

an imbalance of power exists. A bullying culture can develop anywhere people interact, including schools, families, workplaces and neighborhoods. Any culture that is competitive, autocratic and based on external controls can be a breeding ground for bully/victim relationships.

The overwhelming majority of school cultures are competitive, based on external and autocratic controls. They are primed to create the bully/victim relationships they seek to stomp out. Bullying will continue to flourish unless we change our approach from an autocratic power-over culture to an inclusive, compassionate, democratic School Family that utilizes positive intent to see the best in children who act out. These kids don't just show up in school one day and decide, "I think I'll be a bully!" It takes years to become a bully and all bullies actually start out as victims.

The good news about bullying is that we are becoming conscious of it and the problems it creates. The bad news is we are now confusing all aggressive acts with bullying. Children come home from school and instead of saying, "He pushed me," they are saying, "He bullied me." Successful intervention requires that we differentiate between everyday aggression and bullying.

Becoming a bully is a journey of specific life experiences starting at birth. Conscious Discipline produced a video called "How to Make a Bully From Scratch" that examines the five road signs of a bully in the making. Watch this powerful piece on your web portal or on YouTube. Bullies are disconnected children and each road sign represents another form of disconnection. We can choose to intervene at any time using the Conscious Discipline skills you are learning in this book.



Road Sign 1: Attachment Difficulties (0-3 Years)

Some children who have experienced prenatal stressors will be born with difficult temperaments. Some children with difficult temperaments will have insecure attachments with their primary caregivers. Lacking a secure attachment, their behavior can be difficult to manage and some will receive harsh punishment. When this occurs by age three, we start to see two different types of victims emerging. One is aggressive, defiant and hot tempered. The other is passive, acquiescent and anxious.

Road Sign 2: Difficulty Playing With Friends (3-5 Years)

During this time, children find themselves in more complex social settings like school and childcare. The aggressive child grabs, hits and explodes when the world does not go her way. The passive child simply gives up. They both have trouble playing with others because they lack basic social skills and the ability to regulate behavior. Teachers may compound the problem by using exclusionary strategies such as timeout, suspension and expulsion.

Road Sign 3: Difficult Making Friends (6-8 Years)

The exclusion gets worse as both children move further into the world of friends. Both children (aggressive and passive) experience immense social pain. Social pain actually involves the same pathways in the brain as physical pain in the body. Somewhere during this time, the social pain of rejection becomes so great that the brain undergoes significant changes, and a bully and a chronic victim emerge.