



Bully tactics are not new behaviors discovered in the twentieth-first century. These are age-long campaigns used to suppress others, whether this line of attack is used against countries, nations, tribes, factions, or any people. In the Holy Scripture, these unbecoming strategies are often referred to as oppression. Bullying is the relentless systematic abuse of power over another in order to exercise dominion and create a sense of believed inferiority in the other. These tactics have been and continue to be prevalent at the higher level of metacommunication, especially towards minorities and indigenous people.

Sadly, we see many young bullies in today's schools and sometimes even in some churches, where one child or a group of children or youth exercise one form or another of bullying. Once a target is identified, the on-going bashing and humiliation can become a daily routine. Bullying can take different forms and mediums meant to intimidate another peer through verbal, physical, and emotional bullying, including exclusion, rejection, and cyber-bullying.

## **Who is the Bully?**

Bullies are usually feared because they are perceived to be bigger, stronger, more popular, and more powerful. In reality, when it comes to children and youth, bullies are sometimes insecure and may have endured battles of violence within their own homes. Thus, the release of these feelings of powerlessness by overpowering someone else whom they perceive to be weak helps to rectify their own damaged self-perception and lack of self-esteem.

Some bullies turn to this kind antagonistic behavior to experience some sort of temporary success due to other failures in his/her life. Children who may be struggling in their academics or are unable to be content with whatever little or much achievements they may encounter, may need to belittle others in order to feel superior. Many children join gangs for this reason, so to be a part of something bigger, and therefore, more successful, even though the negative success is achieved through misconduct.

Other characteristics of bullies, actually depicts these individuals as having a rather inflated sense of self and/or one who lacks societal norms of kindness and empathy. Although, we may think that these features of altruism ought to come naturally, they must also be taught and fostered by the environment. Bullies possessing these attributes may also have other

underlying psychological disorders which may or may not have been addressed.

### **Who is the Victim?**

A common trait amongst victims of bullies is often that these targeted victims are less likely to have a strong or visible support system. Victims of bullying are type-cast as being defenseless, having few or no friends, and appear as less likely to report any abuse. Even just having a foreign accent, eating ethnic food, or having an uncommon name can provoke a bully who is seeking a victim on whom to exert his/her hostility. Lack of diligent supervision sets the stage for the onset of such negative behavior to be perpetuated towards these unsuspecting victims. The bully's thrill is in his victim's fear of revealing the truth. Therefore, exposing the bully helps the victim to be released from his/her tight grip.

### **What is the Solution?**

Solutions to correct these social issues require awareness, collaborative community involvement, and leadership. It is first fundamental that children and youth learn not to fear going to authorities when something is not right. Parents, siblings, church servants, priests, and friends are the first tier of defense that ought to rally around the child or youth who conjured up the courage to reveal the painful circumstances of being bullied, while the appropriate

adults wisely explore the situation. If the bullying is occurring at a school, parents need to bring the situation to the attention of the school authorities in a calm and assertive manner.

Being a member of an immigrant population with limited English speaking skills produces another conundrum in how to address these issues to the appropriate authorities. The role of the servants is pivotal in these circumstances. Servants need to teach acceptable behavior and alert their children to what is acceptable and what is not. Servants who are available may accompany the parents to these meetings at the school to help facilitate the discussion and impart the parents' concerns over the negative social interactions taking place towards the child.

If it is possible, children should have opportunities to belong to appropriate clubs, sports teams, and organizations. These activities help in forming a well-rounded individual and help to increase self-esteem, friendships, and leadership. Even being part of a "Deacons' Choir" is being part of something. It will not only produce positive spiritual results, but also a sense of unity and teamwork. Joining a girls' choir at church or the Girl Scout Organization at school or at church can also be a means to help unite the girls, since bullying is not only limited to just

boys. Actually, boys tend to bully other boys and girls tend to bully other girls. It is a little too late to begin activities to address these issues when the children are already in their teenage years. Programs and activities are most crucial in the early years, even before the youth reach adolescence, so that children learn to appreciate the differences and abilities in their own peers.

Positive social skills should be incorporated in each of the Sunday school lessons. We ought to teach the children and youth to apply each lesson personally and socially, since we are social beings and should be raised to be morally conscious and productive members of society. Since many children may experience being bullied at an early age, parental involvement in the child's school and church is also fundamental, even if it is a matter of just attending parent meetings in the evenings. By participating in the child's various activities, whether the parent occasionally volunteers in the classroom or chaperones school or church field trips, it sends a strong message to the staff: "My child is important; my child's environment is important; I will not be a passive parent; I am interested in my child's life." These messages help to strengthen and support the child and his/her developing social existence.

Let us all strive together to empower our children through love, interest in their lives, validation of their concerns, lessons of courage, and by providing a sense of community and belonging, so that they do not find no other alternative but to become bullies or to succumb to being bullied, but rather develop into confident moral Christian leaders.

*"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).*

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern  
United States