BULLYING BEHAVIOR- BEHAVIOR THAT NO ONE FORGETS  
By: James Burns

I speak to teachers all over New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia so I was thrilled when I got a call from my hometown school district, and they asked me to do a workshop for their teachers. Some of the teachers I had when I was a student were still there, and it was a lot of fun for me to be teaching them something. The topic that they asked me to speak about was “Student Behavior Management.” I started to talk about bullying which is a significant part of behavior management today, and what an impact this horrible behavior can have on the school climate, individual classrooms, students, teachers, and even the community where the students live. When I gave the group a break one of the teachers in the audience came up to me and said, “When we were kids, you and I were both bullied by Tommy.” I looked at him and realized that he was the cousin of two boys that I played with when I was in elementary school. One of those was Tommy, who had bullied me. As soon as he mentioned Tommy and the fact that I was bullied by this boy I automatically started to look around to see if Tommy was there, even though I knew he probably wasn’t. This young teacher shared with me that even though Tommy was his cousin, Tommy had bullied him. He told me that his cousin used to hold him under water, push him, shove him, slap him, and to sum it all up, terrorize him. Both of us agreed that we were still scared to death of him, even though we were grown men. We talked about how he had been much bigger than we were and used his size to intimidate and frighten us. The part of our conversation that concerned me the most was that even after more than 30 years we both still remembered every bullying thing Tommy had done to us; we still had the experience of being bullied tucked away somewhere in our minds. It is no surprise to me that bullying has gotten worse over the years. Bullying has gotten so bad that the government has had to step in and make it mandatory that programs be created to stop bullying in our schools and in society. Not all people understand this behavior, and some people don’t even realize what bullying actually is. Many people don’t understand how they contribute to the continuation of the behavior, and in their own way make it worse. What is bullying? Bullying among children is most commonly defined as intentional, repeated, hurtful acts, words, or other behavior such as name calling, threatening, and/or shunning committed by one or more children against another. These negative acts are not intentionally provoked by the victims, and to be defined as bullying, an imbalance in real or perceived power must exist between the bully and the victim. Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, or relational. Bullying interferes with learning. In schools, acts of bullying usually occur away from the eyes of the teacher or responsible adults, consequently, if the bully goes unpunished, a climate of fear envelopes the victims. A comprehensive approach to bullying is necessary. Many children and adults seriously underestimate the effects of bullying and the harm that it causes the victims. Educators, parents, and children
concerned with violence prevention should be concerned with the phenomenon of bullying because it is linked to more violent behavior.
THE MAKING OF A BULLY
By: James Burns

With the bullying epidemic on the rise and schools now being mandated to establish stricter rules to combat the problem, it is time to answer a question that truly begs an answer. How and why does someone become a bully? The answer to this question may surprise some, and make sense to others. But, if you study the intergenerational tendencies over the years this explanation will shine a light on the many aspects of bullying that has resulted in unending relational aggression during the past two decades.

Acts of bullying were brought to the forefront after the devastating incident at Columbine High School in April 1999. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold demonstrated many telltale signs of the victims of bullying that were left unnoticed, and the reality is, no one saw them at all.” If you look at acts of violence, you'll find comments from friends, neighbors, acquaintances saying that this person was weird, he was odd, it was only a matter of time," retired FBI criminal profiler Jim Wright said. "All of a sudden -- when the act is over -- a lot of people knew it was going to happen." Knowing what we know now it is evident that victims of bullying develop tremendous hate for their perpetrator, and fear establishing relationships with others because of the chance that they will be hurt again. This anger and fear resides in the heart and soul of a victim and roots itself causing the person to become so bitter and so debilitated by these emotions that it is only a matter of time before this rage will manifest itself. Unfortunately, this rage expresses itself often in adulthood when the person’s spouse or child discovers that their husband, wife, mom or dad is not the person they appear to be. Acts of bullying including violence may permeate the home creating an environment of fear and intimidation. The message that you get what you want through fear or asserting yourself through intimidation becomes a thought process that children develop and ultimately use on others outside the home, in school, and in the community. The victim if not dealt with using appropriate interventions and counseling produces the next bully.

That is one of the reasons why bullying is an intergenerational problem. Bullying can take on many forms and forensic psychologists have studied serial killers, rapists, and murderers for years and always track the problem back to a dysfunctional relationship in their childhood that was not dealt with. Usually, not always but usually the problem involved an abusive, belittling, violent parent who was carrying around his/her own emotional struggles with anger that leaked out onto his own family. The intergenerational youth conflict which was not managed became an adult conflict. What one generation did in moderation, such as a smack on the fanny, the next generation took to the next level using violence, fancying it as corporal punishment. This is only one example, but you can see where anger and bitterness can lead if it is not dealt with when a child is very young.
Am I using this as an excuse? Perish the thought. I am merely citing reasons why an individual can become a bully. The question remains, what do teachers and parents do with this information? The answer is two fold. Bullies lack respect which I define as having a regard for the rights and privileges of another person. So like it or not, feel like it or not a bully must be pressured into developing this lost quality and be held accountable for his words and actions. The word here is consequences. They must at a young age develop respect for authority and be made to feel uncomfortable when they display acts of disrespect. Bullies are anti social, and lack empathy for others. School activities at the elementary level such as class parities or class trips should be seen as a privilege not a right. Bullies should be barred from participation to make the point that this behavior and attitude will not be tolerated. At the secondary level activities such as participation on a sports team or club, should be forbidden by individuals who have involved themselves in acts that produce fear or intimidation in others. You cannot grow a conscience, but you can create what I call consequential thinking, forcing the bully to ask himself the question: what am I going to gain and what am I going to lose through my actions?

The victim needs to develop a responsible attitude and become aware that he/she does not deserve the treatment that they are receiving. Victims can blame themselves. Often victims are asked by teachers when they report acts of bullying, “well what did you do?” They are then placed on the defensive. They may get to the point where they don’t even want to report anymore and decide to take matters into their own hands. The level of anger and bitterness will determine the actions that he/she will take. In the case of Columbine the actions affected society and made us re-think what these actions might be. Victims cannot be afraid to report but when they see no relief they just stop out of frustration. A staggering statistic reveals that 75% of teachers believe that they intervened in a bullying incident, while only 25% of students believe that teachers intervened. The true reason for this statistic is that most often a teacher will talk to the bully because they did not get an eye witness view of the incident and don’t have the ammunition to impose a consequence. A good talking to is not a consequence, ergo the behavior continues. Victims need to develop the ability to be in tune with their emotions and know when they feel uncomfortable with what is being said or done to them. They may even need some anger management work to quell the initial stages of rage before it has a chance to root. Victims need to learn how to express themselves when they feel intimidated and maybe just say “Stop knock it off” and walk away. Keeping a journal of when they were bullied and the emotions they felt that they can review with a counselor or therapist is another way for the victim to express negative feelings.

Right now in New Jersey the laws are getting tougher. The “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” has been passed letting students, teachers, administration, and parents know that bullying behavior is now being taken very seriously. The intergenerational tendency from moderation to excess has revealed that because of the severity of the problem and because it is no longer some right of passage the victim is having a much more difficult time coping with acts of bullying and intimidation. The law was passed because of the suicides that have occurred in the state by the victims of bullying. Bullies are truly created and not born.
THE RELATIONSHIP CONNECTION  
By: James Burns

Two teachers were talking in the hall sharing information about some of their more challenging students. “I don’t know,” said one teacher “I have tried everything with Tom and nothing works.” Behavior modification, extra gym time, phone calls home, parent conferences, restrictions and rewards, it almost seems useless.” The other teacher responded, “Tom, he is one of my better student’s. I have very little difficulty with him at all.”

This sounds like a familiar scenario. But, why is it that some teachers have all kinds of problems with one student while others who have the same student have little or no trouble at all. In order to completely understand this problem it is helpful if we understand the how our brain is wired. If we were to take a cross section of the brain we would discover that the top part of the brain is where we do most of our higher order thinking and where we process information. Understand that I am trying to draw a very basic picture for you. The middle part of the brain called the limbic system is where our emotions are located. Our mind and will is located there. The bottom part of the brain, the stem is where we go for survival. When we are under emotional stress our first response is to survive. The two basic methods for survival are to either attack or to escape. In getting a visual image of what I’m talking refer to the diagram of the brain located below, and notice that all incoming information has to pass through the emotions in order to be processed by the neo-cortex where all higher order thinking and learning takes place.

So, if I were to say to you “When are you going to get this information right?” “I am so sick and tired of explaining this to you what are you dense or something?” Your natural tendency is to survive and you emotionally will either escape or attack. Children and adults who escape usually have clinical problems and are your students who are constantly late, sleep at the desk, chronically absent and may have substance problems. These students need to be watched carefully. In education the squeaky wheel gets the grease. We may not even be aware of these students until an event occurs that is catastrophic in nature such as suicide or even worse a violent incidence that could impact lives for generations to come. Students who have the attack mentality are more argumentative, disrespectful, and non-compliant. They are always in school and are looking for a victim that they can take their anger out on. It could be the person in charge or another weaker student. (Bully/Victim) This student
spends a lot of time in the Vice-Principal’s office, has problems in the community and with the police.

The key to working with both of these students is to understand what qualities they need to develop in their life that will make them successful adults. The student who escapes needs to develop responsibility, the student who attacks needs to develop respect. In order to achieve the desired behavior from either of these students they must be taught to comply with the rules of the system that they are in.

The one thing that is in common with both of these students is that when a relationship is established with them they will comply at a more frequent rate and will display a respectful and responsible attitude when the person they are working with understands them as individuals. The order of the day is to realize that there are bricks in the wall of the limbic system that were put there by other adults who responded to them in a reactive and angry way.

Our goal is to remove the bricks and develop a trusting relationship. Behavior modification is an excellent extrinsic structure but teaches students to behave in an adult’s presence not in their absence. Our aim is to develop an intrinsic mechanism that changes the child’s attitude and helps him/her develop a value system with standards that he/she will be able to sustain as an adult.
DO BULLIES HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM?
By: James Burns

Psychologists used to believe that bullies have low self-esteem, and put down other people to feel better about themselves. While many bullies are themselves bullied at home or at school, new research shows that most bullies actually have excellent self-esteem. Bullies usually have a sense of entitlement and superiority over others, and lack compassion, impulse control and social skills. They enjoy being cruel to others and sometimes use bullying as an anger management tool, the way a normally angry person would punch a pillow. Research does support the fact that bullies have low empathy, and don’t know how it feels to be in someone else’s shoes.

A bully is motivated by power. He/she is very clever and can victimize anyone. He likes controlling other students, and sometimes likes controlling his/her parents and teachers as well. As long as the bully is able to manipulate another person or a situation, his/her self-esteem remains high. Once a bully loses control of their victim, or realizes that they can’t manipulate situations to their liking they begin to experience problems with their self esteem and they will then seek out other people to manipulate and control to raise their self-esteem. It almost becomes an emotional fix that they need in order to feel good about themselves.

Intervention programs usually work to help the victim, and rightly so, the victim needs assistance in dealing with the person who is bullying them. In working with the bully we need to help the bully find things that will help him keep a consistent self-esteem index. Everyone has ups and downs in life, and bullies should experience the same ebbs and flows that are associated with becoming an adult. A bully’s self esteem cannot be based on how they treat others. If clear lines are not drawn and the bully is allowed to continue his behavior without consequence we are doing nothing more than prepare him for prison.
SOCIETY’S MORALITY CAN’T KEEP UP WITH TECHNOLOGY

By: James Burns

A student is accused of posing as a girl on Facebook, tricking at least 31 male classmates into sending him naked photos of themselves and then blackmailing some for sex acts. Anthony Stancl, 18, of New Berlin, west of Milwaukee, was charged with five counts of child enticement, two counts of second-degree sexual assault of a child, two counts of third-degree sexual assault, possession of child pornography, repeated sexual assault of the same child and making a bomb threat. A survey of 1,280 teenagers (users age 13-19) and young adults (age 20-26) conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com has revealed that one out of five (20 percent) teens overall have posted nude photos or video of themselves on the Internet—that number goes up to a third when young adults are included. While 71 percent of teen girls and 67 percent of teen guys who have sent these photos say they've sent them to a boyfriend or girlfriend, 15 percent overall said they've sent nude photos to people they only "knew" online. For women, that percentage stays the same when they turn into young adults, although the percentage of young adult men goes up to 23 percent.

This is just another example of what society developed for good, deviant minds have used for criminal, and immoral purposes. What is the problem? Is it too difficult for individuals to enjoy the tools of convenience without trying to figure out how to use it to satisfy their own immoral appetites? I believe that speed and the lack of impulse control plays a big part in why these acts occur on a regular basis today. The speed of text messaging, and sending emails and pictures from a cell phone, combined with the poor impulse control on the part of deviant individuals creates an environment where people can say and send anything they want to another person, things that they wouldn't say in person like "do you want to screw," or do in person, like getting naked.

I am 57 years old, 40 years ago if I or anyone of my friends wanted to take and send nude pictures of ourselves or anyone else (By the way we never did) we would have to live with the embarrassment of having these pictures developed by a photographer. In order for a picture to be taken it needed two things, a subject and a photographer. No teenage girls were going to take their clothes off for some sex crazed boy and let him take her picture. Any pictures that were taken of anyone, and I mean clothed usually required a five day period for development. Everyone had time to think. It wasn't as easy as hitting the send key.

Once the send key is hit everyone has a record of what was sent, a record that will last a lifetime, and probably create a lifetime of misery. Society's stagnant morality just can't seem to keep up with the rapidly moving technology. We haven't figured out how to use our new toys and are always looking for ways to use these things to self destruct or to ruin the reputation of another person. When I was a kid I was told, never write a letter, and to never through away a letter. I understand this now better than ever. At least 40
years ago if I wrote a letter I could decide if I wanted to mail it off. If it was written in anger I could think about it and allow my impulses to calm down. If someone sent me a letter that was less than friendly I had a permanent record of that person's thoughts of me.

Today people just don't think, they get a thought, no matter where they are and immediately begin to text someone and begin to berate another person without even giving it a second thought. It is just as easy as hitting the send key. Below is an article I wrote a while back about how this type of selfish and uncontrollable behavior affected an evening that I was spending with my daughter Sarah. It is living proof how texting if not used correctly can ruin and day, and evening, or a life. Thank God things worked out, but remember it all started with an impulsive text message. I left in my advice for those of you who have children who could be impacted by such insensitivity by others.

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Many years ago when my oldest daughter Sarah was about 4 years old a good friend of mine told me that girls were easier to raise than boys. Well my oldest daughter is now 20 years old and I still haven't figured it out yet. One thing I do know is that I hate to see my daughter upset. I don't mean mildly upset, that just goes with being a teenager, but upset to the point of tears. This happened to me one night when my daughter was 17. She received a text message from one of her friends. The text message said that she wanted to talk to her about something. Sarah couldn't get in touch with the girl that sent the text so she called another one of the girls in this group. She has been friend with 4 girls for about the last two years. These girls did everything together. Hang out mostly as Sarah calls it. They went to parties together, studied together, drove to school together, and yes, they got into trouble once in a while together.

When she called one of the girls up the girl told Sarah that all four girls were upset with her because they were starting to view her as being selfish, and annoying. My daughter was blindsided by this information and really didn't know what to say. She didn't even know what they were talking about. I asked her if she thought this information was true. She told me no. I then asked her if she thought she might have a couple of blind spots and the girls were possibly seeing something in her that she just didn't see in herself. She said no, and I must say did a pretty convincing job backing up what she told me. The question is this; how do you as a dad offer a teenage daughter advice in situations like these? I am no expert but, I believe that I did a pretty good job based upon the outcome.

Teenage girls always seem to like to be connected to some group outside their family. Teenage boys like the connection also, but a boy's connection is usually with some type of sports team, or club. Girls like to be connected to each other. The longer this connection lasts the greater the chance that their weaknesses will be exposed, and for sure they will start engaging in rumors, and gossiping about one another. Girls also tend to become more jealous in these relationships if a boy becomes involved in this mix. Once one of the girls has an opinion about someone else in their group they will bend over backward to try and convince the other members of the group that it is true. They will even search for the evidence to prove their point. This behavior becomes crushing and emotionally painful to the girl who is being ganged up on, as was the case with my daughter.
What can you do when your daughter confides in you enough to tell you what is going on? First, listen, and I mean listen well. Find out all the facts and please don't react or condemn your daughter. Don't say to her you better change your ways. If you are condemning her it's a good chance that that's the reason why she looking for connections outside the family. The next thing is to love her to death with your actions and words. My comment to my daughter was, I like everything about you. I like how you talk and how you act. Help her understand that you are her biggest fan. Let her know that she doesn't have to apologize for something that she truly believes she is not guilty of. I mean are these girls the only one with an opinion. Of course if she feels as if she has done something to offend someone apologize, and move on.

Tell your daughter that long term relationships give everyone an opportunity to show their true colors. These relationships may be nice at first, but the longer that a person is in them the greater the chance that the true character of someone will pop up. That's when a person has to decide if they want to stay friends with someone who is not a very loyal friend. Tell your daughter to stand tall, hold her head up, and don't let them see you cry, and that you will be there to help her do all of these.

Adolescent relationships are a growth process. There is pain that can come from being hurt by a so called friend. Guess what by the time your daughter is 22 she will have the savvy to manage this type of crap and she won't be emotionally immature when it comes down to relationships. All friendships are not intimate, and by that I mean a relationship that involves a person's heart, mind, and soul. The relationships that your daughter has with someone in high school might be viewed by her as intimate. Relationships have a continuum that go from, acquaintance, friend, close friend, and then intimate friend. An intimate friend is usually someone that is a life long friend.

By the way after I offered my daughter some of my wisdom, which by the way took me two days, she said to me "I really love you dad," and was happier than I have seen her in a long while. When I was alone, I cried, yes I cried again. I am such a big baby.
I frequently think back to my childhood. I remember how my grandmother (Mom’s side) spent time at my house. To this day, she is still the sweetest old lady that I ever met. I was in an afternoon kindergarten program, and my grandmother took care of me during the mornings. Every morning when I woke up, she was sitting in a big chair right next to my bed. As soon as I opened my eyes she would wave and smile at me. I felt so secure seeing her in that chair. I really loved her a lot. My dad’s mom lived right up the street. When I became old enough, I used to walk over to her house, have lunch with her, do her grocery shopping for her, and then just hang around with her. She would give me a dollar for helping her. I saved those dollars to buy Christmas presents for my sisters, my mom, and my dad. Unfortunately, my dad’s mom passed away when I was thirteen, and I still miss her today. My mom’s mom passed away when I was nineteen, and that was another big loss that I still feel.

It really doesn’t matter how old you are. You still need parenting. Just because someone is grown and married doesn’t mean that they still don’t need guidance and direction. I watched my maternal grandmother help my mom deal with things all the time. Whether it was raising her kids or dealing with my dad, my mom always spoke to her and sought her advice. When she died, it was almost as if my mother’s wheels fell off, and she started to stumble through life and always seemed to be looking for answers to some of life’s most basic questions. She seemed to have greater difficulty being married to my dad and seemed angry at times until the day she died. When my dad’s mom died, I noticed that he would drink more, and go off on benders for a few days. It was almost as if he lost his check valve and didn’t feel accountable to anyone.

After working with and talking to countless parents, I have drawn the following conclusion: Parents need parenting! I have spoken to many adults my own age and have found that their relationship with their parents is strained or they’re not talking to their parents at all. I would ask them, “How long has it been since you spoke to your mom or dad,” expecting to hear that they just had a little spat and it was for a few days. A few days, try twenty years. During that twenty year period, I wonder how much wisdom they lost that they could have gotten from their parents. How much help with their children did they lose, or worse yet, what did the grandchildren lose because these parents despised their own mother or father?

No matter what the age, people need to be parented. Some individuals who have a poor relationship with their parents lose their grip on right and wrong and have a tremendous problem figuring out some of life’s most basic problems. These adult children often have a general sense of bitterness because of their poor relationship with their parents. They may feel resentful when they have problems raising their own children; because they become aware that they are receiving no direction or guidance from their own parents and that they have to figure everything out on their own. They might wonder what they’re going to do with their child or what’s wrong with their child. They should be asking what’s wrong with them. Their children enter school and become problems for the teacher. They don’t do what they’re told to do and are disrespectful and non-compliant. The teacher calls home only to find a disrespectful and non-compliant parent on the other
end who is defensive and who believes that the school isn’t being fair to their child. They berate the teacher and blame the school for all of the problems that their son or daughter is experiencing.

This was an all too frequent scenario for me. I dealt with many parents with this type of attitude as a teacher and as an administrator. In one district, I chose to run a parent support group. When I started the group I had seventy-five parents. They all did nothing but complain about the behavior of their kids and blamed the school for the problems their kids were experiencing. Once they discovered that I wasn’t going to play the blame game, my group dwindled down to a precious few and ultimately had to be discontinued. Parents want help, but they want the wrong kind of help. They want someone to fix their kids, but they need to find someone to fix them. They don’t realize that the people who can offer them the most help were put naturally at their disposal for free, and that’s their parents. The question still remains, who will parent the parents? Schools have tried parenting programs. These programs don’t work. They offer advice, but ultimately it’s up to the parents to follow through. The minute their kids gives them a hard time they revert right back to blaming everyone else, then start looking for more advice. Who will parent the parents? Maybe society has to parent the parents. Hopefully, someone will realize that all the wisdom, guidance, direction, support, love, and affection were theirs for the taking, but they chose to turn their backs on their biggest resource, their parents.
Parents Can Be Bullies Too
By: James Burns

Teachers who lose control of their classrooms usually do so because of the behavior of one or two students. Many times, the parents of these students have the ability to instill fear and intimidation into the teacher and in their own way bully the teacher. This scenario is all too familiar.

A student who is a bully gets reported by the victim to the teacher. The teacher doesn’t see the bullying, but is concerned about the report and believes it warrants a phone call home. The teacher calls home and is immediately put on the defensive by the parent. The parent begins to react to the teacher’s phone call and asks the following questions: Did you actually see my child bully someone else? Are you calling my son/daughter a liar? How do you know it was my child? Or, what did the other kid do to my son or daughter?

After the teacher catches his/her breathe and tries to respond, the parent then starts with comments such as these: I heard your entire class is out of control. My son/daughter has told me that you don’t like him/her. My child told me that he was bullied last week, and you did nothing about it. The parent then ends the conversation by saying the following: Unless you have some proof that my child bullied another student, don’t call me again, and then the parent hangs up. The next day the child comes to school and has more clout than before and continues the bullying behavior. The level of intimidation and fear starts to well up in the teacher, who now wonders what to do if there is another report from a victim that bullying is occurring again (by the same bully as before). This is a serious problem.

What usually does happen is the teacher does everything to avoid making that next phone call to the parent of the bully and begins to ignore the bully, including any bullying behaviors, and starts to surrender the authority in the classroom to the bully. Victims who are in this classroom have to sink or swim on their own and go to school everyday filled with fear.

Amazingly, the teacher starts to see the victim as the problem. If the victim says that he or she is being bullied, the teacher says, “Stop being such a tattletale, go back to your seat.” What’s even worse is that the teacher disciplines everyone else in the classroom, but not the bully. The rest of the class begins to see the teacher as siding with the bully, and the teacher appears to be agreeing with the bullying behavior. Everyone looses.