

## Study Guide Sample

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# **Gum In My Hair: How to Cope with a Bully**

## **Study Guide**

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# GUM IN MY HAIR

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a problem for those who are bullied and those who bully. It is not a part of normal growing up. For those who are bullied it can interfere with their rights to experience a positive learning environment and opportunities for growth. For those who bully it can be a behavior that is easy to use, and interferes with the normal development of social skills, including getting along with, and empathy for others.

### **Bullying Can Be Defined As:**

**Behavior of a child or group of children toward another child that hurts or rejects that child.**

**Negative actions that are repeated and carried out over time.** <sup>1</sup>

**Behavior by one person or a group of people in order to have power over another person. This behavior can be:**

- **Verbal** – Name calling, saying nasty things about the child, threatening them, spreading rumors, persistent teasing, racial, homophobic and sexual taunts,
- **Physical** – pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching, making others do things they don't want to do, stealing or damaging belongings, unwanted sexual contact, rude gestures
- **Isolation** – leaving them out of activities, not talking to them,
- **Written** – writing nasty things about them, graffiti
- **Related to gender, race, sexual orientation.**

### **Bullying Can Be Situational**

Bullying can also be seen as the effect the behavior has on another person, not necessarily the specific action. That is because bullying is contextual, and what is teasing or joking in one situation, can also be seen as bullying in another situation. For example, saying that someone is dumb or too skinny, or making a rude gesture or pushing slightly can be teasing, and not bullying if:

- **If it is mutual and both people like the behavior,**
- **If the relationship between the two is one of friendship**
- **If the tone of voice and body language are non-threatening**

# EFFECTS OF BULLYING

## Personal

### **Bullying Can Have Harmful Effects on Children Who Are Bullied**

It can make them feel uncomfortable, scared, lonely, unhappy, unsafe, that something is wrong with them. This may lead to interference with their social, academic and emotional development.

### **Bullying Can Have Harmful Effects on Children Who Bully**

Bullies tend to become more aggressive adults who stand a much higher than average chance of having multiple criminal convictions. In one study, 60% of those students in sixth to ninth grades characterized as bullies had at least one criminal conviction by age 24. <sup>2</sup> Chronic bullies seen to maintain their behaviors into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships. <sup>3</sup>

### **Bullying Can Have Harmful Effects on Children Who are Bystanders**

There are children who are not themselves bullies, but will follow bullies and help them harass or victimize other children. This can them to experience anxiety and fear, negatively affect their environment, and reinforce the notion that they too, could use bullying to solve problems.

### **Bullying Can Have Specific Harmful Effects on Girls Who Bully**

Rachel Simmons says that girls face a cultural mandate to be "nice" and not too powerful, and have few approved outlets for anger or conflict. They often take their aggression underground resulting in nasty gossip, name-calling, isolation and manipulation of relationships. <sup>4</sup> If this aggression is turned against themselves it can result in depression, self criticism and even eating disorders. <sup>5</sup>

## Social

### **Bullying Can Be a Precursor to Sexual Harassment, Dating Violence and Adult Domestic Violence**

Bullying can be seen as a form of interpersonal violence, such as sexual harassment, dating violence, adult domestic violence and child abuse. The most important element in such interactions is the imbalance of power in the situation, and all interventions must take this into account.

Bullies appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others, seem to have little empathy for their victims, and often defend their actions by saying that their victims provoked them in some way. These are typical characteristics of teen and adult batterers. If boys bully in peer relationships when they are younger, they may think they can use this behavior in dating relationships when they are older. If they have not been made to feel responsible for making others feel badly, and if their need to control is never challenged when they are young, they will think that this behavior is acceptable as a teen and adult.

## STATISTICS

- Fifteen % of students are involved in bully/victim problems in elementary and junior high school
- Seven % of children have been bullies and 9% have been victims
- Boys engage in more direct physical bullying than girls, both as perpetrators and as victims
- Girls engage in more indirect bullying such as spreading rumors and manipulating friendships
- Boys engage in most of the bullying toward both girls and boys: 60% of girls who were bullied in fifth to seventh grade were bullied mainly by boys; 80 % of boys were bullied by other boys
- Bullying is most intense in elementary school, somewhat less in middle school, and then decreases as children get older. A large proportion of those who are bullied in lower grades are bullied by older children, emphasizing the role of power differentials in bullying.
- Most bullying takes place in areas unsupervised by adults: going to or coming from school, playground, lunch, hallways, etc.
- Boys and girls both used sexual put-downs toward girls
- Girls' use of words like "slut" and "whore" helped maintain a hierarchy with male-oriented, tough and sexually aggressive boys at the top. <sup>6</sup>

## CAUSES OF BULLYING

### Family Factors Contributing to the Development of a Bully

- Lack of attention and warmth toward the child
- Modeling of aggressive behavior at home
- Poor supervision of the child
- Very forceful parental discipline at home
- Less time spent with adults
- Few positive adult role models or positive peer influences are all factors that contribute to the formation of a bully. Role modeling is especially important for children for when they see their fathers, or other males, abuse their mothers it leads to more aggressive behavior of all kinds on the part of the child. <sup>7</sup>

### Individual Factors

Children who are active and impulsive may be more inclined to develop into bullies.

### School Factors

Lack of good supervision, particularly in the hallways, schoolyard and playground, and lack of appropriate interventions by adults when they see or hear about bullying encourages its continuation.