

# **Bullying & Mental Health ~ *Why it Matters to Think and Talk about this.***

*Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten, University of Portsmouth*



# What is bullying.....



*Bullying is.....: behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.*

# What is Mental Health?



According to the World Health Organisation mental health is:

“... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

# Some Facts.....

At least one in four primary school children in the UK report being bullied at least 'sometimes' during the last school term.

Although intervention projects have had some success – they have only reduced bullying by about 50%.



# Can Bullying affect your Mental Health???

## YES!!

- Feeling sad and lonely.
- Lacking confidence; feeling bad about yourself.
- Becoming depressed.
- Worrying and trying to avoid going to school.
- These problems can carry on long after the bullying has stopped.



# Who are bullies? They are not all the same!!!!:

- **Selfish** – wanting to make themselves feel better by being mean to others.
- **Clever** – because they know what to do and say to upset others.
- **Damaged** – as they may be bullied themselves, for example at home.



shutterstock.com · 26024380



© Can Stock Photo - csp39383860

# Not all Bullies are like this – and not all bullying scenarios are like this!!!



# Victims can also be different people!:

- Wrong place, wrong time?
- Scared?
- Nice and not wanting to upset people?
- Not being able to stick up for themselves, for whatever reason.





# Example...



*I started getting bullied in Year 2 at primary school when I was seven. One boy didn't like me, I'm not sure why. Not that many people liked him, because he was quite mean but he would invite them to really good places at weekends and so a lot of people wanted to be his friend. He is much bigger than me and a few times he attacked me but mostly he just spread rumours and stopped people playing with me.*

# Continued...

*At playtimes I had to walk round the playground on my own playing with sticks. If I tried to fight back he would tell the teacher straightaway and the other children would back him up.*

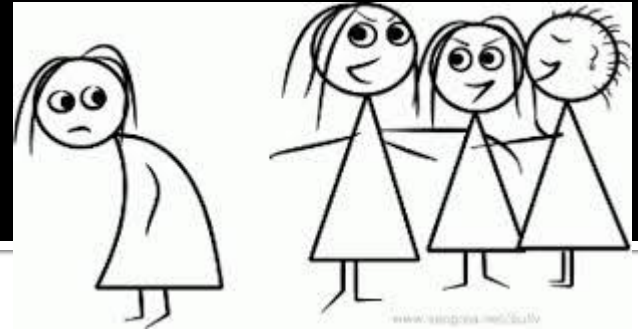


# Link with wellbeing & mental health..

At home I didn't talk about it much because I was worried about my dad going in and making a fuss. I wanted my mum to let me change schools but I couldn't because my sister went to the same one as me. *I couldn't get to sleep at night because I'd worry about the next day.*



# Another Example:



*I was in year 4 of Primary School when things went pear-shaped for me. I am not sure why, but from that moment onwards, till the end of primary school, the other girls in my class kept saying that I am 'weird', and didn't allow me to join in with stuff in the playground – ever... I didn't really tell the teacher, cause I didn't want to get into further trouble with the popular girls – I also never told me parents.*

# Impact.....



Now I am at Secondary School and things are a bit better – I am part of the nerd group, so they are kinda weird to, just like me... I do wonder *what is wrong with me though*, and I am sure that I will never be cool. My *confidence* is not great, for starters I think that I *am super-ugly and a bit fat as well.* I guess some people are not meant to be popular or something....

# Why does bullying happen???

- Lack of understanding of the impact?
- Feeling that the victim is asking for it, after all they are sooo weird!!
- Being part of a group that bullies other kids – in other words, everybody does it!!!



# What about the Victim?



- Imagine feeling sad and bad about yourself – *day in, day out....*
- Not knowing what to do, and *not wanting to bother people about this.*
- Being *worried* what might happen if you talk about it – will the bullies be even more annoyed with you..?
- Long term consequences – lack of *confidence, self-doubt; why am I so weird???*

# Ways Forward: Bullying & Mental Health

Talk about **bullying** *and* mental health.

Accept difference!!!!

Be empathic!! – put yourself in other people's shoes; how would you feel????

