



Bullying and Negative Outcomes: Promising Prevention Practices

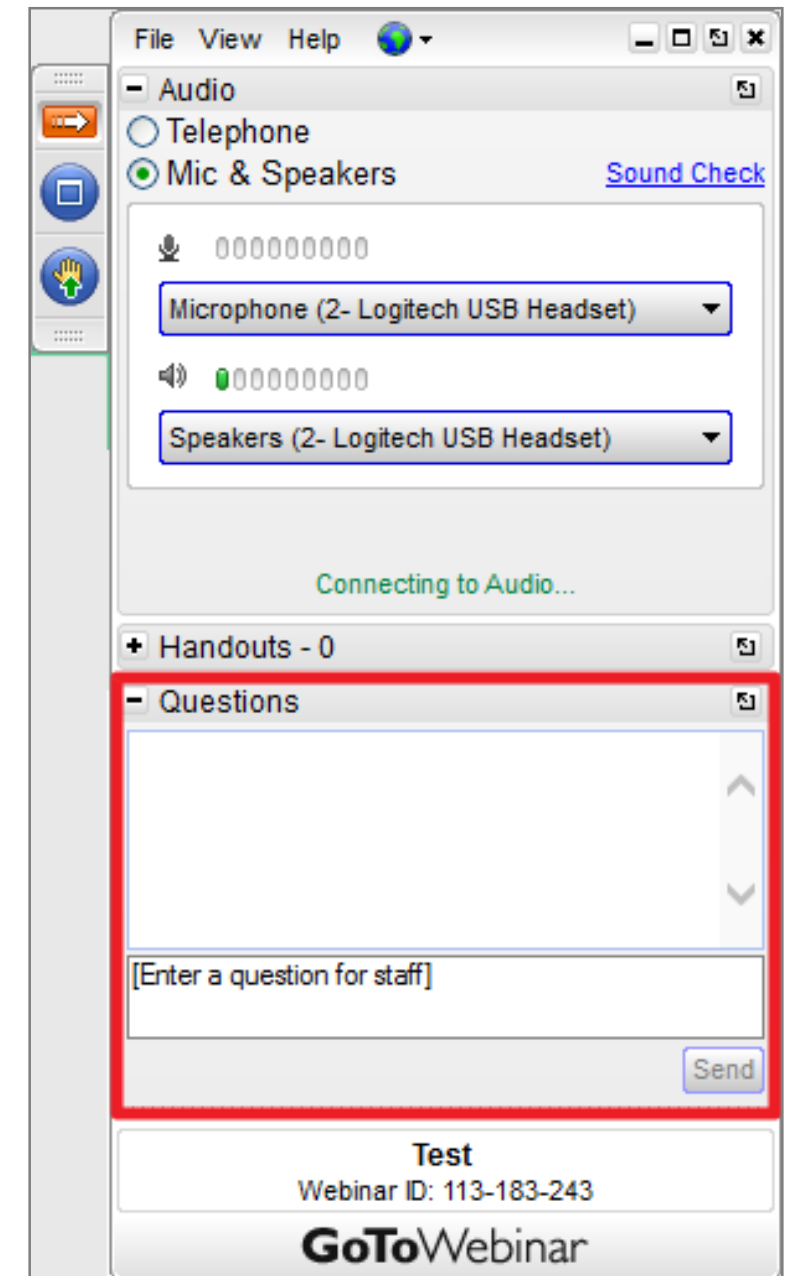
Presented by:
Dr. Scott Poland

October 2016

Welcome

- Presentation will be recorded
- A copy of the recording will be sent after the presentation
- Attendees are in listen-only mode
- Please submit questions on the right side of your screen
- Connect with us!

 @kognito



Today's Presenter



Dr. Scott Poland
Co-Director of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office
Nova Southeastern University
spoland@nova.edu

Reality of Bullying

Bullying Facts from U.S. Department of Education Website:

- Bullying peaks in middle childhood
- Studies show 15 to 25% of students are being bullied with some frequency
- Most common forms are being made fun of, being the subject of rumors, being pushed, shoved, kicked, tripped or spit on
- Only 1/3 of the victims told an adult

Bullies

- Seek out children who are younger, smaller or weaker
- Harshly punitive home environments can foster bullying
- May have troubled relationships with parents and have little trust in others
- Are often untroubled by anxiety and view themselves positively
- Can be popular as they are socially dominant but their peers really do not like them

Myths About Bullying

- Bullies seek power because they are powerless—they are very calculating and often get what they want
- Bullies were themselves previously abused—long term studies show that children who have been abused are most likely to be the victim
- Bullying is a problem only for schools to solve—it's a societal problem
- When bullied it is best to fight back—social assertiveness is better and the best is to walk away and tell an adult
- Bullies outgrow bullying—many carry their pattern of aggression into adulthood

Would this student be bullied in a middle school?

- Has an extensive psychological history
- Walks funny and speaks with a lisp
- Has a bad skin condition on his face
- Described as pale and frail
- Identifies as gay
- Identifies as Buddhist

Importance of Building Relationships and Connections

- My Fourth R article and school experience in understanding the importance of building relationships between students and school staff
- Research on bullying prevention is still developing and there is inconsistency in the definition of bullying
- We know that positive interactions and good relationships between staff and students can significantly reduce bullying (*U.S. Department of Education*)
- Summary of most recent Congressional testimony

Definition of Bullying

- Bullying occurs when a person is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more persons (Olweus).
- It is about power and is nasty and humiliating
- It is victimization not conflict!
- Today it includes cyberbullying which is especially challenging for parents and schools
- All school staff must be trained and engaged in bullying prevention

Cyberbullying

- Messages can be posted anonymously 24 hours a day and can reach students even when alone
- Messages can be very difficult to trace and to delete
- Messages and posts may be especially nasty and may be viewed and commented on by many others
- Schools need internet citizenship presentations and prompt investigation of cyberbullying as it effects learning
- Parents need to have discussions with their child and close supervision of internet activities

Bullying Facts

- Bullied children are more likely to be anxious or depressed and more likely to take their own lives.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24 years old and suicide rates have increased the fastest for those aged 10 to 14.
- The U.S. Secret Service Study of Targeted School Violence found that 2/3 of school shooters were the victims of bullying and that 2/3 were suicidal
- All states have bullying prevention legislation

Raising Awareness of School Staff

- School wide buy in and training first for all staff is essential and a suggested program to show to faculty is the free documentary Bullied
- Bullied which is the story of Jamie Nabozny the first student to ever successfully sue his school for failing to protect him from bullying
- The documentary Bullied is available from the Southern Poverty law Center at www.splcenter.org

How Can School Staff Help a Student Who Is Bullying Others?

- Let them know consequences are inevitable, consistent, and non-hostile and escalate in severity
- Hold them accountable and confront the excuses they make for their behavior
- Let them know that school staff will be watching for further bullying behavior
- Assess possible reasons for their behavior

How Can School Staff Help a Student Who Is Bullying Others?

- Contact and conference with their parents
- Consider referral for mental health treatment
- Help them to develop empathy
- Encourage involvement in pro-social activities
- Reward them for appropriate behavior towards others

Bystanders: Key Role

- Present 80% of the time
- Can intervene to stop bullying
- Can encourage it or view it passively
- Literature has found bystanders reported anxiety and insecurity as a result of witnessing bullying
- The term witness has been recommended instead of bystander
- Research has found programs that specifically targeted bystander attitudes and behavior were the most effective

Why Don't Bystanders Get Involved?

- Not sure of what to do.
- They are afraid of retaliation.
- They are afraid that they will become ostracized by their existing friends or social group.
- They are concerned they might do the wrong thing and make the situation worse.
- They think adults won't help.
- “It is the bystanders that must have the courage to say something and step forward to stop bullying” Bill Modzeleski, U.S.D.O.E.

What Should School Staff Do if They Hear or See Bullying?

- Take immediate action and stand between bully and the victim
- Support the victim but without questioning them in front of others
- Provide additional support for the victim privately
- Let all students know that bullying behavior is not acceptable and include bystanders in the conversation about how to intervene next time
- Provide immediate consequences for the bully or refer them to the appropriate personnel

What Should School Staff Do if They Hear or See Bullying?

- Do not require students to meet and work things out
- Share information with other staff about the incident
- Let the bully know that you and other staff will be watching them closely
- Let the victim know the next steps that will be taken and urge them to report any further incidents

Student Involvement and Commitment is the Key

- Student survey input needed to determine the extent of the problem but surveys often are met with resistance
- Hold student meetings and create task forces
- Train all students and then gain a commitment through pledges
- Utilizing the arts through drama and music to create awareness and prevention programs
- Creating a means for anonymous reporting

What if My Child is Being Bullied?

- Take it seriously and do not ignore it or blame your child
- Listen carefully and learn as much as you can about the bullying incidents
- Empathize and let them know the bullying is wrong
- Ask your child what will help
- Do not encourage physical retaliation
- Step back and consider your emotions and options carefully
- Do not contact the parents of the bully as that may make the situation worse

Who Should I Contact if My Child is Being Bullied at School?

- Contact your child's teacher as bullying often does not stop without adult intervention
- Ask the teacher to alert other school staff to the problem
- If you are not comfortable with the teacher's response make an appointment with the principal
- Commit to making the bullying stop and to talking regularly with your child and the school staff

How Can My Child Become More Resistant to Bullying?

- Help develop their talents and positive attributes and areas/activities where they are successful—find their niche!
- Encourage your child to build friendships
- Teach your child safety strategies and how to seek adult help
- Make sure your home is a safe and loving environment where they feel sheltered
- Be alert for signs of cyberbullying
- Maintain open communication with your child and create times when your child will truly talk to you

SPRC Brief: Suicide and Bullying

- Both victims and perpetrators are at higher risk than peers
- Personal characteristics such as internalizing problems; low self-esteem; and low assertiveness increase the risk of being bullied and these factors are also associated with risk for suicide
- Children most at risk for suicide are also at risk for being bullied
- It is difficult to control all the risk factors to determine if being bullied was a proximal cause to a youth suicide

Bullying and Suicide Prevention: Common Strategies

- School environment is the key
- Family outreach when necessary
- Education of parents about warning signs and importance of their involvement
- Building relationships with all students
- Identification of students and families in need of services and obtaining services for them

Best Practices: Final Thoughts

- School wide program where all staff engage and cooperate towards common goal
- Increase staff supervision in areas where bullying occurs the most
- Take immediate action to stop bullying when it occurs
- Provide consequences for bullies
- Provide support for victims
- Engage students in bullying prevention
- Do not hesitate to ask a victim of bullying about hopelessness and suicidal thoughts

Resources

- www.stopbullying.gov
- www.nova.edu/suicideprevention
- www.splcenter.org

Q&A



Dr. Scott Poland
Co-Director of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office
Nova Southeastern University
spoland@nova.edu