

Adult Bullying - It's a Real Thing

When most people think of bullying, they recall their school days. The name calling, ostracizing, intimidating, shoving, ear flicking, taunting good ole days of elementary and high school. But bullying doesn't stop after graduation. Far from it. All those years of practicing verbal and physical abuse are carried into the adult world – often in sophisticated ways that aren't easily identified as bullying. But make no mistake, it meets the definition.

What is the definition of bullying? My definition: Any action, comment, or communication (written or online) that is intended to injure a person psychologically or physically. Simply put, bullying is an attack on a person's self-respect or their person. Furthermore, it is often a combination of psychological and physical abuse.

The most common examples of "adult" bullying occur in relationships. Society has code words for them: "controlling", "volatile", "on and off", "dysfunctional", "demanding", "abusive", "dominating." These relationships all contain the same abuse. The bully will:

1. Remind you of all your deficiencies and past offenses,
2. Mock your ideas, desires, and dreams,
3. Tell you how to dress, talk, act, and think,
4. Demand your servitude, loyalty, and love,
5. Restrict your other relationships, and
6. Physically abuse or threaten to abuse you.

Of course, you are also reminded that you are so lucky that the bully tolerates you – despite your obvious inferiority. In reality, you are simply a victim, a.k.a. punching bag, doormat, whipping post, etc.

The other adult arena for bullying is at work. Who hasn't experienced or at least witnessed all that ridiculous, destructive drama – the gossiping, back-stabbing, hatefulness, lying, harassment, and sabotage? Again, it's nothing more than an attack on your self-respect. Note: the physical abuse is less common at work because it's easier to prove in court.

Why do bullies attack the self-respect of others? As I have said many times before, bullies are insecure cowards who must boost their self-respect or relieve their stress by pushing other people down. Bullies actually enjoy disrespecting other people. They feel powerful, important, and superior – or when they are unleashing their many frustrations – they feel relief. I don't know about you, but I wasn't put on this earth to prop up someone else's weak ego and emotional immaturity.

Recognizing adult bullying is the first step. Dealing effectively with it will be the subject of my next newsletter.