

On Sunday, September 25, 2011, Jamey Rodemeyer, a 14 year old victim of bullying and U.S. high school freshman, took his own life.

In recent years, numerous bullying-related suicides in the US have drawn national attention to the connection between bullying and suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people. Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims, according to recent studies by Yale University.

Bullying is “any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate, or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, at a school sponsored, activity, or on a school bus.”

In other words, bullying is a repeated event by the same student(s) and happens on school grounds, at a school-related activity, or on a school bus. Bullying is when one person is repeatedly cruel to another person.

Types of bullying:

- ⇒ Verbal bullying may include name-calling, spreading rumors, teasing, sarcasm, ridicule, intimidation, harassment, or threats.
- ⇒ Psychological bullying may include socially isolating a child from a group, tormenting, or humiliating another child.
- ⇒ Physical bullying may include fighting, shoving, kicking, hitting, or any other type of violence.
- ⇒ Racial bullying may include racial taunts, jokes, gestures, or writing.
- ⇒ Sexual bullying may include unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, or abuse related to sexual orientation.

Signs of Being Bullied

Because children and teens who are being bullied are not likely to tell their parents or teachers - they often feel frightened or do not feel safe - it is important that parents and schools recognize potential signs of bullying.

Signs of bullying can include:

- ⇒ Unwilling to go to school or feeling “sick” before school
- ⇒ Avoiding the usual school route
- ⇒ Avoiding the school bus
- ⇒ Fear of social situations with children
- ⇒ Nightmares
- ⇒ Physical injuries when they come home from school

- ⇒ Slump in school performance
- ⇒ Depression or moodiness
- ⇒ Low self-esteem
- ⇒ Withdrawal or becoming quiet or distant
- ⇒ Attempts or threats to commit suicide.

According to statistics reported by ABC News, nearly 30% of students are either bullies or victims of bullying, and 160,000 kids stay home from school every day because of fear of bullying.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 28 percent of students aged 12 to 18 reported that they were bullied in school during the 2008-2009 school year. Bullying decreases as children get older from a high of 39 percent of all sixth graders to 20 percent of high school seniors. 2010 bullying statistics reveal that one in seven students in kindergarden through 12th grade has been a bully or a victim of bullying.

Other U.S. bullying statistics:

- 56% of students have witnessed a bullying crime at school.
- 15% of school absences are reported to be out of fear of being bullied at school
- 71% of students surveyed reported that bullying is an ongoing problem
- 1 out of 10 students drops out of school, or transfers schools, because of bullying
- 4th through 8th grades are the top years for bullying – 90% of students in those ages report being the victim of some form of bullying

Locally - in the Highland Lakes area - local children's counselors and non-profit organizations that serve children report bullying as a common issue among the children they serve in the Highland Lakes.

Marble Falls Children's Therapist, Julie Douglas Goble, LCSW, said she has "personal experience with the 3 in 4 students [bullying statistic] who say bullying is problem at their school - as a children's counselor for the past 10 years in Burnet County this has been the ratio of my client's that have shared about their personal experiences with bullying." Goble said that "Student's do not believe that they can trust their school administrators to do anything about it - thus they remain silent." Goble added that "it is our responsibility as adults to guide our children and make not only our schools but our entire communities safe for every child."

Hill Country Children's Advocacy Center therapist Susan Kulbeth, LMSW, also sees bullying as a prevalent issue and stated that "75% of the clients receiving therapy services through the Hill

Country Children's Advocacy Center, both male and female, have experienced some form of bullying in school. A fifth grade student from one of the local elementary schools described being "made fun of and called rude names" and experiencing "physical violence." Children have described incidents of bullying happening in the classrooms, the lunchroom, and the playground. When asked, many of these kids can not name a place in school where they feel completely safe. For many of these kids, reporting to teachers or administrators is not an option. Children report that school officials do not respond to their concerns or if they do the response results in retaliation by the aggressor. This is unacceptable. The problem may be a lack of information or resources on the part of teachers and administrators. Whatever the barrier, it is our duty as parents and a community to ensure both our schools and our community are safe for our children. We must get involved and hold schools accountable not only for learning but for creating a safe space for our children to thrive."

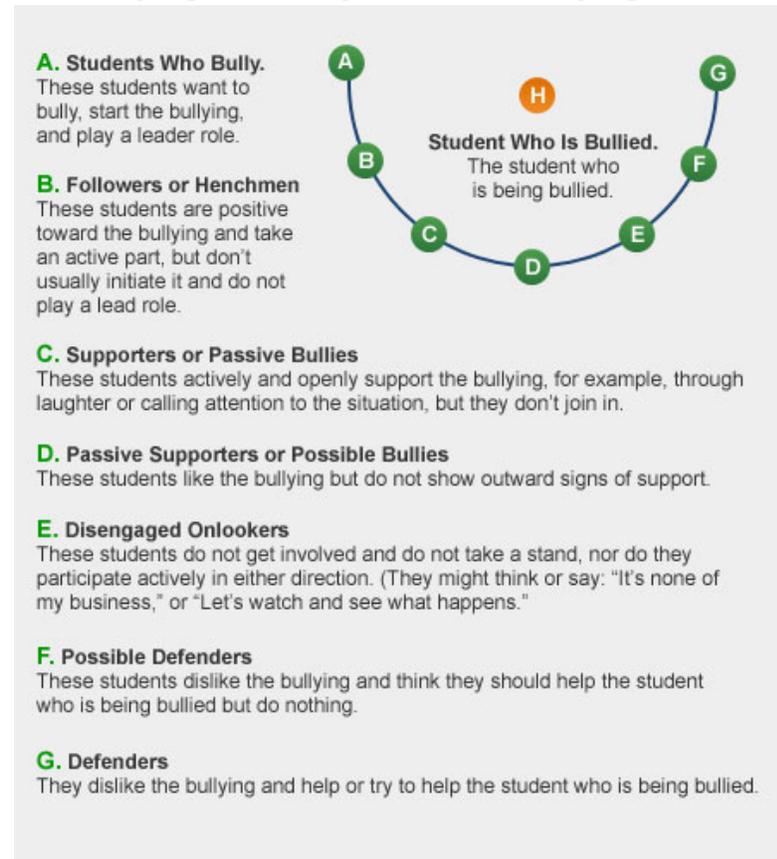
A Burnet ISD parent of a middle school added "My son had an issue with a student at his school, who was constantly bullying not just him but other students. This went on for several years, and the school would just send him to the office but once he was back in the mainstream it would happen over and over. Finally my son had enough of it and there was a confrontation with this child. Now my son has a permanent record on the incident. The bullying student to this day still is in the school. The way the issue was handled was not professional and has never been resolved."

Highland Lakes Family Crisis Center's Children's Outreach Counselor, Earley Ullrich, LMSW reports that "A majority of the kids I counsel have been victims of some type of bullying. Many feel that it is useless to tell someone that they are being bullied. Some who do report the abuse are told to stop tattling and just ignore it. It is essential for adults, especially school staff, to listen, believe the child, provide support and take action. To be effective, interventions need to target bullies, bystanders and victims."

Sarah Garrett, Founder of Camp Phoenix & Phoenix Center, and an area Children's Therapist, added that "bullying is a pervasive and common issue among more than 80% of my clients." Garrett added that the Phoenix Center in Marble Falls offers "free counseling services to youth who are victims of bullying or those who are identified as "bullies" – or children who repeatedly harm others with words or actions." The Phoenix Center is currently forming a support group for victims of bullying, and individual counseling sessions are currently available at no cost. For more information, please call the Phoenix Center at (830) 637.7848 or visit www.phoenixcentertexas.org.

GRAPHIC BELOW FROM WWW.OLWEUS.ORG – may be educational to include in article

The Bullying Circle: Dynamics of Bullying



A. Students Who Bully.

These students want to bully, start the bullying, and play a leader role.

B. Followers or Henchmen

These students are positive toward the bullying and take an active part, but don't usually initiate it and do not play a lead role.

C. Supporters or Passive Bullies

These students actively and openly support the bullying, for example, through laughter or calling attention to the situation, but they don't join in.

D. Passive Supporters or Possible Bullies

These students like the bullying but do not show outward signs of support.

E. Disengaged Onlookers

These students do not get involved and do not take a stand, nor do they participate actively in either direction. (They might think or say: "It's none of my business," or "Let's watch and see what happens.")

F. Possible Defenders

These students dislike the bullying and think they should help the student who is being bullied but do nothing.

G. Defenders

They dislike the bullying and help or try to help the student who is being bullied.