



BULLYING & Drug Abuse: THE CONNECTION

Bullies are people who repeatedly take advantage of their power over others to do harm. Bullying is defined as aggressive, repeated, and unwanted behavior that is based on an imbalance of power, often done in groups against one person. It can be verbal, emotional, or physical attacks. Cyberbullying takes place online, e-mails, and through text messages. Incidences of bullying have been prevalent throughout a child's school years, and starts as early as elementary school.

The emotional harm from being bullied can be irreparable. Data from 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows students between 7th-12th grades were 1.5 times more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol if they had been victims of bullying.

Bullying & Substance Abuse: COMMON RISK FACTORS

- **Peer Pressure:** It's a risk factor related to both bullying and substance abuse. Kids spending time with other kids who bully or use alcohol and drugs are more likely to engage in those activities. Researchers found that middle and high school students who bully their peers or are bully-victims (bully others and are also bullied) are more likely than students who aren't involved in bullying to use alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. Victims will have a hard time fitting in and will be less sociable than their peers.
- **Problems in the Home Life:** Divorce, or separation, substance abuse, violence, lack of parental supervision, and lack of guidance and nurturing. Alcoholism and child abuse may foster aggressive bullying behavior.
- **Aggressive Behavior:** In many cases aggression is a sign a child could start abusing drugs and alcohol and begin bullying/mistreating schoolmates. This behavior may be an early sign of risk of substance abuse.
- **Lack of Enthusiasm about Learning:** Studies show that bullying may also result from low self-esteem caused by poor grades and underperformance academically.
- **Environment:** Kids who are surrounded by substance use, crime, poverty, and violence at home or in their neighborhoods are more likely to turn to bullying and drug or alcohol use.





What Kids Can Do:

Are you being bullied?

Do you see bullying at your school?

There are things you can do to keep yourself and the kids you know safe from bullying.

TREAT EVERYONE WITH RESPECT

Stop and think before you say or do something that could hurt someone. Report all bullying to an responsible adult.

If speaking up seems too hard or not safe. Walk away. Don't fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying.

If you are a victim of bullying, don't keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. Ask an adult to help you find a counselor or other professional to talk to.



PREVENTING BULLYING AND SUBSEQUENT DRUG ABUSE

Effective prevention programs can educate teachers, students, school administrators, and parents on how harmful bullying can be with a goal to foster a safe home, school, and community environment.

Many more schools and social organizations are adopting NO TOLLERANCE policies for bullying behavior.

DO YOUR PART TO STOP IT!

Prevention resource: stopbullying.gov

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Distributed by the
Elks Drug Awareness Program



Funded by a Grant from the
Elks National Foundation, Inc.