

Distinguishing Normal Conflict from Bullying

Normal Conflict...

- Involves people with similar degrees of power, or in which neither party uses a power advantage to prevail unfairly.
- Involves a mutual disagreement or difference in interests or goals, or reasonable competing claims
- Might not involve wrongdoing; if there is wrongdoing or escalation of conflict, both parties are somewhat responsible.
- Can be fairly resolved by compromise involving concessions by both parties, or by negotiation or cooperation.
- Is reciprocal; both parties participate in the conflict.

Bullying...

- Involves an imbalance of power wherein one person is unfairly exercising *power over* another.
- Involves one party exerting their needs or interests unilaterally over another.
- Involves hurtful behavior on behalf of one party against another. Wrongdoing and blame lie with the offending party.
- A fair resolution involves a change in the behavior of the offender; the targeted party has no concession to make.
- Is one-sided; one party instigates and maintains the bullying dynamic.
- Does not become normal conflict if the targeted person retaliates in defense

Distinguishing Playful Teasing from Hurtful Taunting

Teasing is...

- NORMAL CONFLICT
- Mutual and reciprocal; either party might tease the other
- Good-natured and benign; not intended to hurt
- Intended to be fun/humorous for all parties involved; parties laugh with each other.
- Maintains basic dignity of all parties
- Teasing is one part of a relationship between parties; parties share other activities and forms of interaction also
- Stops when the person teased becomes upset or objects to teasing

Taunting is...

- BULLYING
- Based on an imbalance of power, so that one party consistently does the taunting; reciprocation by the other is unlikely
- Harmful and/or malicious. The taunter intends to harm, unconcerned about harm, and/or a reasonable person would consider the words said to be hurtful.
- Laughter is directed at the target; joke is cover for mean-spirited comment; others' fun is at target's expense.
- Diminishes the self-worth of the target
- Not part of an otherwise friendly relationship between the parties
- Continues especially when the targeted person becomes distressed or objects
- Causes fear, might escalate to physical bullying

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