

Psych Savvy

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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Victimization and School-Age Populations

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Types of Victimization at School:

- ◆ Body fighting or physical assault
- ◆ Self-esteem bullying, ridiculing, teasing, threatening
- ◆ Property theft or damage to belongings, books, lockers, lunches

Who are the victims?

Victims are not significantly different in behavior, appearance or ability from non-victims except for possible lesser physical strength. Both sexes are equally vulnerable for victimization. Olweus describes at least two types of victims: “passive” who are anxious, insecure, fail to defend themselves and “provocative” who are hot-tempered, restless, irritating and teasing.

Some Facts about Victims:

- Approximately 10% of school children will experience some level of victimization during their school years
- In any one-month period, many students will avoid three or more school locations or **miss** a day of school out of fear of assault.
- Physical victimization rates generally decline after elementary school, while verbal assaults remain high at all grades. Property violations show little change across grade levels.
- By the time a child reaches middle school, a pattern of victimization has often been established.

What to do:

- * Provide a means of timely and accurate reports of victimization perhaps through mail drops or hotlines.
- * Improve safety and enhance deterrence through better lighting, hall monitors, parent volunteers at bus stops.
- * Develop firm and fair rules against physical and mental maltreatment that prohibit violations of body, self-esteem and property.

- * Ensure a conflict resolution or prevention program. A peer review board at secondary can be very effective.
- * Capitalize on student strengths rather than weaknesses.
- * Reestablish victims' sense of control by involving them in the decision making process as to what to do after an incident.
- * Place victims in leadership roles to improve their status and self-assurance.
- * Be aware of abrupt changes in child behavior that may indicate repeated victimization (fear of school, missing personal belongings)
- * Do not overreact or question if child mentions an incident. Listen carefully, restate the comment and help to identify the feelings.
- * Praise children for appropriate social behaviors (sharing, peaceful resolution of problems).
- * Help the victim decide what to do as a next step to reestablish a sense of control.
- * Monitor and limit the amount of unsupervised time your child has.

Resources

Baenninger, R. (1991) *Targets of violence and aggression*. Holland: Elsevier Science Publishers.

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Garriety, C., Jens, K., Porter, W., Sager, N. & Short-Camilli, C. (1994) *Bully-proofing your school*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.