots. ferr putting this site on herre. i learned alot about it. I appreciate it. Im doin a report on it. and yeha thank yah.

xoxo
Bree :]

long term effects being felt here - Pete - usa - May 2nd 2008

Thank you so much for this article. I am just beginning to come to terms with how my childhood aggressors have effected me into my adult life. at 31 i was recently diagnosed with disthymia which holds a lot of similar symptoms to someone who is being bullied. In elementary school i was bullied a good deal by neighborhood boys because i had an accent, i was sensitive and cried easily. to this day i still feel alienated from society. without identity and powerless, or moreso afraid to change anything major in my life. while it hasn't effected my career, my childhood bullying has effected my relationships with other men (as long as i can remember my friends have been female) my relationships with women as more than friends - inability to fully emotionally commit to someone - and as you can imagine, my general feelings about my own worth. it's horrible, but at the same time comforting to know that i am not alone in this.

how i'm coping with bullying -- May 1st 2008

I'm 17 and I'm still being bullyed verbally. It started when I was 14. I told my parents but they didn't believe me. They ignored the fact that I was being bullyed. They ignored the fact that I was already full of anxiety and hatred each day. There are days when I get so aggressive. I even cut myself thrice. It was so depressing because I didn't get the support that I needed from my family but I found some precious and amazing friends who will support me all my life. I met them on a Christian organization in our campus. They're my Bible study buds. They helped me realize that I am a good person and I am likeable. Also, as I read the Bible each day I realize that I am so blessed and so loved by God so even though my family failed to support me, God never failed to give me the strength and the courage to face my life ahead on. I therefore advise those who are being bullyed and those who are still suffering the long-term effects of bullying to search for Christ.

The Corner - Iain - Apr 30th 2008

Hi All,

I'm not sure of anything. Yet after a lifetime of emotional bullyng. One physical blow that broke my face. A child. In a seatbelt. Two seatbelts plus guardians, backup guardians, and constant scrutiny in the name of the child. Before I could have any concept of language I understood I was in a place danger. Someone elses need. An endless nightmare of being an Adult in a Child's body and mind.Taken from my Mother at five days old (for the benifit of the child) At 54 I just found out the truth. My Mother did want me. Her Father did not. All this time I've battled with how or why I was allowed to be placed with such cruel self serving people. None the less, I achieved what I wanted to. A natural and gifted. Well and good being gifted with the ability to play many instruments. Compose, Record and the toughest one... releasing the bird to fly.

I am lucky and driven by something I do not understand. What I know is this. I am me. I am still standing. I stand on my own two feet in health & sickness. When I find myself spinning. A head so full of characters. Performances, from which it's most important to the mind and body to calm down.
Unfortunately it takes a perceptive and professional mind to help re-establish that which is perfectly settled. Safe. I love to live. Yet people seem reluctant to live up to what strengths they may or may not have. They haven't experienced the "Corner". I prefer these days to see life as a circle. Within the circle are many cycles of disfunction unaddressed, ignored and labelled normal. If you are a child you jump in trust upon a cycle. A life sentence of am I? Safe?

About face.... the hardest action I've made is to have jumped from the corner/cycle. I didn't fall. All I know is if I turn back only to re live the past in my understanding is dangerous. There is always the chance I may be fooled in my open heart. Slowly I'm beginning to see what I have been legally forbidden to see. The change is. I now know what everyone else new. They are now on the war path. Undermining my own child. Dangling carrots in desperate hope that the taste of carrot intoxicates. Leaves me helpless as inside the carrot are carefully placed and accurately timed bombs designed to react defensively if approached. The "Softspot". A terrifying and crippling explosion from within. Placed by those without.

I can see very clearly. The view is a nightmare. I tend to blur the vision. Not turn away. As I need to know that what I see, is in fact there. Yes, regardless of my struggle I have been examined and dismissed. As they now want to return the Pup to the Pound. Damaged goods. All task is that I see clearly. Believing against all odds. I am. That is enough. It's beautiful to say "I AM". then sit and let it go.

Easily said. If you can hope. Then so can I. That makes us a family of sorts. An open family. Until, someone begins to fail. We know how it feels to fail. Be broken. How could any normal? person let a member of the team fail. The Answer?... Very Easily and with a good kick in the head to help you on your way...

Thank you - Carol UK - Apr 30th 2008

Thank you so much for this article, and to all of you who've added your own comments. As so many have said, although no-one would wish this experience on anyone else, it's kind of reassuring just to know that there are people who understand. Through reading all of this I think I now have a better understanding of why I'm the way I am (lonely, single, pretty antisocial, etc etc!), but I'm also tremendously encouraged by all the helpful advice.

I was bullied, verbally, and given the cold shoulder, for 5 out of my 7 high school years. (I was somehow just 'a little bit different'; Aspergers, maybe, or leaning that way? Does this ring a bell with anyone else?) My family was the sort who would simply say 'you have to learn to stand up for yourself', and in any case were going through all sorts of other problems, so I had no support and no-one to turn to. I too tried to emulate Mr Spock by trying to suppress all my emotions, and succeeded to a frightening extent, but alas they don't go away; they just lie buried deep, ready to sabotage you for the rest of your life. So here I am with low self-esteem, like others having done jobs below my ability for most of my life, with few friends because I can't believe anyone would really like me and I find it hard to trust people. I do have a handful of really, really good friends and a loving family, without whom I'd be lost.

I'm middle-aged now and perhaps just beginning to stand up for myself. For the past week or more I've been plagued by daily phone calls from a finance company who for some reason think that one of their defaulting customers is on my phone number. They won't believe they've got the wrong number, and I've felt so powerless that it was pushing me to the edge of insanity, but today for some reason something in me rose up and decided to fight back. I've written a letter of complaint, and had the enormous pleasure of being extremely sarcastic to the young man who called this afternoon - a bravura performance though I say so myself. So I would echo all those who have said: Take back the initiative. Take back the power. It feels so-o-o good. And the younger you start, the better! And Bravo to all those of you who are parents, and standing up for your children.

And I too wish there were support groups of some sort for us survivors.

Editor's Note: Please know that you can discuss the long term effects of bullying in our Support Community's Abuse and Bullying forum.

My story - PK - Apr 29th 2008

I can really relate to you people, and good on you all for having the courage to share your
I was bullied by a group of boys in Years 6 and 7 at an all-boys college. Sometimes it was physical, but mostly it was psychological, until at the end of Year 7 I was effectively ostracized and rejected. I have been angry at my parents, particularly my dad, for sending me to that school, which has damaged my self-esteem and steered a life direction of not reaching my potential.

I have avoided group situations and have friends who are much older than me, another legacy of being rejected by that group of boys in primary school. Older people have more empathy and understanding. I only have several friends who are my own age, but mind you, they're good ones. Everyday I count my blessings.

I'm 34 and it has come to me how much my young life has been marred with anger, resentment, fear and comfort-seeking. While I can't change the past, I am determined to do something about it now that I can. This year is the year I change my life for the better. I have a girlfriend, am studying Buddhism, have a university degree, and I try to get up before 6am. Every day is precious.

I say to the person on this forum who did something about their childhood bullying effects in their mid-20's, about going out and trying different healing paths - GOOD ON YOU! It's great you gave yourself those things. I started at 29, picking up an astrology book while teaching in South Korea. Now I'm back in Brisbane, Australia, where I live, and have been getting some great support by a good friend of the family. My girlfriend is there for me when I need her. She's making me aware of my acute sensitivity, and my aversion to group activities, which come from the school experiences. My challenge is not to lean on her too much, but to work on finding out who I am independently, living independently, while having her there for me, if you know what I mean. Self-nurture.

Bullying has left me with issues to work on. I have come a long way, and have had some great experiences in my travels which have started my healing process. Travel has opened me up and made me feel safe in the world. I am now speaking out about my experiences. The next thing is to get a job which reflects my talents and strengths. While bullying has caused me great setbacks, I feel I can't go down the lone ranger track anymore, and I can't ignore people.

As for the bullies I hope they have learned, or are learning, from their mistakes. I pity the ones that haven't. I wouldn't like to be in their shoes, particularly the ones who may have criminal records, or worse. When we are young, we don't realise the consequences of our actions - not until we're much older. I am still annoyed with the teachers, who as adults, should've done something about it. Unfortunately at my time at the school, which was the mid-1980's, nothing was done. It wasn't until the 1990's, after some brutal bashings, that one of the mothers contacted the media, an the school cleaned up its act.

As I said, I count my blessings and try to put it all behind me. Good luck guys, I hope you can find ways to make your lives better. Every day counts! I'll pray for you, and can you please spare a prayer for me too??

Thanks so much - Sarah - Apr 22nd 2008

I really appreciate this article. I, too was bullied off and on throughout school. The worst was during grades 8-10. I had never really dealt with it and had never admitted to myself that I had been bullied. Today, I was visiting my mom when I saw my old yearbooks. I immediately felt a sickening rush of the old feelings flood over me. I think, that now, at the age of 29, I finally feel safe enough to look back and try to deal with my past. For years I have dealt with extremely low self esteem, problems maintaining friendships, mood swings, depression. I think I understand why now. They stole my identity at an age where I was figuring out who I was. They made me feel ugly, stupid, unwanted, like a failure. Not only kids, even some of the teachers picked on me. I hope and pray that each person reading this article will, with God's help, be able to experience the healing we so desperately need in order to live happier lives.

Long term effects - Lulu - Apr 15th 2008

I was bullied from kindergarten through 12th grade. I was told I was fat, ugly, stupid, had death threats against me and my family. Nobody at the school told these kids to stop even though it happened often in front of them. I am 30 now and have absolutely no confidence, I swing between anorexia and bulimia. I cry at the drop of a hat. I am on a lot of medication...
and see a therapist. I always feel like I am in the way of people and should not be here. I have attempted suicide 3 times in the past 5 years. I can hear their voices and the insults every day. I love animals and have better relationships with them than people. I have surrounded myself with pets and volunteer at animal shelters. They don't bully anyone and they are always happy to see me. It sucks and there should be a better punishment for these abusers.

my ten year old is a victim - jean - Apr 11th 2008

I read your article and it was right on the mark. My husband and I are dealing with it now with our son. It's been months. The school is uncooperative. We are now seeing the short term effects that are heartbreaking. We are seeking outside help. I recently saw the video with the teenaged girls in FL beating their classmate. No matter how much the schools are addressing bullying in this country, it seems to be getting worse and worse. What is wrong with our society and our youth?

Wow right on target! - Maota - Apr 9th 2008

I was bullied throughout my entire middle school year until the 9th grade. It was because of my race. I am Korean and black. Kids in the 6th grade thought I was arabic... yet I looked nothing like an arabic kid. Then when the whole "Osama bin laden" thing happened, I was ridiculed because he was "my father". When I finally blew up on someone who was saying I was arabic... everyone realized. Oh she's ASIAN! The comments grew worse and worse. They would say I was related to Jackie Chan and Jet Lee.

But eventually when I came to high school, it faded away. People didn't no longer make fun of my race but rather praised it because they liked asians. I found it weird because I was never LIKED because I was asian. But this was a high school where no one knew me. So I decided to start over.

I'm very grateful I didn't experience the dramatic bullying others have. I'm also grateful it eventually stopped.

To all of you who has or still is being bullied, there is hope! there's always hope. talk to someone you can trust about the situation!

Still tormented by past - Susan Wilson - Apr 7th 2008

What a wonderful article, thank you. Everyone seems to talk about bully prevention, but no one talks about the long term effects.

I was bullied... no... TORTURED... by a group of girls from 7th grade until I graduated high school. I'm now 50, and it hurts like it happened yesterday. I feel robbed of my teenage years. I never got asked to the prom, and I never got invited to the parties. I was treated like I had leprosy. I had no friends because I was a target, and anyone associating with me would then become a target as well. Girls are cruel.

When I went to college, I couldn't believe that people LIKED me. I was suspicious... why were they talking to me? I unknowingly sabotaged my friendships because I wanted to reject them before they rejected me. After all, why would anyone REALLY like me?

I always felt "success was your best revenge." so I succeeded in my career and in sports, and I made the news. My former tormenters are losers in life, and I'm a big success. HOWEVER... I still FEEL like a failure. I still suffer from poor self esteem. I have never had a successful relationship and am still single because I am so insecure. No matter how much money I make, no matter how many sports medals I win, I still will always "feel" like a failure. My head knows I'm a good person... that I'm smart, kind, and pretty, but I still hear my tormenters over and over and over in my head. Thank you Nancy (the bully ring-leader) for ruining my life.

Long term effect of bullying for me - Mike C. from CT. - Mar 28th 2008

I was bullied on a constant basis from kindergarten until I'm ashamed to say, but my high school graduation ceremony right before the hat throwing. I was made fun of from girls, boys, etc. I'm 40 yrs. old now, and still try to avoid social situations. I'm nervous all the time, and can never just finish anything. I was told I'm ugly constantly while growing up, and to this day, still believe it. I never told my parents until my ex-wife had to tell my mother because I was so sad and depressed I didn't get out of bed for a couple days. No one I think entirely believes I was bullied to the extent that I say. I wouldn't make
anything like that up. It was terrible, I was (and still am) ashamed to do anything, go anywhere, and I prayed to GOD while my ex-wife was pregnant both times, that our children did not have red hair. My children do not, thankfully have red hair. They are beautiful and loving kids. It still infuriates me when someone makes a red hair comment. It’s like everyone sees that and just has to make mention of it. I thought about suicide many, many times. Even had thoughts of what it would be like with out me here. It’s truly a terrible thing what bullies do to people. I really wish I could get better. I still hear the comments, and have several mood swings each day. I know I’m not healthy mentally because of this. I just wish the torment would stop.

I had no idea why he is always angry - Spencer’s Mom - Mar 19th 2008

This essay has been very helpful and understanding what my son is still going through thank you. Spencer would always seem to be the one to get into trouble at school for not listening Spencer has a significantly hearing loss, all through elementary school he was picked on we dealt with it as a family so I thought. I thought he learned how to deal with it even through his middle school years he was always active in sports an very good at them but didn't have many friends and kept to himself, when he would come home from school he pretty much kept to himself he has 3 other brothers one older the other two are younger he always seemed to be mad at the world we would talk from time to time about how he was feeling he seemed to always over come what was bothering him. By the time he was in 8th grade he seemed to becoming out of his shell made some new friends and even became friends with some of the bullies,by high school he turned out to be one of the popular kids I thought he was doing well and all the bad experiences he had growing up were gone I thought. Every once an awhile I would see the old Spencer angry,confrontational with tachers he thought were judging him and then he would be in trouble again an get another detention an I would get a phone call from the principle. The principle would say I dont know whats bothering Spencer, well I heard that for the last time I was going to found out just what was bothering him,he finally told me through tears and anger an yelling I finally got to the bottom of it after all this time I thought he was over all the bullying that he endured in elementary I was wrong he thinks he is a bad child he says he can still hear the voices that bullied him and it makes him cringe an very angry and he doesn't know how to stop feeling this way. He's a junior in high school now very popular has a girlfriend plays varsity football,basketball and baseball he's a very funny kid he can always make me laugh he should be looking forward to graduating an sat's an act's prom an colleges I fear that my son is not going to over come this,when he told me how he was feeling an why he didn't think that I believed him that I thought it was impossible for him to feel this way still even though the bullying had stop even though I told him I did think it was possible. Please somebody help me help my son so he can over come this I just don't know what to say to him. I should of known I'm his mother I feel that I let him down how can I help him. We havn't talked about it since he let it all out 2 days ago an I know that's doing more harm by not talking about it PLEASE help me tody to help SPENCER.

THANK YOU
FROM SPENCER’S MOM
GRETCHEN

I'm keeping your article as a voice for me - mona - Mar 13th 2008

I did not have a label to describe how the kids treated me in Grade 3 when I was 8 years old. It was a grim fact of my life that the kids were being mean to me. There was nothing I could do about it. My parents never knew about it. The only kids I could be friends with were the other bullied kids in the school. I was grateful to have some friends. The following year I changed schools and was happy that the bullying did not start at the new school. I was in the same peer group there for the following 3 years, and I found the leader of the group to be a bully in her way. In order to be included in the group I often had to be a follower yet always under the scrutiny of the leader. I wasn’t able to just be myself like during the summers at camp. Then I realized ‘what many people were like’ and kept learning ways to talk back at anyone who seemed nasty. I am soon to be 50 years old. I have become worse than a bully in how I deal with anyone who is in my way. I have become intolerant of people mainly because bullies were intolerant of me and that’s what is making my life a kind of living hell. I can’t get over the hurt that shaped my young life due to not having anyone to talk to about it and little support. Plus it’s a progressive dis-ease; being a bully. I’m at a place now where I have been so mean and offensive to people, it’s as though I’m acting in a way to have someone take out their shotgun and kill me. That’s what the effects of bullying has done for me.
None* - Mike - Mar 11th 2008

I am only 17 and the bullying happened also from 6-8th grade. people lied to pick on me because I was small and I was nto the smartest kid in our grade. Now I am 6'4" and on "A" Honor role the best thing that was there for me like I had said once in a previous post was my support system. I never went to a counselor or anything like this I just talked to my parents about what happened. they were there for me not with advice but with support. I got through both physical and verbal abuse. The best thing to realize that you do matter to people and what the bullies say shouldn't matter.

Agreed! - United States - Atlantic - Mar 5th 2008

I was persecuted from 12 - 16 yrs...physically and verbally. It was cool for other kids to ignore and ridicule me.

My siblings were all straight 'A' students - I on the other hand was focused on 'getting out' to anywhere! Finally made it to college and from there to a somewhat successful career. I did make alot of friends and I have have good friends and a great spouse.

I have no desire to have children ever. I feel that that may put me back in a place that I do not want to be - I might not take too kindly to my kid being persecuted either!

It takes alot of effort for me to push forward and I do suffer from anxiety and 'second guessing'. I still have nightmares about being back at school...when I meet folks from back then I think I regress and feel panicked.

I am very sensitive to criticism and unwelcome comments - sometimes my reaction can be too strong...using the sledgehammer to crack the nut. I don't like family members trying to 'give advice'...perhaps I think this is a type of bullying...perhaps I'm just stubborn :)

I am always happiest when I make my own decisions (with my spouse of course)

I fight the self esteem issue daily and try hard to cover it up. I work hard not to undersell myself.

My best advice is to try and conquer your fears...hit them straight on. Don't let the bullies win.

You know what they say - If it doesn't kill you it'll make you stronger.

Be your own person and stop looking for the acceptance that you were once denied - it has made my life and ability to overcome bullying much easier.

Thank you for a wonderful article -- Feb 27th 2008

Like so many who have written, I too was bullied as a child. I consider myself lucky, because the bullying lasted from only 6th - 8th grade. But those 2 years changed my life.

I'm pretty sure I was bullied because 1.) I was the smallest in the class, 2.) I had no siblings to look out for me, 3.) both of my good friends moved away the beginning of 6th grade, leaving me with no real allies. The bullying was both physical and verbal. I was often hit, punched, kicked, tripped, had my hair pulled out, etc. Verbally, other students would call me "gay," and wouldn't allow me to sit anywhere near them at lunch (then the lunch monitor would yell at me for not sitting down). Thankfully, once I entered high school I made some new friends and the bullying stopped. I've been able to "move on" somewhat, and am able to function as a pretty happy adult. I am currently seeing a psychologist to try and deal with the remaining lasting effects (mostly anxiety).

I can't even say what my best advice to those currently being bullied would be. While I was being bullied I stayed strong, fought back, and never let them see me cry or weak. It didn't make one shred of difference. For the few times that I did try telling the teacher or principle that I was just beat up, they would only say "kids will be kids" I tried to get my parents to send me to a different school, but the school counselor said that I would only be "running away from my problems" and my parents would be allowing me to "get my way" I can only hope that nowadays bullying is taken more seriously than it was when I was in school.
I would also tell people currently being bullied to please, please. please never give up hope. You will find a place where you belong, and where people will treat you how any human deserves to be treated. For me, I found this in the local music scene. Everyone has a place and a purpose, and you will find yours. As a young person it is hard to explore everything that is out there in the world, but trust me, there is a whole world out there with endless possibilities.

I'll also echo what other people have said regarding support groups for adult survivors of bullying - this would be a great idea.

I know how you feel - Mike - Feb 6th 2008

I know how you guys feel because bullying happened to me you just need to find someone that supports you and let them know what is happening. As long as you can think to yourself this is not going to affect me and you understand that the people bullying are worse off than you are. You have to keep positive no matter what and believe in yourself because no matter what whatever the bullies are saying is not true and if it is something about your physical appearance who cares. Everyone is different noone is normal there is always someone somewhere that will accept you no matter what. Never give up and always believe there is a way out.

--- Jan 19th 2008

Thank you. It seems you can find resources for survivors of just about anything but bullying. Oh yes we hear all about the anti-bullying campaigns, we hear all the time about how bullying is ‘wrong’, but more often than not the long term effects and emotional scars of persistent bullying are downplayed. If anyone out there thinks that bullying cannot cause ‘real pain’ then you have never been bullied.

I am 21 years old.

I've had many bad experiences, my family life was dysfunctional, I was sexually abused by a neighbour from the age of 7–10, yet it's the taunts and jeers of my former classmates that keep me up at night. It's the one issue I can't resolve. As a child I was quiet and 'over-sensitive' (ie. I cried pretty easily). I taught myself to play piano at six years old, I was writing songs by age 8 and by the time I was 11 I was quite the little guitarist. It's one of those things, music is my one and only natural talent, I suck at everything else besides it's off no significance considering how I turned out.

Now? I am a bitter, misanthropic adult, prone to debilitating bouts of depression and self loathing. I am harsh and critical of the people that surround me, I have few friends and little prospects because I dropped out of school at 15 to escape my peers. I struggle with self-harm and panic attacks. Deep down I know I am not completely useless and it's not too late to turn it around, but even now I second myself. I fear failure, I fear rejection of any kind and I just want to avoid it.

I hope I get over this in time :(

Bullying began at home - Jeff H. - Jan 14th 2008

My experience with bullying began at home. My father was overly critical, controlling, dynamic and an alcoholic. He was the bully on the homefront and it eroded my confidence over time. I'm 36 now and still have no self-esteem, confidence, or sense of control over my life. The stance I used to take was to pretend it didn't hurt and pretend I was "tough"...all the while, my insides crumbled.

I was very confused as a child and still am today...why would someone so close to you treat you so poorly? On one hand, I wanted his acceptance, security, love and positive support but on the other hand didn't want to put up with his tyrannical behavior. I let him run me over and have problems with boundaries today...I let him run me over because I really didn't know how to deal with it as a young kid.

There was so much that went into it and it's a complex problem because it is/was a close relative and not a neutral person on the outside of the home. I couldn't just avoid him or dismiss him...I had to live with him and had no escape...there were no relatives that lived close enough that I could run to and live with. Plus, he was the bread-winner although my
mother did work too...he seemed to use ANYTHING he could to gain control over me - play me against friends, control me with money, or use plain force to intimidate.

I didn't defend myself against him, but smiled instead, hoping he would see it wasn't getting to me and stop. This didn't work. I was very afraid of him also...I seen some violence inside the home between him and my mother and I didn't want to play sides or choose between the aggressor and victim because they would both initiate it at times. A very confusing childhood to say the least. I suppose I ended up turning into a peacekeeper of sorts because I grew to hate conflict of any kind and this is coming back to bite me badly as an adult as conflict is unavoidable.

My options were poor when I was a child...but I have a choice today. I can't seem to think straight either...my thoughts seem random, jumbled, etc...and I know this comes from a chaotic upbringing with little stability. And when I run into someone overly aggressive today, I get something like PTSD and just want to plow that person over and squash them to "end the conflict immediately". And I believe this comes from watching his vengeful rages...I feared that he would want revenge against me if I ever crossed him. Not a very good role model.

And this father who drank, bullied, yelled on the inside of the home pretended to be nice, warm, and cooperative to outsiders...it drove me crazy! He wasn't the person he pretended to be on the outside of the home...I feel like I'm going schizo but believe it just dealing with the past. It's hard for me today to think straight, believe in myself, have my own voice (inner), etc...there are so many little nuances and triggers that came from living with him, it's hard to put into words.

And I'm far from being the innocent victim...I used to bully at school somewhat...more of a vengeful bully...that is, if someone said something the least bit disrespectful, there was going to be a fight - no questions asked. And I ended up outright bullying at times, which I hated...I didn't want to be "known" as a bully, so I turned inward...turned the anger and rage inward at myself - at least I wasn't hurting anyone else.

Again, it's so complicated...my parents and sister were all I really "had" in terms of potential emotional supports and for my father to "betray" me by turning against me and bullying turned me inside-out. I think I let him run me over because I had no one else and let him do whatever he wanted to, to me. I never really learned to defend myself verbally because that didn't seem to sink in with him...he's the type of guy who really only learns from physical pain. So, when I was 12 or 13, the confrontation was on!!! - At least I could take some, but also give it back.

Today, I barely have a sense of self or know who I am. My thinking is jumbled and feel I have no control over my life. Hating him is not the answer because I fear that I will take it out on other people also...I think forgiveness, compassion, and understanding is the way to go for me. I need to remember that bullies and controlling people are very, very scared people and not strong or "tough". Later.

My Life -- Jan 4th 2008

I make great first impressions. I'm 29, well spoken, handsome, and in good shape. The problem is when people get to know me they realize there is something seriously wrong with me. I've have never had a relationship with the opposite sex. Being with a prostitute is the only way I can get an erection. I am also a misogynist. Although I became somewhat social in my last year of high school, I now consistantly have less and less friends every year. I trust no one. I haven't worked for almost a year, living off my parents. Before that, I worked for my dad. By the way, I resent my dad for impregnating my mother. I also resent my parent's for not properly socializing me into the world. I have a tremendous amount of anger and hate but no one to channel it toward. Thus, I try to punish my parents for having me by making them miserable. Unfortunately, I don't think I will ever change. I hope my time on earth is short.

Bullying - Em - Dec 26th 2007

I was bullied all the time at school, but it got much worse at secondary school - I was threatened many times, had rumours spread about me, had more names than I want to think about and was isolated most of the time.

I told my teachers but they didn't believe me and one of them started making the bullying worse by drawing attention to the fact that I didn't stand straight (a direct effect of the
bullying). My parents didn't believe me either so I had to 'cope' by myself - mainly done by teaching myself Japanese, smashing people at badminton and avoiding people. I considered committing suicide twice. I felt so lonely and helpless.

I got through college but at uni was unable to keep what had happened at school to myself any more - told my parents and thought that would be the end of it. But all the effects of my 'copying methods' came to light and I struggled the whole time at uni. I got a degree but the grade was nothing like what I know my abilities are.

My 'copying methods' and the effects are still causing me many problems now. I started experiencing panic attacks while at secondary school, and have only recently stopped having these; I also get depressed very easily and my self confidence is very low. I have a dream of going to live and work in Japan, but still doubt how I'll manage if I ever get there. Have been in therapy for over 1.5 years now - even went back to the school where it all happened and was surprised how different it was - but the recovery is nowhere near complete.

I think parents need to know that the phrase 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words can't hurt me' is not true, and that just because they think something shouldn't hurt they doesn't stop it hurting you. And schools should accept that there is a problem of bullying in schools. I get really angry sometimes and wish had more support. But one day I will make my dream come true and start my life again in Japan.

I feel more in control just from reading the essay - Matthew Kendell - Dec 1st 2007

Hello Mark,

Thank you for you enlightening essay. I can truely connect with many of the points that you have made.

I was born in Egypt and moved to England at the young age of 10 due to parental divorce. I began being bullied when I entered the last year of primary school. I think the children who bullied me somehow felt threatened by my foreign status and by the fact that I had only joined the school in the final year. I was punched a few times in the stomach. But physical pain, as you say Mark, is not the problem - it was the verbal abuse that destroyed my self-esteem. The constant attack of my race, and name made me feel inadequate, out of control and scared. When I was in Egypt, I had never stuttered, but when I started going to primary school, I suddenly could not respond to the teacher at morning registration. Being unable to say 'goodmorning Mrs Bedo' in front of a whole class in the midst of being bullied is probably one of the most frightening experiences I have ever had. Every morning I would worry to death about stuttering at registration and being victimised again.

Mark you are right when you say that bullied cannot be completely solved. Punishing the main line of attacks by schools but this is counterproductive. It just makes the student more rebellious and more judgemental. There has to be preventative measure right from the start. Surveilances need to be set up to identify potential bullies and potential victims. The earlier you detect a problem, the less damage will have been done. However this requires the input of teachers. Im afraid my primary school teacher did not notice most of the time and neither did my secondary teachers.

The parents of bullies also need to be educated. Yes children do have somewhat underdeveloped emaphetic skills, but there is a spectrum and some children far worse than others. These children probably come from hostile, destructive families where love is at sparse. Parents also need to be educated.

So yes the bullying continued in secondary school and certain times I was afraid to leave my house. My school was 7 miles away and one day, my mum gave me a lift, but I was so anxious that I as soon as my mum left me for work walked home. I suppose this scenario is an examplar of my tendencies to walk way from stressful situations.

I am 25 and have never had a girlfriend to shout about. I simply do not have the confidence to ask a girl on a date and do not have the confidence to hold the relationship. This causes me great social anxiety when I see my friends doing the opposite.

My school grades suffered as a result of my constant anxiety and poor stress tolerance and lack of motivation. Eventually I was diagnosed with ADHD. I do not think it is ADHD per se.
I have all the symptoms of ADHD but they are caused by my anxiety, lack of self esteem and confidence and lack of control. I am NOT taking drugs.

All I can say is that my bullies destroyed my mental health. A year after I left school, I found out that one of my bullies died from a drug overdose. Unfortunately I showed no remorse. I regret it now but at the time I said 'he had it coming'. On numerous occasions I have even visualised myself gaining revenge on them through torturing them.

I am beginning to find a way back to optimal mental health through Cognitive behavioural therapy, hypnosis, affirmations, neurofeedback, meditation and educational/professional achievement.

Dont let the bullies beat you.

hey NK - healthynut - Nov 25th 2007
Hey NK - good for you for having the brazen courage to even recognize that anything happened in your life. You will GET STRONGER AND BETTER day by day! stay real - stay moral - help others - heal and look for the truth in everything! peace

Bullying - Dave - Nov 24th 2007
I too was bullied for a few years from about grade 5 to grade 8. It was mostly verbal, sometimes I would build up the courage to mouth back but usually got my ass kicked for it. The school bus was the worst, i was told where to sit, had things thrown at me and the whole bus full of kids would chant out names directed at me. Most of the kids went to a different highschool, so highschool wasn't to bad as far as getting picked on. My main problem was social anxiety, whenever attention was turned to me I would experience panic. My face would go red, my heart would pound my voice would shake. This really affected my grades as you can imagine, I would not participate in any discussions and refuse to speak in public. In my mid twentys I knew I had to correct this problem and found many resources that helped, such as hypnosis, NLP, sedona method, yoga, meditation, spirituality you name it I probably tried it. And you know what, they worked. Today I'm 32, athletic, married to a wonderful beautiful women, I'm back in university studying psychology and I'm very positive about my future. In some way I wonder if the universe presents certain obstacles in your life only so that you can grow from them. Maybe just maybe everything in life does happen for a reason. Maybe those bullies in our lives were sent to show us how NOT to treat others and to have love and compassion for others. Persevere in your efforts for healing and forgiving. Not only for those who bullied you but yourself for being bullied.
	hank you for a detailed look into the effects of bullying - - Nov 18th 2007
In the 70's bullying was completely acceptable and considered normal.

I agreed to allowing the boy who lived next door to me to pimp me out in order to avoid his bullying (he controlled all the children in the neighborhood). I was quite young and really did not know much of anything about sex but he showed me what to do (blow jobs). My parents refused to believe me. I was grateful that the bullying stopped and didnt care what I had to do I was so relieved. Of course then I was called a whore...all at around 9-10 years of age.

This occurred in the most "normal" Midwestern middle class suburban neighborhood anyone could imagine- no poverty, no desperation, no gangs, etc.

Finally! An explanation to why I've felt this way all my life - - Oct 21st 2007
After 25 years I finally found the courage to finish college. I was finally able to identify the reason for my procrastination as the years of bullying I received in school. Walking on campus for the first time made me physically ill. Now I know why. I grew up in Oakland, and by the late 60's I was one of only a handful of white children in my school. The Black Panther movement was at its height and violence was erupting all over. When Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed, the physical violence against me began. I was constantly kicked, shoved, knocked to the ground. The walk to and from school seemed like miles long. The time on the school ground was endless. I ended up missing the last three weeks
of third grade. I didn't know what suicide meant back then, but I knew I didn't want to live life anymore. My father was an alcoholic, my mother addicted to tranquilizers, and my only sibling, an older sister, was already exhibiting signs of clinical depression. There was no one to turn to. The teachers saw first hand what was going on, but turned a blind eye. When we finally moved away to another city, the opportunity to reinvent myself was lost. By then I was incredibly overweight. Something new to be picked on for. By the time I was in my teens, I had begun the diet merry-go-round. My self esteem never improved. I ended up getting married to a man I knew for three weeks. He was so good looking that I couldn't believe he would be interested in me. Maybe I got married so quickly because I thought he would soon move on to someone more worthy than I. What I ended up with was another bully. He turned out to be just as emotionally and verbally abusive as any of my childhood tormentors. It took me 10 years to work up the courage to leave. All my life I had dead end jobs. Although I was incredibly bright and got straight A's, I always felt inferior and worthless. When I finally got up the courage to change jobs, I ended up with a supervisor who herself was a bully.

I am now 46 years old. Only now am I beginning to see myself for the wonderful person that I am. I am taking my last class now to complete my degree. While doing research for a paper I have to write for class, I ended up on this website. Our text is about Multiple Intelligences. As I began to read through the book, I kept telling myself that I wasn't good at anything. After a month of introspection, I realized how I never had given myself credit for everything I have accomplished. The thesis for my final project will now include how the effects of bullying are life-long.

Thank you for this article, and the opportunity to share our stories.

Power from within - Dave - Oct 21st 2007

Hi Im Dave from the uk i went through years of being bullied at a private school in the uk a terrible time all alone no one at my side........my family life lacked love.

It was through sport that i found my wings.......Cycling saved my life I fought on the roads night and day all the Anger within me......I became a national champion.

But the hurts stay and reading this on this day in London i notice self destruction still plays too much of a part within me........I still ride now in fact im a elite athelete..........thsi essay makes me sit up these things have no part in my life any more

My advice ids find somthing annything u are good at.......it will be likea Angel at ur side

Any through Cycling and a close freinds family did i pull through Im proud and strong at my best thats the way I will live the rest of my life

Take the power back

Good luck guys

- - Oct 12th 2007

Hi, Im nearly 18 and have been bullied pretty much from the start of high school (age 11). It was only ever verbal, you know, a nasty comment practically everyday, but as you said in the article, I would have much rather it had been physical as then It would heal quicker. Id say Its left me pretty messed up, I suffer from periods of depression, panic attacks and feelings of inadequacy. Theres not really alot young people can do when they get bullied, I know theres the age old “tell someone” advice, but Its absolutely pointless, nothing Is ever done. Its a sad fact that there is no actual law on bullying, despite the evident damage that it causes.

Unfortunately, I doubt there will ever be a society without bullying, Its just the way it is. There will always be a weaker and a stronger party; those in the position to take advantage of their “power”.

My 3 1/2 year old was bullied... - A Mom - Oct 5th 2007

Bullying starts YOUNG. I put my daughter in a local YMCA preschool in Nothern New Jersey and there was a five year old girl, MORGAN, who started bullying my daughter from the first day. My daughter was not even 3 1/2 at the time. My daughter only went twice a week for a few hours. Once I realized what was going on, I pleaded with the teacher to help, but after many pleadings and no action being taken by the school, I removed my
daughter from the school.

Though, I also had her signed up to go to summer camp there. I asked her teacher if Morgan would be at summer camp. She said no, so I felt safe in having my daughter there for camp. She did not have the same lead teacher as preschool, who is basically a teacher with her head in the sand who did absolutely nothing.

You can imagine my surprise when on the first day of Camp, there was MORGAN in another classroom upstairs. I told her teachers that I did not want morgan around my child. Little did I know that I was talking to an absolute “shell” of a human being who told me what I wanted to hear, but again, did NOTHING. I pleaded, I begged, I spoke with the executive director, I spoke with the director -- all she did was try to figure out the point of view of the teacher -- really helpful.

Luckily, my daughter had minimal contact with Morgan; a shared playground a few times a week. But this was enough. Morgan stole her ice cream, Morgan taunted her. Morgan wiped her fingers in her own vagina and held them up to my daughter's face and said, “SMELL!” This kid is sick!!

I complained and complained and complained. Then the teacher said to me, Listen we have 17 kids and only two teachers, we can't keep Morgan away from your daughter.” Well, ever see a volcano erupt? That was me. I laid it into that totally moran of a teacher. It was then I relayed the VAGINA story to him and FINALLY, I got some action. Morgan was not allowed to approach my daughter anymore.

But the damage had already been done. And it’s been three months since my baby has seen the dreaded MORGAN and she talks about her nearly every day. My daughter has also taken on the personna of Superman and now wants to be a boy. I assume because she sees boys as bigger and stronger, so this is how my precious beautiful girl is trying to cope with the lack of protection she felt due to Morgan and a bunch of coward teachers who refused to take responsibility and pretended there was no problem.

To help her cope when she talks about Morgan, I have told my daughter that Morgan is such a bad girl that Santa has crossed her off his list and she won't get any presents this year. I have told her that Morgan is not allowed to have any fun and must stay in her room alone with no toys. I have told her that no one likes Morgan and Morgan has no friends because she is so mean. My daughter enjoys these stories and wants to hear them over and over again. Of course, I NEVER bring up Morgan. She does, nearly every day. I also told her that her teachers had to go to "time out" in the teacher's room for not listening to Mommy and Daddy when we told them to keep Morgan away. They got in BIG TROUBLE, we tell her. Again, she wants to hear this story over and over again.

I am thinking of going to a psychologist for advice on how to best handle this. Please...if any of you can offer any advice, I'd so much appreciate it. My baby is only 3 1/2 years old.

Question: why didn't I remove her from camp? Except for the minimal contact with Morgan, she was having a fabulous time. She made new friends and would have been broken-hearted, and very bored if I removed her. Also, all the other summer programs were booked, so it was either this or nothing.

Thank you.

Me too! - Patti - Sep 25th 2007

This is the first article I've ever read that reminds me of my childhood bullying experience. All my life it seems like I've suffered from low self-esteem, lack of goals, not working to my potential, loner-ism and so on. I was diagnosed with dysthymia in 1988 and have been on medication ever since.

Reading this article makes me wonder just how much of my problems can be attributed to the bullying I experienced. The dreaded MILDRED MCKINNEY! ! ! ! my nemesis! I don't know what her problem was but she made my life a living hell. I don't know at what age it started or when it quit (if it ever did). We moved away from that town when I was in the middle of 8th grade. I think I've blanked a lot of the misery out but can remember some specific episodes. She was a group leader and when she would tease me, so would the others. I don't remember why she did it - I don't think I looked all that different - my
The Long Term Effects of Bullying

weight was not an issue - maybe I cried easier but I don’t remember. I just know I have never forgotten her or the feeling she inspired in me. I remember also how I was always chosen last for any team sport (that I was FORCED to participate in) - again I don’t remember why. Was I clumsy, awkward, a bad player? I don’t know - I just remember a teacher saying “come on now! Someone’s got to pick Patti!” How demoralizing was that?

Later, in another school, I hung out with a bunch who went to the trees and played Star Trek during recess instead of doing team stuff (finally they didn’t force us). I was always Spock and somewhat of our group leader (the geek squad?). Did I admire Spock for his ability to shut off emotion and pain - who knows?, sounds plausible.

Mildred was there throughout my childhood from 2nd grade to 8th as far as I can recall. I wish I could remember more about it all. I wonder if hypnosis really works?

So anyhow, I’m looking into the therapy idea but if it costs much I won’t be able to do it.

Thanks for this opportunity to vent.

- Nk - Sep 25th 2007

Wow! I sit here reading this essay with tears in my eyes my heart pounding, bile rising in my throat thinking that I’ll never find the real me ever again. what the hell hell happened how did I allow this to happen to me. I wasn’t bullied as a child my experience happened 3 years ago and I no longer function with my family, at work or socially, I have to take medication to be able to cope on a daily basis, I could never have imagined that another person could inflict so much harm to another human being. Everything you talk about is so true it’s scary. It sounds silly but it’s good to be able to see that their are people who unfortunatly really understand what happens to you. it has made me feel not so alone.

- Someguy - Sep 17th 2007

My chronic bullying experiences at school and a messed up family life with an alcoholic father led to me having traits similar to post traumatic stress syndrome or borderline personality disorder.

It took me a long time to realize that my adverse personality traits were ‘not’ biological, but rather from abusive black and white perceptions other people would inflict upon me, associated with their inability to regulate their emotions. If you’re in an environment that is abusive, IE bullying, it reverberates upon you negatively....especially when you’re young and you’re apt to think that it’s ‘normal’.

When I was younger I use to studder, have anxiety attacks and feel empty inside.....a form of dysthymia. Now, I’m just angry, not all the time mind you......I would like to think that is a natural conclusion?

I had a neighbor yell as his daughter that she was an e’n cunt. Then I would go to school and put up with all these neurotic bullying kids. Do you see the connection?

I repeat I have a facial paralysis, and for some reason that warrants contempt.....especially in childhood. I think people should reevaluate their motives because for some reason insensitivity is becoming standard.
Moving on - V - Sep 15th 2007

This article hit everything I've ever felt and is a huge wake up call about the long-term effects of bullying that I have not even considered. My negative thoughts about my self-worth, why I avoid relationships, why I never feel close to friends and, unfortunately, a lot more have been influenced by something I thought I buried.

I recently had a strong emotional reaction when my 20th high school reunion was announced. I initially dismissed the event as irrelevant. I don't spend any time thinking about the high school or any other school experience. When a high school friend called to talk about it I was surprised by all the negativity that came out of me. I never expected that reaction and now I realize that the bullying experience had more of an effect on me than I care to admit.

Thank you all for your comments. I too relate to continually seeking jobs that I am overqualified for, avoiding social situations and not trusting people. I still struggle with depression and anxiety.

All I can say is I am saddened by how I let them change me. I have new personal and career goals I'm working toward. I have resolved to not let the bullies take up anymore space in my head. They've had enough. I don't want this to go on any longer.

My advice is that if you are bullied tell someone, anyone that will listen. Don't let anyone dismiss your feelings. They are completely valid and don't feel ashamed or embarrassed. It's not your fault. You are strong for surviving it.

Effects of being bullied - - Sep 9th 2007

Because I was an obese child, I was bullied mercilessly in elementary school. I was also exhibiting symptoms of depression, and cried quite a bit. My parents were no help—they told me to simply ignore my tormentors (how do you ignore someone who is torturing you?) If I tried to defend myself I found myself slapped down by those in authority. I quickly learned that it was my lot in life because I was inferior, mainly because I was overweight.

I was a brilliant and precocious child academically, but my achievements were overshadowed by the fact that I was considered an easy target.

Now, at age 40, I am still struggling with feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, shame and loneliness. I have had difficulty finding and keeping a job. The jobs that I have held are way below my abilities and education level. I simply do not have the confidence to search for greater opportunity.

I've been in therapy for several years, dealing with the issues I can trace directly to the bullying (including body image—I suffer from bulimia.) I do not have children, mainly because I fear that my clinical depression and weight issues would be passed on, and they would suffer the torture that I did.

Justice Helps in the Healing - - Sep 1st 2007

Being bullied is no life for any man or animal. I take extreme pleasure when bullies are put in prison and remind them tactfully when they get out so they can keep walking.

3S and still not recovered - - Aug 23rd 2007

Thanks for the article. I haven't found much on the internet on adult survivors of bullying. What I have read seems to downplay the impact on survivors. I am presently trying to get some counseling to help me reach my potential and become capable of having a long term
relationship. I was bullied from kindergarten until I graduated from high school. I am still a loner and don't have any close friends in my generation. I am incredibly critical of other people. If I want someone to be my friend and they begin showing an interest in me I start to see their faults and back off. I identify myself as a loner and I choose to find support for this belief. It seems logical to me that my behavior would be the result of the bullying I experienced growing up.

**Finally - - Aug 18th 2007**

It is finally nice to realize that I was not the only one to suffer bullying. I always thought that I was the only one and alone, and I am still young. I was one of those who was bullied from Kindergarten to senior year in high school and it was a daily routine, and sometimes more than once a day. I learned early on that no one would support me as my mom got sick of hearing me talk about it and I got in trouble once for trying to defend myself. I learned to silently suffer, as I believed that no one would believe me nor would anyone listen to me. I felt I had no where to turn, so I turned inward and silently suffered under a "false" steel wall I made to protect my sensitive insides. I received teasing ad taunting daily for my weight, for looking different, and other things. Everyone teased me, but no one more so than the bully of the class who made herself leader of the class because she was older than most of us. She made my life miserable, with teasing insults and later it did get a little physical, but most of it was wearing down myself esteem. I chose to rebel and make my self hurt me in order to survive. I did not have the opportunity to leave my horrible situation until I finally went to college, but my internalizing of all that I went through has made my life difficult to deal with. It is so hard for me to be confident in myself. I try and I try and yet when something goes wrong, my confidence shatters like delicate glass, and it takes quite a while to rebuild. I am continuing to struggle with what happened and have had one year of counseling, but it was only enough to reopen the can of worms. Now I am so confused what I should believe or do. I will say that I am glad to know that I am not the only one to have suffered bullying, it does not make me feel so alone and forlorn.

**Finally I found some answers to my questions! - - Aug 16th 2007**

Dear Mr Dombek,

Thank you very much for writing this essay! I have been searching the internet for answers for several years (too embarrassed to try the library ...) but there is next to nothing written for adult survivors of childhood bullying (at least that I have been able to find). This essay gave me some of the answers that I have been looking for. It feels great to know that it's okay and normal not to be "over it" yet, even though it's been 12 years now since I left school. Twelve years - and it still hurts SO MUCH! But I also learned from this essay that I'm actually doing very well! I have completed higher education, and I have managed to get married and have children - that's actually a great achievement, I see now! Knowing this made be feel great.

To those who are currently being bullied: PLEASE ASK FOR HELP! Don't be ashamed! It's not your fault! My biggest mistake was to hide it from my parents that I was being bullied - please don't make the same mistake as I did!

**Answers - Truth - Aug 8th 2007**

Thank you for the article. It's true... all true. The bullying that I received as a child has left feelings of inadequacy, mostly relieved by cognitive therapy (a wonderful perk of college life). It's not perfect, and I'm still prone to depression... I'm on preventative antidepressants. I'm down at the moment because I'm looking for employment... another symptom.

While I'm at it, I want to mention the other side problem: shame. In my recent "Human Development" class, I learned about the Erikson stages of development. The school-age one, Industry vs. Inferiority, was "unsuccessfully resolved," leaving me with a certain lack of ambition. This is compounded by the feelings of inadequacy that do tend to pop up from time to time like a doggone whack-a-mole. It would be fabulous to have a nice rubber mallet to beat them with.

I also wish to offer a secondary look at bullying, more common among females: pure and simple rejection. I had no friends at all throughout my childhood, and I remember with unabashed joy the feeling of having a place saved for me at the lunch table for the first time. I was in 8th grade.
I'm completing my training as a special educator. I now understand that some of the rejection I faced was a result of my own poor social skills. I am, unsurprisingly, dedicated to and passionate about teaching my future students good social skills.

This article has helped to clarify and pinpoint my own personal demons before I try to help others with theirs. Thanks.

**Bullying Doesn't Stop in Childhood - Someguy - Aug 8th 2007**

I know a woman that is hiding from her ex-husband because he's a control freak with anger management problems. I can tell her mind is racing do to the trauma he has inflicted.

Imagine what this guy was like as a kid?

We seem to be in a society that admires aggression, but pays little attention to its psychological affects. We have a school shooting televised every year, and yet we always seem to be in denial of its causes?

**Thank you for addressing a huge problem in our society - Pam Moore - Aug 7th 2007**

At age 13, I was assaulted by five girls all at least a year older than myself. I agree completely that these incidents leave a lasting effect on one's social and personal development. Also I feel strongly that having a supportive background (someone to dispel the negative feelings) has a tremendous impact on how one recovers from the abuse. Sadly in my case, this was not so. I have, however been in continuous therapy for three years (cognitive behavioural therapy) which has helped immensely. I also take meds--cymbalta and wellbutrin xl--which have helped correct chemical imbalances. I feel that until some realistic and readily available solution is found, bullying will continue unabated, regardless of how many programs or “zero tolerance” policies are in place. Thank you for this opportunity and God Bless You.

**You're right !!! - dna - Aug 5th 2007**

You're very correct when you say "I believe that 'bullying' is what contributes to a lot of our personality disorders......such as Borderline, Antisocial, Paranoid and what have you."

And making good relationships can heal those "disorders". It's too bad you haven't been able to do that. I hope you try to trust someone enough to form a lasting relationship.

**Fundamental Disempowerment - Isabella - Aug 1st 2007**

Everything in this article really resounds within me...

I was lost for many years due to being a victim of bullying and a chronic lack of acknowledgement and support in my home environment. I am woman, around 4ft 8” in height and I never really grew after the age of 11. I was overprotected by my mother from a very early age and to a great degree smothered with love and I never established my own concept of myself. I remember many times trying to express my feelings of being different and 'not as good as everyone else' hoping that somebody would want to listen and maybe even support me and help me find myself. I had limited access to non-family members and I found it hard to relate to anyone. Firstly I had trauma from being bullied by my parents into stopping sucking my thumb at age 6/7 and among other things I was subject to my maternal aunt and uncles quasi religious ravings about veganism at the age of 7,8 - that was infact whilst I was eating meat at our own dinner table! After that particular trauma I stopped eating and my dad shouted at me and forced me to eat meat - leaving me with a strong sense that my feelings were irrelevant. I was then bullied numerous times and by numerous boys at school - I think because I was successful academically, as well as giving off that emotional vulnerability bullies seem to thrive off, and as such stood out in more than one way. I can relate to everything in the section about the long term emotional damage of such events. To survive my childhood I began denying my feelings and living purely in my intellectual side. For example trying and failing to rationalise the actions of the bullies both adults and children - but most of all adopting the 'rules', the shoulds, the musts and other limitations of my parents. Thinking that would bring me closer to obtaining love - something I felt I was dying from the lack of. To look at things as I left my teenage years you would think I was fine, normal but I had just managed to turn around my A’levels from near failure, and a failed relationship in my first year of uni resulted in panic attacks so much so I couldn’t sleep or eat or do anything. Now I realise I had pinned so much on being ‘rescued’ from this trapped world of living by my parents limitations and so much so I had perpetuated those limitations so I was in effect trapping myself. I felt anger and
frustration but had no way of expressing my true feelings. This cycle continued throughout
univ, my teaching qualification, my life as a teacher and I had many instances of panic -
where my mind and body was shrieking YOU CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS. This is the worst
feeling ever - you are to all intents and purposes LOST! So lost from yourself - which is the
thing that matters the most. Even now as I write this I can go to that awful, judgmental
and terribly unsatisfying place and I am only just beginning the path to getting out of it. I
have been seeing a psychologist for several weeks now and I finally feel, with the love of
my partner, that I can take that control that the article mentions. In fact me writing this
is the beginning of that process. I want to take a stand and get my story out there. As
you say in the article evidence (the study of spanish students) is showing it doesn't matter
what the true situation was, or what the students did, it mattered what they BELIEVED.
Only with love and support can someone who is fundamentally disempowered begin to
heal. I want to help anyone I can by sharing my story. There is hope. Listen and make
time for your feelings.. people might not have thought you were worth it before but you
were a child then and you were powerless. Now you are an adult you don't have to be
trapped anymore.

Let's Get Specific.... - Someguy - Jul 26th 2007

I have a facial paralysis.

Do you really think I was treated well by my peers? Preadult behavior is very much like
something out of 'Lord of the Flies'. If you're perceived as being weak and undesirable then
that warrants 'contempt'.

Hey, I knew a 'teenager' from 11th grade that had a cleft pallet and a speech impediment
that dropped out of high school. Now why do you think he dropped out?

I think contempt is the visible emotion that is above the underlying currents. I think the
underlying currents consist of 'being in control' at the expense of others. And it is
narcissistic

I grew up in a school system that gives accolades to sports and aggression, and little
merit to intellect. My facial paralysis caused emotional discomfort do to constant questions
that eluded to opinions that there was 'something wrong with me'. Because of the constant
pecking, I felt I was worthless. When you feel worthless, you don't feel you have the right
to be aggressive. When you're not aggressive, you're less likely to excel at
sports........And would anybody take an interest in me and help me? Nooooooo. I was
set up for failure in my own school system and neglect from my family to my special
needs. Well, how many people do you know with a facial paralysis?. This Spartan mentality
lead to my ostracizing and contempt by my peers.

I simply accepted that this is way it was. Keep in mind I was still a child. As a child
you're taught to accept things as they are, and not to think for yourself. That is where the
group mentality plays in.

I guess in order to recover from bullying, you have to recognize the absurdity of human
behavior. To this day I have never been married and I am struggling to achieve recognition
in a career.....I still feel worthless.

I've surfed 20 foot waves, I've hiked to the top of 12,000 foot mountains....and yet I still
feel worthless. Y'know, people are a'holes. How's that for human absurdity?.......well, I'm
expressing 'contempt'. That's what people did to me, so I'm throwing it right back at you.
And if you reply with contempt to what I just said, then you're just perpetuating the
absurdity of human behavior.

I believe that 'bullying' is what contributes to a lot of our personality disorders.....such as
Borderline, Antisocial, Paranoid and what have you.