



Bullying, Mental Illness and Suicide, Is There Really a Link?

Marian McCord

Objectives

- Create a burning passion within you regarding bullying and suicide to drive change
- Action items to prevent bullying and suicide
- Appreciate the link between bullying, mental illness, and suicide

2



Chad

Age: 18
Academics: Honor roll – top 15%
Athletics: Recruited by D1 for soccer, distance runner
Church: Active in youth group, retreat leader
Activities: Boy Scouts, computer games, Sci-Fi & fantasy movies & books
Awards: Eagle Scout Award, 5 plaque awards for high school sports, HS Leadership Award
Volunteer: Over 100 hours per year, Kirkwood Track club, Ride On St. Louis
Personality: Caring, funny
Descriptive words: Bright, popular, loving, leader
Diagnosis: Depression, Bipolar, OCD
Died: April 15, 2004

3

Since 1992 Through 2017 in USA

671 students
have died from school shootings

(Stoptheshootings.org,
wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States)

126,800 students
have died from suicide

(CDC.gov)

4

Suicide Another Perspective

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds
- More children die from suicide in the 15-19 year old age group than the top six medical causes of death combined
- **1 in 10 teens** considered suicide in the last year (2016 MSS)
- **1 in 19 middle school students** have made a suicide attempt in the last year

www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
Mental Health
COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE₅

Bullying what is the impact

- Every day an estimated 160,000 kids nationwide stay home from school because they are afraid of being bullied
- Yale School of Medicine Study
 - Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims
 - Not just the victims are in danger
- 1 out of 4 kids are bullied nationwide
- 42% of kids are cyber-bullied nationwide

www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
Mental Health
COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE₆

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.”



3 Distinct Groups involved in this issue:

Bully

- Often acts at the prodding of henchmen
- Surprisingly strong self esteem
- Peak age is 3rd grade

Bullied

- May be part of identifiably different group
- May take form of “ganging up” by high school years



Bystanders

- The largest of the three groups in the Bullying Paradigm
- The group in a school that can have the greatest positive effect on the school climate
- The Bystanders are the link to the adults in the building, the more committed they are the greater the reduction in exclusion and bullying

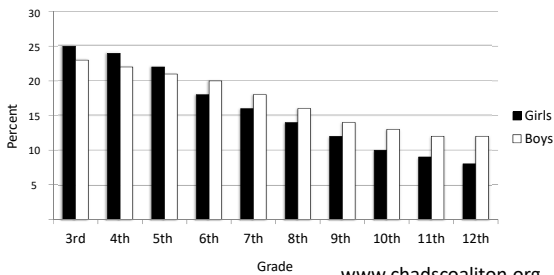


What Motivates Students Who Bully?

- Like to dominate others in a negative way
- Gain satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering
- Receive “rewards” by bullying other (prestige, attention, possessions)

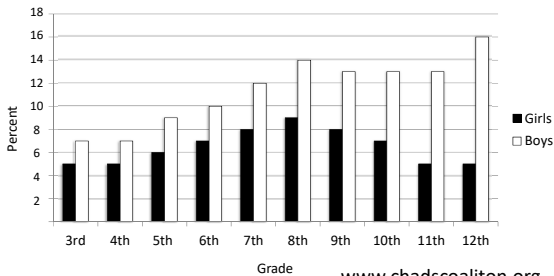
www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Bullied Students: Grade Trends
 2-3 times per month or more



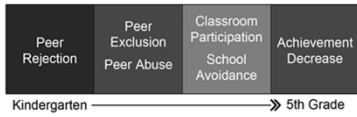
www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Percentage of Students Bullying Others
 (Olweus & Limber, 2010)



www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Buhs et al. (2006) Study of Peer Exclusion, Victimization and Academic Achievement



- Peer rejection in K associated with peer exclusion and peer abuse, grades K-5
- Peer exclusion leads to decrease in classroom participation, which leads to decrease in achievement
- Peer abuse leads to increase in school avoidance (but not directly to decreases in achievement)

www.chadscoaliton.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Concerns About Children Who Bully

Children who bully are more likely to:

- Get into frequent fights
- Be injured in a fight
- Steal, vandalize property
- Drink alcohol, smoke
- Be truant, drop out of school
- Report poorer academic achievement
- Perceive a negative climate at school
- Carry a weapon

www.chadscoaliton.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Effects of Bullying on Bystanders

Bystanders may feel:

- Afraid
- Powerless to change the situation
- Guilty for not acting
- Diminished empathy for victims over time

www.chadscoaliton.org
CHADS Coalition
 COMMUNITIES HEALING ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Effects of Bullying on School Climate

- Creates a climate of fear and disrespect
- Interferes with student learning
- Students may feel insecurity and not like school as well
- Students may perceive lack of control/caring

www.chadscoalition.org
CHADS Coalition
COMMUNITY HEALTH ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES

Repercussions of Bullying

- Serious and long lasting negative effects on well-being and mental health for all those involved in bullying
- Frequent bullying or victimization are at increase risk for suicide related behavior
- Bully-victim highest rate of suicide related behavior

17

Types of Bullying

Direct/Indirect/Cyberbullying

- Direct bullying involves a confrontation that may or may not be physical
- Indirect bullying is often occurring through means that allow the perpetrator to avoid seeing their victim
- Cyber, Texting, chat rooms have doubled the amount of mistreatment taking place

CHADS Coalition
COMMUNITY HEALTH ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES

Cyberbullying

- Parents greatly underestimate how often their children are cyberbullied
- A strong link between being a cyber-victim and being a perpetrator.
- Students who were cyber-victimized were less likely to report and seek help than those victimized by more traditional means, thus highlighting the importance for staff in schools to encourage 'help-seeking' in relation to cyberbullying.

Peers, Predators, and Porn: Predicting Parental Underestimation of Children's Risky Online Experiences. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, October 2013

19

Cyberbullying

- Electronics can be weapons of mass destruction
- Cyberbullying...once it is out there, it never goes away!
- Prevention of cyberbullying should be included in school anti-bullying policies

20



21

Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

- Worry excessively about everyday things
- Trouble controlling worries or feelings of nervousness
- Feel restless; trouble relaxing; easily startled; irritable or feel "on edge"
- Muscle tension
- Racing heartbeat
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Have a hard time swallowing
- Tremble or twitch
- Feel light-headed or out of breath





Symptoms of Depression

- Anger, irritability, rage
- Problems with sleeping
- Changes in appetite/weight
- Physical pain: headaches, stomachaches
- Feelings of sadness
- Excessive isolation
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Loss of energy
- Substance abuse

24

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking or writing about suicide
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like a burden
- Increasing substance abuse
- Serious behavior problems in or out of school
- Strong feelings of wanting to be dead
- Giving away favorite things
- Sudden sense of calm/happiness
- A previous suicide attempt
- Having a history of depression

25

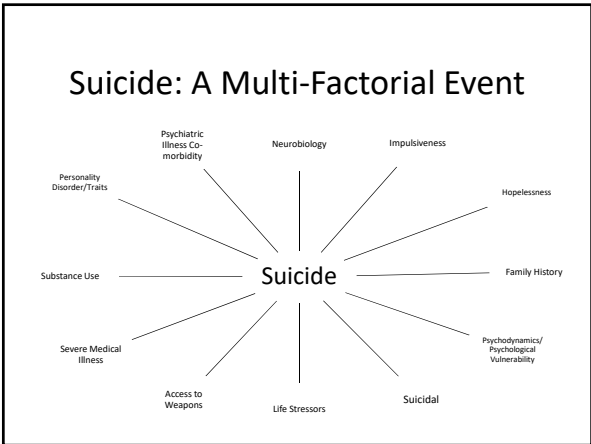
Acknowledge
that you are seeing the signs of depression or
suicide in yourself or a friend and that it is serious

Care
enough about yourself or a friend to take action

Tell
a trusted adult and seek help

SOS Signs of Suicide™

26



Profile of School Shooter

- 69% age 10-19 years of age
- 63% had interest in violent movies, video games, or books
- 17% dx with mental illness
- 78% had history of suicidal attempts
- 61% experienced severe depression
- 71% victims of bullying
- 87% left behind evidence as victims of bullying

28

Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention and intervention is essential within any comprehensive anti-bullying program and should incorporate a whole-school approach to include awareness raising and training for staff and pupils.

29

House Bill 1583

170.047. 1. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, **any licensed educator may annually complete up to two hours of training or professional development in youth suicide awareness and prevention** as part of the professional development hours required for state board of education certification.

2. The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop guidelines suitable for training or professional development in youth suicide awareness and prevention. The department shall develop materials that may be used for such training or professional development.

30

HB 1583 cont'd

170.048. 1. **By July 1, 2018, each district shall adopt a policy for youth suicide awareness and prevention, including the training and education of district employees.**

2. Each district's policy shall address, but need not be limited to, the following:

- (1) Strategies that can help identify students who are at possible risk of suicide;
- (2) Strategies and protocols for helping students at possible risk of suicide; and
- (3) Protocols for responding to a suicide death.

31

HB 1583 cont.

- School districts required to **include and implement anti-bullying policy in student handbooks.**
- According to the bill, bullying consists of
 - "intimidation, unwanted aggressive behavior,
 - harassment that is repetitive or is substantially likely to be repeated and causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property;
 - substantially interferes with the **educational performance, opportunities, or benefits of any student without exception;**
 - **or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school."**

32

DESE Recommendations

Starting no later than fifth grade, students will receive age-appropriate information and instruction on suicide awareness and prevention. Information and instruction may be offered in health education, by the counseling staff or in other curricula as may be appropriate.

Student education will include the following:

1. Information about mental health, well-being and suicide prevention and awareness
2. Promotion of a climate that encourages peer referral and which emphasizes school connectedness
3. Recognition of the signs that they or peers are at risk for suicide
4. Identification of issues that may lead to suicide including depression, anxiety, anger, and drug/alcohol dependency
5. Directive to not make promises of confidence when they are concerned about peer suicide
6. Identification of a trusted adult on campus with whom students can discuss concerns about suicide

33

Evidence Based Programs

- Suicide Prevention SOS Signs of Suicide
- Bullying Prevention Program
 - Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
 - Second Steps
 - Steps to Respect: Bullying Prevention for Elementary Schools
 - Good Behavior Game
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>

34

Call to Action

- Aware of the damage bullying has on students' mental health and well being
- Support evidenced based bullying prevention in your schools
- Implement an evidenced based suicide prevention program in your school for students faculty and parents

35

Takeaways to make a difference

1. Know there is a link between bullying and mental illness/ suicide.
2. All students have the right to feel safe
3. Do something about it! Understand how to intervene: Stop it, Name it, and give it a consequence

www.chadscoaliton.org
CHADS Coalition
 Children's Mental Health
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education

CHADS at a Glance 2017

- CHADS an acronym for
 - Communities Healing Adolescent Depression and Suicide
- Mission
 - CHADS saves young lives by advancing the awareness and prevention of depression and suicide
- Vision
 - CHADS will eliminate suicide by young people in the Midwest.
- Suicide Prevention
 - 1172 presentations to 23257 students
 - 13.1% of students self-identified
- Bullying Prevention
 - 7 schools implemented
 - 35% reduction in bullying incidents
- Family Support
 - 193 families assisted
 - 608 support group sessions

37

Website
chadscoalition.org

Facebook page
[Facebook.com/chadscoalition](https://www.facebook.com/chadscoalition)

CHADS' Support
314.952.8274

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)