



## The Effects of Bullying on Teenagers

Bullying is an unfortunate experience that many teenagers face today. With bullying so prevalent, especially cyberbullying, it's important for parents to understand the range of effects bullying can have on a teen's mental health and wellbeing, both in the short and long-term. This article explores the psychological and emotional impact bullying can have and what parents can do to support a bullied teen.

### Short-Term Effects of Bullying

Being the victim of frequent bullying can take a significant psychological and emotional toll on teens. Some common short-term effects include:

- **Anxiety** - Bullying causes significant distress. Teens may develop generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic attacks or specific phobias related to bullying.

- **Depression** - Victims are at higher risk of depression and sadness. Warning signs include irritability, withdrawal from friends and activities, changes in sleep and appetite.
- **Anger** - Bullied youth often feel frustration and anger at their mistreatment. This can lead to reactive aggression and getting into conflicts.
- **Low self-esteem** - Demeaning bullying takes a toll on self-confidence. Teens start to view themselves more negatively and feel shame.
- **Poor body image** - Bullies frequently tease about physical appearance. Teens internalize this, feeling ashamed of their looks.
- **Self-harm** - Victims may turn to cutting, scratching or bruising themselves to cope with the emotional pain.
- **Suicidal thoughts** - In severe cases, bullying leads teens to consider suicide as a way to escape the situation.
- **Declining academic performance** - Bullying is linked to decreased motivation, concentration and grades.
- **Substance abuse** - Bullied teens have higher rates of drug, alcohol and tobacco use, often as a coping mechanism.

These effects can happen quickly when teens are immersed in a bullying situation at school. The distress bullying causes can make it extremely difficult for teens to focus on normal developmental tasks like building social connections, succeeding in school and developing a positive self-image.

## Long-Term Impact of Bullying

Without intervention and support, the detrimental effects of bullying can last well beyond the teen years. Some long-term consequences include:

- **Social isolation** - Victims may withdraw from social interactions and have increased difficulty trusting people.
- **Lasting mental illness** - Teens bullied in childhood have higher rates as adults of depression, anxiety disorders and suicidal behavior.

- **Poor adult relationships** - Bullied youth struggle more with intimacy, communication, trust and relationship satisfaction.
- **Unemployment** - Adults abused as children have lower employment rates, education levels, and earnings.
- **Ongoing anger issues** - Childhood bullying is linked to increased aggression, hostility, anger expression and getting into fights as adults.
- **Substance dependence** - Teens who turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with bullying have higher addiction rates later in life.
- **Post-traumatic stress** - Severely bullied teens may develop post-traumatic stress disorder that persists into adulthood.

Without supportive resources, bullying can stain a teen's self-concept and interpersonal relationships for years to come. The harm bullying causes to physical and mental health can reverberate throughout adulthood. This is why early intervention is so critical.

With compassion and emotional support, you have the power to help your bullied teen heal both in the short and long-term. Your advocacy shows them they are not alone. Collaboration with the school is key - do not let up until administrators take meaningful steps to keep your teen safe. You may even consider additional resources like counselors, teen support groups or self-defense classes tailored to bullying situations. There are many resources available to teens who have experienced bullying's harmful effects. Early intervention and treatment helps minimize lasting scars.