

# Health Politics with Dr. Mike Magee

## Childhood Bullying Hurts—In More Ways Than One

(NAPSA)—Kids just being kids? Not any more. Bullying is pervasive in America's schools and it causes more damage than many people realize. Approximately 30 percent of sixth through 10th graders are involved in some type of bullying—either as a bully, as a target of bullying or both.



**Mike Magee, MD**

Bullying is a unique form of aggression because it causes long-term damage to both source and target. Both bullies and the bullied often suffer from poor psychosocial functioning. Both show poor academic performance, poor relationship building, and loneliness. Bullies have high rates of discipline problems, usually dislike school, and are more likely to use drugs and alcohol. Bullied kids are more likely to suffer depression and anxiety.

By their 20s, former bullies and those who have been bullied are likely to continue to suffer consequences. Bullies have four times the rate of criminal behavior as non-bullies in adulthood, with 60 percent having at least one conviction. Those who were bullied have higher levels of adult depression and poor self-esteem.

What can be done to identify those involved in bullying and intervene early? First, identify the risk factors and warning signs associated with bullying. The risk factors for bullies include poverty

at home, overcrowded schools, difficult childhood temperaments, inadequate parenting, poor socialization skills and poor school performance. The warning signs include unpredictable temper and mood swings, loneliness, depression, vandalism and threats of violence.

There is much to be done to stop childhood violence and we each have a role to play. For example, school principals can enforce zero tolerance policies and devise guidelines on how violence should be handled. Students can report violence, serve as peer mentors, and participate in violence-prevention programs. Parents can be role models for non-violence, and ensure firearm safety and security if firearms are in their homes. Teachers can work with parents to recognize early warning signs of trouble, and legislators can pass responsible gun laws. Information for parents and kids is available by visiting [www.Bullying.HealthPolitics.com](http://www.Bullying.HealthPolitics.com).

We have to work together for peace in our schools. Our kids and our future depend on it.

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*For more information on topics such as childhood bullying or to receive a free weekly health report from Dr. Magee, visit the Web site at [www.HealthPolitics.com](http://www.HealthPolitics.com).*