

The Dark Side of Bullying: Abuse Against Individuals with Disabilities

by Lucas Thompson

Abuse as Bullying

Let it settle in your psyche that abuse is bullying, and bullying is abuse. The two are synonymous. Abuse is marked by “repeated cruelty and/or violence towards one over whom another believes he or she can overpower” (De Bouse, 2019). Bullying is defined as “repeated and intentional harm and/or intimidation toward one whom another believes is weak” (De Bouse, 2019). The parallel is clear. As a provider of bullying prevention and recovery services, I promote the reality of abuse as bullying. Both bullying and abuse stem from an unhealthy attempt to feel empowered and “in control.” Bullies/Abusers typically have a real or perceived inability to control some or all aspects of their lives. Thus, they seek to bully/abuse whom they believe they *can* control as a distorted means of restoring normalcy to their lives. Of course, such bullying/abuse is marked by a cycle of harmful, violent behavior that often may extend longer or to a greater intensity than even the bully imagined. People often ask me why other people bully. Fundamentally, the answer is this. Bullies/Abusers engage in such behavior in an attempt to restore order to the chaos in their own lives. It is mis-directed anger at its worse.

Disability Abuse

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As discussed in my article, [*Disability Bullying: Double Imbalance of Power*](#), “disability bullying creates a double bully-bullied imbalance of power because disabled individuals are physiologically and/or psychologically less equipped to combat bullies than are non-disabled individuals” (De Bouse, 2019). Likewise, abusing the disabled is a double imbalance of power. Unfortunately, many abusers/bullies target the disabled because they believe their risk or resistance or reporting it is greatly diminished. According to the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) (2016), “children with disabilities are maltreated at 1.7 times the rate of other children.” Some of these disabled children are abused by parents or caregivers in response to the real or perceived added stress of caring for a disabled child. Others think it is sport to bully/abuse one who is disabled merely because *they can*. As stated previously, some bullying/abuse against the disabled is underreported or not reported because “some children may be unable to adequately verbalize their need for help” (De Bouse, 2019). All this article exists to bring awareness to abuse as a form of bullying that must be reduced considerably, and hopefully

eliminated-especially against the vulnerable community of the disabled. Disability abuse is bullying at its worst because it is a [double imbalance of power](#).

References

De Bouse, G. (2019, February 9) Disability bullying:Double imbalance of power. *Disabled. World*. Retrieved from <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/discrimination/gdb2.php>.

NCCAN (2016). Maltreatment of children with disabilities. *Prevent Child Abuse America*. Retrieved from <https://preventchildabuse.org/resource/maltreatment-of-children-with-disabilities-2/>.