

# BULLYING

Most kids get picked on at some point when they are growing up. The danger is that in some cases name-calling and teasing can turn into harassment, and escalate into violence. Growing up is hard enough without being emotionally or sexually harassed, or the victim of physical violence.

Children and youth that bully other students are equally at risk, not only because they are often the victims of bullying themselves either at school or at home, but because they think that getting what they want in life, means hurting other people or pushing them around.

Children and youth that engage in bullying behaviour don't necessarily lack confidence, but they have not learned to respect other people, and may have learned to think that being cruel to other people is fun. This attitude is not going to work for them as adults, and children and youth that think it is fun to hurt other people better start learning to think of other people as human beings if they want to carry whatever self-confidence they have into their lives as adults. Bullying behaviour can be extremely dangerous, and can have consequences that most people would have trouble living with.

## Bullying Kills!

The tragic reality is that children or youth can die, or be severely injured as the result of persistent bullying. The following list recounts some Canadian examples of this tragic history in recent memory.

### **December, 2004, Strathroy, Ontario**

A grieving Strathroy father says bullying led his son, tenth-grader Joshua Melo, to kill himself, and pleaded with school officials and students to end the harassment before more youths die. "I had to cut my son down from the tree. I told the kids at the funeral that if you don't get together and confront the bullies, it will be your parents cutting you down," John Melo said.

### **October 2002, Brampton, Ontario**

Greg Doucette, 15, was so tormented about his acne by bullies that he hanged himself in the basement of his home.

### **April 2002, Halifax, Nova Scotia**

Emmet Fralick, 14, shot himself in his bedroom because he was being bullied by classmates. Emmet was regarded as a quiet boy with a reputation for kindness to others.

### **November 2000, Mission, B.C.**

Dawn-Marie Wesley, 14, hanged herself with her dog's leash in her bedroom. She left a note naming three girls at her school she said were "killing her" because of their bullying.

She wrote:

*"If I try to get help it will get worse. They are always looking for a new person to beat up and they are the toughest girls. If I ratted they would get suspended and there would be no stopping them. I love you all so much."*

The girls named in the note were suspended from school.

### **March 2000, Surrey, B.C.**

Hamed Nastoh, 14, leapt to his death from the Patullo Bridge. He left a 5-page suicide note for his family describing in detail the bullying and taunting that drove him to suicide.

*"Mom, I was teased at school by my mates, my classmates, even my own friends laughed at me. They always called me four eyes, big nose, and geek."*

His mother said one of Hamed's last wishes was for people to stop harassing each other and to realize that taunting is hurtful. His friends felt powerless to stop the taunting. *"Everyone gets bullied. But this went too far. We stood up for him, but people couldn't get the hint that this went too far, and this pushed him."*

Hamed Nastoh was on the honour's roll at his school.

### **April 1999, Taber, Alberta**

Jason Lang, 17, is shot to death and another student is injured by a victim of bullying. The 14 year-old gunman was the target of bullies since he first entered school, and was eventually sentenced to 3 years for the murder.

The summer before the shooting, while on a scout outing, this "new kid in town" was stuck on a rock outcropping, unable to climb up or down. His fellow scouts laughed about his predicament and taunted him instead of helping him out.

Students at the school described the shooter as an unpopular kid who was the subject of teasing and name-calling. The boy's mother has said he endured incessant bullying by peers and showed signs of depression before the shooting.

He said he planned the shooting out of revenge, though he did not know his eventual victims.

**November 1997, Victoria, B.C.**

Reena Virk, 14, died after being attacked and beaten unconscious by seven girls and one boy--all schoolmates. Reena's arm, neck, and back were broken before she was dumped into the Gorge Inlet.

Reena was shy but earnest. She had tried to fit in, but was routinely mocked and taunted by her killers about her brown skin and her weight.

Particularly shocking was the fact that hundreds of students knew about the cruel and relentless taunting—and even of her death—before anyone tipped off the police.

**April 1997, Nanaimo, B.C.**

A grade four student pulled a knife on another student who was taunting him. According to his mother, the knife-wielding boy was tormented by his peers for over a year. The boy and his family were required to take an anger management course. The school took no immediate action with the children who bullied him.

## **ANTI-BULLYING LINKS**

### **[CBC Backgrounder on Bullying](#)**

CBC background article on bullying. Also includes links to other bullying and cyber-bullying sites.

### **[Challenge Day Videos](#)**

Challenge Day videos from "The Bully Solution" include a 2-minute segment featuring Alanis Morissette, as well as a 10-minute version of the Global News program (the broadcast version of this program runs approximately 1/2 hour).

### **[Anti-Bullying Tips--Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)**

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board anti-bullying tips.

### **[Parent's Guide to Bullying](#)**

### **[Bullying Awareness Network](#)**

Information and resources on bullying compiled by the Bullying Awareness Network of Ottawa.

### **[Stay Alert...Stay Safe](#)**

National street-proofing program for Grades 1 to 4, offering educational resource materials for teachers and information for children and youth.

### **[Anti-Bullying Playground for Children and Youth](#)**

Information on bullying in a kid-friendly format.

### **[Kids Help Phone](#)**

Children and youth can call the Kids Help Phone for help with a variety of issues facing youth.

### **[Bullying Prevention Strategies-Government of Canada](#)**

Links and information on bullying.

### **[Cyber-Bullying](#)**

Information and resources on preventing cyber-bullying.

### **[Bullying Information from KidsHealth.org](#)**

Website dedicated to providing good information on the health of children and youth.

### **[Hamilton Fish Institute](#)**

The Hamilton Fish Institute is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the reduction of school and community violence. (Nothing to do with the city of Hamilton, just a coincidence).

[\*\*Bullying.org\*\*](#)

Website created by William Belsey the father of Jason Lang from Taber Alberta, who was indiscriminately shot to death by a victim of bullying in 1999.

[\*\*Ontario School Counsellors' Association\*\*](#)

Links to informative websites covering a range of youth issues such as bullying, eating disorders, drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

[\*\*BullyFreeHamilton.ca\*\*](#)

Website of the Hamilton Coalition for Bullying Prevention and Intervention.