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Dealing with Bullying

Even a Single Act Can Have a Massively Detrimental Effect to Someone's Mental Health

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The effects of bullying are the same for children and adults.

I recently included in the 'Transtopia' youth group the topic of bullying and how best to deal with it. While bullying is often thought of as an experience most likely to be encountered by children and adolescents, it is also a reality in adult life for those unfortunate enough to encounter adult bullies. We know that bullies exist everywhere - in our school system, in universities and workplaces.

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Probably the widest and most inclusive definition is that bullying is any act or words that make another person feel less than who they truly are. Most people are likely to experience bullying which is characterised by a number of examples including but not limited to mocking; putting someone down; making threats; belittling; ignoring; intimidating someone; and physical violence.

While most workshops focus on the valid importance of how to deal with a bully, many of them fail to address an important reality for many victims - namely that advising a victim of bullying to 'ignore' the bully is often impractical (especially if you see them regularly) and more importantly it does not make them stop.

It is important to realise that even a single act can be bullying and have a massively detrimental effect to someone's mental health. The effects of bullying are the same for children and adults. Often though, it is more difficult for adults to talk about how they feel or report it. Sometimes even when an adult commits suicide due to the cumulative effects of bullying, family or loved ones might not even know the person was being bullied at all.

Never forget that bullying is a crime and bullies are criminals. Their actions, whenever practical and possible, need to be reported and action taken. Suicide is a very real outcome for some victims of bullying and as such its incidence needs to be taken seriously both in terms of getting support for the victim and the bully.

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