

# CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

Summer 2003

## Children's Friendships

### What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone keeps doing or saying things to have power over another person. Some of the ways people bully others are by calling them names, saying or writing nasty things about them, leaving them out of activities, not talking to them, threatening them, making them feel uncomfortable or scared, taking or damaging their things, hitting them, or making them do things they don't want to do. Have any of these things happened to you? Have you done any of these things to someone else? Bullying is an unacceptable behavior that makes the person being bullied feel afraid or uncomfortable.

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### Why is Bullying Harmful?

Some people think bullying is just part of growing up and a way for young people to learn to stick up for themselves, but bullying can make kids feel lonely, unhappy, and frightened. It can make them think there must be something wrong with them. They may lose confidence in themselves and may even not want to go to school anymore.



### How Common is Bullying?

We asked 206 children (108 girls and 98 boys) ages 8-13, attending schools in Champaign, Urbana, and surrounding areas to come into our lab and answer some questions for us. Using these questions, we tried to see if bullying had a harmful impact on children's well-being and how often children experienced an act of bullying.

The Children's Friendship Project shows that sometimes when kids get picked on or teased it hurts them for longer than just that day. For example, Peter teased Joe all of the time in school, and Joe was embarrassed and sad when it happened. Over the summer, even though Joe never saw Peter, he had a hard time thinking that other kids would be nice to him at his baseball camp. He thought that all kids would be mean to him.

We also found that children who get teased have problems in the way

they feel about themselves and in getting along with other kids. Sometimes when a classmate bullies another classmate, that student feels more scared or nervous in many situations. We also found that children who are bullied feel more sad and hopeless, perhaps because they do not understand why some kids are mean to them. Because others tease them, they might feel worse about themselves and think something is wrong with them. Think about a girl named Sarah. Maria likes to make fun of Sarah and call her mean names. After a while Sarah starts to think something is wrong with her and she becomes nervous about going to school because she does not want to feel bad about herself when Maria teases her.

Also, we found that children who were teased felt like they did not have any control over other kids putting them down and also felt like they didn't have any control over whether they did well in school.



Other studies:

Other studies have found that teasing can still affect kids later in life, years after the teasing has stopped. Also, teasing makes kids feel more sad and have lower self-esteem. Sometimes when kids get teased they have a hard time doing well in school and their grades get worse.



### **What can we do to stop children from bullying each other?**

There are many ways that we can stop bullying from happening and make children who are bullied feel better about the situation.

Suggestions for everyone:

Children should respect each other and realize that putting other kids down does more than just embarrasses them; it hurts them. Even if you do not pick on other children, you can tell your classmates who do that you think it is wrong. You can stick up for the child who is being bullied. It might seem scary to stand up to a bully, but many children agree that bullying is wrong. Another good idea is to try to be friendly with a lot of kids in your class, especially the children who do not have any friends. In a classroom, every child is different from everyone else in one way or another. Making fun of those differences only makes kids feel bad about themselves and causes many other problems.

If you are teased and you think that it is out of your control, tell your teacher, parents, school counselor, or any other adult that you feel comfortable with so they can help you with the situation.

University of Illinois  
Department of Psychology  
603 E. Daniel St.  
Champaign, IL 61820

Phone: 217-244-9385  
E-mail: [krudolph@s.psych.uiuc.edu](mailto:krudolph@s.psych.uiuc.edu)

## **FAMILY STUDIES LAB**

### **From the Director**

We hope that you have enjoyed hearing about the Children's Friendship Project. We want to thank you for your participation in the project. Without your help we would not be able to find out about children's friendships. We hope that you will find this newsletter useful, and please let us know if you have any comments or questions by contacting us by mail, phone, or e-mail.

Thanks for all of your help!

Family Studies Lab

#### Project Staff:

Melissa Caldwell, Ph.D.	Kristen Koh
Karen Rudolph, Ph.D.	Sarah Pak
Megan Flynn	Heather Morgan
Alison Dupre	Justin Hamel
Maggie Evans	Jackie Roe