

Strategies for Bullying

According to ***Perfect Targets***, Rebekah Heinrichs' book that outlines various aspects of bullying and solutions to support students, bullying can take several forms:

- physical (hitting, pushing, tripping, grabbing, destroying another's property or school work)
- verbal (teasing, making fun, threats, name-calling, or non-verbal communication)
- social (intent to isolate others through rumors, shunning, humiliation, etc)
- educational (adults from the school team who use their position and power to cause distress to students—can include sarcasm, humiliation, favoring certain students, etc.)

Research has shown there are general characteristics of an individual inclined to bully others, as well as typical victim profiles. The characteristics of a child on the autism spectrum often fall within the victim profile—social, interpersonal and communication difficulties, anxiety and poor sense of self, feelings of not being in control, younger, smaller or weaker, and typically well-protected or overly directed by family members or well-intended adults. In particular, students with Asperger Syndrome or others who perform well academically and are less likely to have full time adult support (and therefore, protection) are often the targets of bullying. As with other areas of intervention for special needs students, finding ways to help the child to become more assertive, self-reliant and able to self-advocate is a critical piece of reducing a student's victim characteristics.

Several strategies are available to develop a community that minimizes bullying and helps to develop a welcoming environment for all. Options include staff and school community awareness and training, positive adult modeling, developing a school code of conduct and reporting, using formative and pro-social instruction as well as consequences, and involving parents when bullying occurs. Specific intervention strategies excerpted from *Perfect Targets* are outlined as follows:

Strategies for Dealing with Targets of Bullying (pg. 106-7)

- listen, be compassionate and use a calm voice
- provide as much privacy as possible
- take reports seriously and reassure students that they were right to come to you and that you will advocate for them
- decrease self-blame by identifying the bullying behaviors as wrong and unjustified
- be proactive in manipulating the classroom environment for success (e.g., helpful peers)
- look for cues that students may need help developing social competence



- discuss whether other bullying has occurred
- continue to monitor behaviors and have a follow-up conversation with the student
- take into consideration any exceptionalities and how they may impact bullying situations; individualize strategies accordingly

Strategies for Dealing with Students who Bully

- stay calm but use a firm, straightforward style
- provide as much privacy as possible
- give a brief, clear summary of the unacceptable behavior(s) and consequences, if appropriate
- note the behavior so a pattern can be established if behaviors continue
- do not get drawn into arguments or lengthy discussions
- correct the bully's thinking errors (e.g., blaming the target)
- identify the target's emotions to help promote empathy
- consider other ways to help build empathy for the target(e.g., role-play incident with the bully taking the target's role)
- re-channel the bully's need for power into more positive, socially appropriate endeavors
- model respect and look for opportunities to pay attention to positive behaviors
- provide formative /pro-social consequences whenever possible (e.g., making amends)
- take into consideration any exceptionalities and how they may impact bullying situations; individualize strategies and responses accordingly

Extracted from: Perfect Targets; Asperger Syndrome and Bullying; Practical Solutions for Surviving the Social World, By Rebekah Heinrichs

