

Summary of Education & Health-Related Bullying Stories:

Bullying a Strong Risk Factor for Suicide in Gay Youth: Study

New research confirms the trend of disturbing headlines that have appeared in media reports in the past two years:

- For Many Gay Youth, Bullying Exacts a Deadly Toll
- Gay Buffalo Teen Commits Suicide on Eve of National Bullying Summit
- Tennessee Teen Commits Suicide After Years Of Anti-Gay Bullying
- Indiana Teen Commits Suicide After Anti-Gay Bullying at School

As seemingly damning as the headlines may be, the results of the study don't prove that harassment directly causes young gay people to become suicidal or hurt themselves. Still, the research is the first to show what happens over time to teens who are bullied and victimized, said study co-author Brian Mustanski, an associate professor at Northwestern University's Department of Medical Social Sciences. It may seem obvious that bullying and a lack of support from loved ones would make people more suicidal. But "sometimes the things that we think are important still have to get confirmed with science," Mustanski said. "It's surprising how negative those effects are," he added. "Victimization turned out to be really important. It was far and away the most important risk factor." In the new study, reported in the current issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, researchers surveyed 246 LGBT youth aged 16 to 20 and followed them over several years to see what happened to them. Fifty-seven percent of the participants were black; about half were female. Being bullied (over the time period of the study) and a low level of support from others boosted the risk that the teens would become suicidal. Bullying also boosted the risk that they would try to harm themselves. Over the 2.5-year study, slightly more than 15 percent of the people in the survey reported trying to harm themselves. On average, 8 percent of the participants reported hurting themselves in the prior six months, Mustanski said. Seven percent of those who didn't report being victimized said they'd harmed themselves, compared to 11 percent of those who'd reported being victimized. Overall, a history of being bullied more than doubled the odds for self-harm, the researchers found. However, those who had social support -- "support from family and peers, meaning that the young person would say they have someone to go to when they have a tough time, someone is looking out for them" -- were less likely to be suicidal, Mustanski added. Mustanski said young people themselves can find support through gay-straight alliances on campuses, youth programs at local gay community centers and online sites. He recommended the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's list of [warning signs](#) of suicide.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=661739>

Teens Victimized by Dating Violence Often Have Difficult Pasts

Teens victims of dating violence are likely to have suffered other forms of violence, such as sexual violence and child abuse, according to a new study. Interviews with a national sample of 1,680 youth aged 12 to 17 revealed that every victim of dating violence reported it wasn't the first time they had been victimized, the researchers at the University of New Hampshire Crimes Against Children Research Center said. Sexual violence and child abuse were the most common other types of mistreatment experienced by teen dating violence victims. More than half of teen dating violence victims had a history of some form of child abuse, with more than 40 percent of victims physically abused by a caregiver and nearly 70 percent having witnessed violence in

their families. The study also found that 60 percent of teen dating violence victims had also suffered at least one type of sexual victimization, with the most common types being verbal sexual harassment (30 percent), flashing by a peer (25 percent) and sexual assault (20 percent). The researchers also found that youth who had been cyberbullied were three to four times more likely to be victims of teen dating violence than other youth. Teen dating violence is often regarded as a stand-alone issue, but these findings show that it is more typically part of a pattern of multiple victimizations, the researchers said. "We were genuinely surprised how interconnected teen dating violence turned out to be with other forms of victimization. We thought there would be overlap but had no idea that all dating violence victims are dealing with other forms of violence and abuse as well," lead author Sherry Hamby, a UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center research associate said in a UNH news release. "We know that some youth are just generally more at risk for everything than other youth," Hamby said. "If they live in a violent family or violent neighborhood, they may not be able to avoid violence or know how to. If they've been hurt in the past, it may lower their self-esteem or impair their ability to protect themselves. In particular, we need to help kids from violent families, kids who have been bullied or kids who have been sexually abused from getting involved or staying in an assaultive relationship.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=661733>

Teen dating violence meant to assert power

A teen dating partner can prove to be abusive rather than affectionate as a way to assert power in a relationship, a U.S. psychologist said. Sherry L. Hamby -- a research associate professor at Sewanee, the University of the South in Tennessee, and a research associate with the University of New Hampshire Crimes against Children Research Center -- said teens who use violence and those who are vulnerable to being victimized have typically experienced previous victimization, harsh parenting and other adversities. Some of the most dangerous youth are those who expect their dates to meet all of their emotional and social needs, Hamby said. Warning signs include jealousy -- and jealousy that is way out of proportion to how long a couple have been dating, or how serious their relationship, is a big warning sign. So are controlling and monitoring behaviors. "If you have to send your boyfriend a picture from your phone to prove that you are really at your grandmother's house, that's a problem," Hamby said in a statement. "Youth who turn to violence to solve other problems are also at increased risk of perpetrating teen dating violence." Hamby, editor of the American Psychological Association's journal *Psychology of Violence*, said the journal was releasing a special issue about the interconnections among different types of violence. Teens, parents or anyone else -- regardless of where they live in the United States -- can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE or loveisrespect at 1-866-331-9474, or text "loveis" to 77054.

http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2012/02/15/Teen-dating-violence-meant-to-assert-power/UPI-88621329288173/

Bullied under-10s 'are dieting'

Almost a quarter of children under 10 consider themselves overweight, according to a new survey. Some 28% have been bullied because of their weight, while 26% have skipped a meal in the hope of losing some pounds. The poll of 1,500 young people aged seven to 18 also found that

more than 40% of under 10s worry about their weight and almost a quarter (23%) have been on a diet in the past year. Two thirds (66%) of this age group admit to weighing themselves, with 37% doing so regularly. And 38% say they are influenced by a "diet obsessed society". Among youngsters aged 11 to 13, 34% are not happy with their weight and 61% worry about it, 45% have been on a diet, including 15% in the last year. Some 77% of this age group weigh themselves, with half doing so regularly. And 44% have been the victim of bullying over their size while 51% say they are influenced by society's expectations. Of all the age groups, 13% say they are on a constant diet, while more than a quarter have visited anorexia websites and 5% do so on a regular basis. More than half also said they had heard of people making themselves sick after eating and 16% think laxatives help weight loss. More than half of girls surveyed said they want to be a size 10 or smaller when they are older.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5jo6-YauHMIQumcYGV1YSooUZwsuw?docId=N0792931325693790431A>

Bullying at work toxic and costly

Bullying, or psychological violence, is predictable in a workplace environment, a U.S. expert says. Gary Namie, president of Work Doctor Inc. and author of "The Bully-Free Workplace" -- said surveys show 35 percent of U.S. adults report being bullied at work. Another 15 percent witness it and vicariously are made miserable, but 50 percent report neither experiencing nor witnessing bullying. A toxic work environment can bring out the worst in most employees and hurt the bottom line, Namie said. A predictor of bullying-prone workplaces is a culture led by either autocratic or laissez-faire leaders. The work environment fosters destructive interpersonal competition and when negative conduct is rewarded -- either explicitly with promotions or implicitly by treating complaints with indifference -- bullying is reinforced and becomes a defining characteristic of that workplace, Namie said. In a 90-minute Nov. 15 Webinar, Namie said he will provide practical guidance on how to:

- Recognize the symptoms produced by bullying behavior.
- Identify three or more workplace conditions that precipitate bullying.
- Detect several physical and psychological health consequences of bullying.
- Distinguish between adequate and inadequate institutional responses to bullying complaints.
- Separate personality-based/dispositional explanations from workplace culture-based causes.
- Apply two or more interpersonal techniques that mitigate bullying.

http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2011/11/03/Bullying-at-work-toxic-and-costly/UPI-30321320294992/

Nicolette Taylor, 13 Year-Old Girl, Gets Nose Job To Avoid School Bullying

After enduring online harassment and name-calling multiple times a week because of the shape of her nose, Nicolette Taylor, a 13 year-old from Long Island decided to take drastic action: plastic surgery, Nightline reported. Although Taylor accepted teasing as a normal and unavoidable part of growing up, to her, social networking sites like Facebook made it 10 times worse. "Everyone could see it," the Nightline reported her saying. "All my friends could see it, all my new friends, and I didn't want them saying things. Because gossip goes around, and it

really hurts.” With her parents' blessing, Taylor went under the knife ... and got a new nose. Some time later, when the bandages were peeled off, the preteen cried from happiness and relief, the Daily Mail wrote. Earlier this year, ABC news reported that plastic surgery to avoid being bullied was on the rise, and that in 2007 alone, around 90,000 teens went under the knife. In April, people around their world expressed their outrage when 7-year-old Samantha Shaw got her ears pinned back to escape name calling and harassment. In this case, Shaw's mother told reporters that the surgery was more to prevent her child from being bullied even more in the future.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/12/nicolette-taylor-13-year- n_1007371.html

Poll: Young people say online meanness pervasive; most say it's deeply upsetting

A new Associated Press-MTV poll of youth in their teens and early 20s finds that most of them — 56 percent — have been the target of some type of online taunting, harassment or bullying, a slight increase over just two years ago. A third say they've been involved in “sexting,” the sharing of naked photos or videos of sexual activity. Among those in a relationship, 4 out of 10 say their partners have used computers or cellphones to abuse or control them. Three-fourths of the young people said they consider these darker aspects of the online world, sometimes broadly called “digital abuse,” a serious problem. They're not the only ones. Conduct that rises to the point of bullying is hard to define, but the AP-MTV poll of youth ages 14 to 24 showed plenty of rotten behavior online, and a perception that it's increasing. The share of young people who frequently see people being mean to each other on social networking sites jumped to 55 percent, from 45 percent in 2009. That may be partly because young people are spending more time than ever communicating electronically: 7 in 10 had logged into a social networking site in the previous week, and 8 in 10 had texted a friend. The most common complaints were people spreading false rumors on Internet pages or by text message, or being downright mean online; more than a fifth of young people said each of those things had happened to them. Twenty percent saw someone take their electronic messages and share them without permission, and 16 percent said someone posted embarrassing pictures or video of them without their permission. Some of these are one-time incidents; others cross into repeated harassment or bullying. Likewise, technology can facilitate dating abuse. Nearly three in 10 young people say their partner has checked up on them electronically multiple times per day or read their text messages without permission. Fourteen percent say they've experienced more abusive behavior from their partners, such as name-calling and mean messages via Internet or cellphone. The poll is part of an MTV campaign, “A Thin Line,” aiming to stop the spread of digital abuse.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/poll-young-people-say-online-meanness-pervasive-most-say-its-deeply-upsetting/2011/09/27/gIQA0uB30K_story.html

Bullying: How Do Victims Respond to Bullies and Why?

Many wonder why bullies bully, but a new study looks at the other side of the equation: How do children respond to bullying and why? The answer, researchers say, may lead to more effective interventions to reduce the negative consequences -- and perhaps even the frequency -- of bullying. "The main question we were interested in is how do children go about selecting strategies for dealing with harassment from their peers?" said University of Illinois psychology professor Karen Rudolph, who led the study. "And what we focused on was an understanding of

the goals that kids develop in their social relationships." Consciously or not, children tend to adopt one of three approaches, she said. "Some are focused on developing their relationships. They want to improve their social skills. They want to learn how to make friends," she said. Others are most interested in "demonstrating their competence," she said. They may try to demonstrate their competence by enhancing their status or seeking approval from their peers. "These are kids who say: 'I want to be cool. I want lots of kids to like me. I want to hang out with the popular kids.'" Or they may try to demonstrate their competence by avoiding negative judgments. "These are the kids who say, 'I'm not going to do anything that's going to draw negative attention, that's going to make me look like a loser, that's going to embarrass me,'" Rudolph said. The researchers found, as they expected, that children who were most interested in developing relationships "had more positive perceptions of themselves and were more likely to say that they would cooperate and work to reduce conflict with other kids," Rudolph said. When other kids harassed them, these children were "more likely to engage in proactive strategies to solve the problem," she said. This might involve asking a teacher for advice, or getting emotional support. Students with these goals also were less likely to engage in other impulsive responses to harassment, Rudolph said. Children who wanted to be perceived as "cool" or competent "were less likely to use those kinds of thoughtful, careful strategies" when dealing with harassment, Rudolph said. "And they were more likely to retaliate." These children also had more negative perceptions of their peers, Rudolph said. Understanding children's social goals may lead to better interventions to change the dynamic between a bully and his or her targets, Rudolph said. "Just telling kids, 'this is what you should do' might not change their behaviors because their goals might be different from our goals," she said. "So I think understanding where the kid's coming from and why they're actually acting the way they do is going to be crucial for changing their behavior."

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/08/110830082052.htm>

Bullying May Contribute to Lower Test Scores

High schools in Virginia where students reported a high rate of bullying had significantly lower scores on standardized tests that students must pass to graduate, according to research presented at the 119th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association. "Our study suggests that a bullying climate may play an important role in student test performance," said Dewey Cornell, PhD, a clinical psychologist and professor of education at the University of Virginia. "This research underscores the importance of treating bullying as a schoolwide problem rather than just an individual problem." The research, which is part of the ongoing Virginia High School Safety Study, compiled surveys about bullying in 2007 from more than 7,300 ninth-grade students and almost 3,000 teachers at 284 high schools located across Virginia. Approximately two-thirds of the students were white, 22 percent were African American, and 5 percent were Hispanic. The study found that schoolwide passing rates on standardized exams for Algebra I, Earth Science and World History were 3 percent to 6 percent lower in schools where students reported a more severe bullying climate. "This difference is substantial because it affects the school's ability to meet federal requirements and the educational success of many students who don't pass the exams," Cornell said. The survey defined bullying as "the use of one's strength or popularity to injure, threaten or embarrass another person on purpose. Bullying can be physical, verbal or social. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength argue or fight." Effective anti-bullying programs must take a schoolwide approach that involves students,

teachers and parents, Cornell said. The programs should provide help for bullying victims, counseling and discipline for bullies, and education for bystanders to discourage them from supporting bullying. The study was co-authored by Anna Lacey, a University of Virginia graduate student in clinical and school psychology, and the research was supported by a grant from the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/08/110807143810.htm>

Special Needs Kids Bullied More, Fare Poorly at School

Many 'special needs' kids who struggle with medical, emotional or behavioral issues often face tough social and academic troubles in school, a new study suggests. Tracking the progress of more than 1,450 students in fourth through sixth grades from 34 rural schools, U.S. researchers found that one-third coped with special health care needs such as asthma, chronic pain, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, or emotional or behavioral problems. These children, from three large school districts in Maryland and West Virginia, were also more likely to be bullied or feel socially isolated in their school, and to be more disruptive in class, according to the cross-sectional study, published in the July 25 issue of *Pediatrics*. "Health affects school performance," noted study co-author Dr. Christopher B. Forrest, a professor of pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "Special health care needs have manifold effects on school outcomes that increase the likelihood that these kids are not going to successfully transition to adulthood." Children were classified as having a special health care need if they had a condition lasting at least 12 months and needed interventions such as prescription medication, therapy, counseling or other medical, mental health or educational services. Additionally, school records were measured for attendance, grades and standardized achievement test scores. Forrest said the finding that one of every three students had a special need was high -- greater than a 2003 national survey indicating 20 percent of children aged 6 to 17 had such conditions. But he added that some of the problems stemming from chronic conditions do tend to peak in the ages he and his team studied. Boys were twice as likely to have a special health care need as girls, the study found. But the overall findings from the study were disheartening, Forrest said. Kids with special health care needs "have significant differences in their engagement in school and their school relationships, as well as academic achievement," he said. "It sets up a trajectory for these kids that's highly distressing."

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=655179>

Bullying's Scars May Last a Lifetime, Experts Say

Because millions of kids in the United States are affected by bullying, some people may shrug it off as just a part of growing up. But experts warn that it should be treated as a serious issue and not accepted as normal childhood behavior. Estimates indicate that nearly 30 percent of U.S. teens -- or about 5.7 million -- have bullied someone, been targeted by bullies or both, according to the National Youth Violence Prevention Center. Widespread use of the Internet has also taken bullying to a new frontier in online chat rooms, email and on social networking sites. Facing this growing problem, experts at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill., warned that if bullying is not addressed head-on, this very real problem could do lasting harm to children's health and well-being. "Being the target of a bully involves real suffering," Dr. Earlene Strayhorn, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Loyola University, said in a university news

release. "The constant stress of physical assaults, threats, coercion and intimidation can take a heavy toll on a child's psyche over time. The abuse may end at some point but the psychological, developmental, social and emotional damage can linger for years, if not a lifetime." Because bullies thrive on intimidation and control, they often target those who are timid, passive and have fewer friends. They also choose victims who are younger, smaller and are less able to defend themselves. These victims may experience a number of adverse effects, including anxiety, fear and the inability to focus on schoolwork. Over time, Strayhorn noted, a bullied child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth can suffer, resulting in withdrawal, depression and insecurity.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=653988>

Kids Who Bully Often Get Poor Sleep

Poor sleep may be a factor in aggressive behavior among kids, according to new research that found that children who bully other kids are more likely to be sleepy during the day. In the study, researchers from the University of Michigan Medical School found that children with conduct problems at school were twice as likely to have sleep-disordered breathing problems or daytime sleepiness as other children who reported adequate amounts of sleep. "What this study does is raise the possibility that poor sleep, from whatever cause, can indeed play into bullying or other aggressive behaviors -- a major problem that many schools are trying to address," Louise O'Brien, assistant professor in the University of Michigan's Sleep Disorders Center and the departments of neurology and oral and maxillofacial surgery, said in a university news release. In examining elementary school students who had conduct problems, the researchers concluded that sleep-disordered breathing -- problems that occur during sleep, including snoring and obstructive sleep apnea, where the airway collapses -- could be the cause of their daytime sleepiness. Other reasons for kids' fatigue, they noted, could include a disorganized home environment or too much stimulation from technology, such as televisions, cellphones or computers in the bedroom. To improve children's sleep quality, the researchers said, parents should:

- Remove TVs, phones and computers from kids' bedrooms.
- Encourage children to get an adequate amount of uninterrupted sleep each night. That's 11 to 13 hours a night for preschoolers and 10 to 11 hours nightly for school-aged kids.
- Make getting enough sleep a household priority.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=653528>

One-in-Four Workers Have Felt Bullied in the Workplace, CareerBuilder Study Finds

A new study from CareerBuilder shows the playground isn't the only place one will encounter bullies. Twenty-seven percent of workers reported they have felt bullied in the workplace with the majority neither confronting nor reporting the bully. Comparing genders and age groups, the segments that were more likely than others to report feeling bullied were women, workers age 55 or older, and workers age 24 or younger. The study was conducted from February 21 to March 10, 2011 and included more than 5,600 full-time workers nationwide. Women reported a higher incidence of being treated unfairly at the office. One-third (34 percent) of women said they have felt bullied in the workplace compared to 22 percent of men. Looking at age, 29 percent of workers age 55 or older and 29 percent of workers age 24 or younger reported they had been bullied on the job, the highest among age groups. Workers age 35 to 44 were the least likely to report feeling bullied at 25 percent. The most common culprit is typically the boss, according to

the survey. Fourteen percent of workers felt bullied by their immediate supervisor while 11 percent felt bullied by a co-worker. Seven percent said the bully was not their boss, but someone else higher up in the organization while another 7 percent said the bully was their customer. "Bullying is a serious offense that can disrupt the work environment, impact morale and lower productivity," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources. "If you are feeling bullied, keep track of what was said or done and who was present. The more specifics you can provide, the stronger the case you can make for yourself when confronting the bully head on or reporting the bully to a company authority."

http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr632&sd=4%2f20%2f2011&ed=4%2f20%2f2009&siteid=cbpr&sc_cmp1=cb_pr632_&wpisrc=nl_persfin

Bullied Kids Showing Up in School Nurses' Offices

Elementary school children who were victims of peer bullying -- along with the bullies themselves -- made more frequent visits to a school nurse's office with complaints of physical illnesses and injuries than their other classmates, according to new research out of Kansas. "The message is, a child might be getting frequent stomachaches from being picked on," said Eric Vernberg, lead author of the study and director of the Child and Family Services Clinic at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. "If a child is frequently showing up at the nurse's office with a fever or vomiting and no obvious illness, it might reflect the visit is related to victimization and to some extent aggression," Vernberg said. He added that when a student often visits a school nurse and parents get calls about their child complaining of stomachaches, "it's certainly worth examining the child's relationship with [his] peers." The report is intended to prompt investigation into such cases by school nurses and others to see whether school officials need to intervene to stop bullying. The Kansas study involved 590 children in grades 3 through 5, and identified a small but statistically significant number who were involved in bullying incidents in six Topeka primary schools. These students went to a nurse's office an average of 4.71 times during the 2000-01 school year. The study found that aggressive interactions among children can hurt their health and do particular harm to the victimized child, who is likely to become socially withdrawn. About 45 percent of trips to the school nurse were for somatic, or physical, complaints such as headaches. Another 13 percent of visits were for illnesses with physical symptoms, while 42 percent were for physical injuries with no indicated reasons, based on nursing log notes. <http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=652204>

Student Bullying Linked to Family Violence: CDC

Student bullies, their victims and bully-victims -- those who are victimized and also engage in bullying -- face a broad range of health risks, including family violence and intentional self-harm, a new U.S. study finds. In a survey of 5,807 middle-school and high-school students from almost 138 Massachusetts public schools, researchers found that those involved in bullying in any way are more likely to contemplate suicide and engage in self-harm, compared to other students. Those involved in bullying were also more likely to have certain risk factors, including suffering abuse from a family member or witnessing violence at home, compared to people who were neither bullies nor victims. Bullying was defined as being repeatedly teased, hit, threatened, kicked or excluded by other students. After adjusting for other factors, the odds ratio of a middle school student being physically hurt by a family member, for example, was 2.9 for victims of

bullying, 4.4 for bullies, and 5.0 for those who were both bullies and victims, compared to other students. The odds ratio for witnessing violence at home was, respectively, 2.6, 2.9, and 3.9. The odds ratio for a high school student to be physically hurt by a family member was 2.8 for victims, 3.8 for bullies, and 5.4 for bully-victims, compared to students who were not involved in bullying; for witnessing violence at home, the odds ratio for high school students was 2.3, 2.7 and 6.8, respectively. Previous research has linked bullying with poor grades, substance use and mental health issues. This report concludes that the health risks and home environment for teens involved in bullying are much worse than for kids who have no experience with bullying. Of the students surveyed, middle school students (44 percent) were more likely than high school students (30.5 percent) to have some involvement in bullying. Researchers found that 26.8 percent of middle-school students reported being bullied compared to 15.6 percent of high-school students. But fewer middle-school students (7.5 percent) than high-school students (8.4 percent) reported being bullies themselves. In both age ranges, more males than females admitted to bullying, and more females said they were victims than males. The CDC has launched a program, Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, to help communities promote safe environments for students.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=652160>

Study Finds Surprising Gender Differences Related to Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment may have become so commonplace for women that they have built up resistance to harassing behavior they consider merely "bothersome," suggests a provocative new study by Michigan State University researchers. This effect, said lead investigator Isis Settles, may be similar to the way people build up immunity to infection following exposure to a virus. "When women view sexual harassment as bothersome, it doesn't seem to be associated with distress," said Settles, associate professor of psychology. "In some ways this suggests that sexual harassment is such a widespread problem that women have figured out ways to deal with it so it doesn't interfere with their psychological well-being." For the study, which appears in the research journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, the researchers examined surveys of more than 6,000 women and men serving in all five branches of the U.S. military. Sexual harassment was a problem for both sexes, the study found. More than 50 percent of women and nearly 20 percent of men reported at least one incident of sexual harassment during a 12-month period. The study is one of the first to examine how both men and women view harassment -- whether they saw it as bothersome or frightening -- and how these perceptions relate to their psychological well-being, Settles said. The survey covered 16 types of verbal and physical harassment, including offensive stories or jokes and touching that made the person uncomfortable. For women, sexual harassment was distressing when they saw it as frightening, but not when they saw it as bothersome. "We were surprised by this finding," Settles said. "We thought women would be negatively impacted if they saw their harassment as frightening or bothersome." For men, sexual harassment was distressing when they saw it as either frightening or bothersome, she said. "People tend to underestimate the impact of sexual harassment on men," Settles said. She added that men "typically haven't had a lifetime of experiences dealing with sexual harassment and may not know how to deal with it when it happens to them." Settles said the study does not suggest sexual harassment is less distressing for women than men.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/03/110330101242.htm>

Recognizing the warning signs for teen bullying, suicide

School officials need to do more to make parents aware of the stress that today's teens and tweens face. Mainstream media outlets have coined a new term to describe the rash of student suicides committed in the wake of persistent school bullying and harassment: "bullycides." According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 12 percent of all deaths among youth and young adults in the U.S. result from suicides. Nearly 20 percent of high school students surveyed by the CDC report being bullied on school property during the previous 12 months; 5 percent report not going to school on a least one day during the past 30 days as a result of safety concerns. Perhaps even more telling, 26.1 percent of the CDC survey respondents felt so sad or hopeless for a two-week period or more that they stopped doing their usual activities—a clear sign of teenage depression. Nationwide, 13.8 percent of students reported they had seriously considered committing suicide. The numbers are particularly bleak for female students, 17.4 percent of whom reported suicidal tendencies. Because the CDC identifies a family history of suicide, mental illness, and alcohol or drug abuse as major risk factors for suicide, school personnel need to stay alert for signs of trouble and recognize that bad behavior might just represent a cry for help. "Domestic violence and bullying feed each other," wrote Susan M. Swearer, an associate professor of school psychology at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. According to Swearer, a 2007 study indicated that "72 percent of children who were physically abused by their parents became a bully, a victim of a bully, or both." Both bullies and victims are at risk for significant mental health issues, from low self-esteem to anxiety and teenage depression. So, while bullying might serve as a triggering event, or increase a young person's tendency for "self harm," other risk factors also likely are involved, according to Swearer. "Interpreting a teenager's suicide as a reaction to bullying ignores the complex emotional problems that American youth face," writes Swearer, author of *Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Realistic Strategies for Schools* and co-director of the Bullying Research Network. "To understand the complexity of suicidal behavior, we need to look beyond one factor." In addition to mental illness, Swearer says easy access to firearms and medication, exposure to the suicidal behavior of others, and isolation might all contribute to a child's feelings of hopelessness and despair. Major shifts or changes in behavior, such as isolating former friends, changing peer groups, dropping grades, and losing interest in favorite activities, should raise red flags for educators, parents, neighbors, friends, or other individuals concerned about a child's well-being. Other warning signs include difficulty sleeping or over-sleeping, changes in body weight or appetite, irritability, sadness, lethargy, and difficulty concentrating. Younger children might report vague physical symptoms or have more frequent emotional outbursts. For most young people, developing resiliency and responding well to adversity represent learned skills. As such, we need to help students develop these characteristics and not simply judge them for not having them.

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2011/02/14/recognizing-the-warning-signs-for-teen-bullying-suicide/>

Bullying May Accompany Drive to Be Popular

Teens who are already popular but trying to become even more so are the most likely to bully other kids, new research suggests. The kids seem to think that antagonizing others will raise their

own status in the eyes of their peers, according to the study, published in the February issue of the American Sociological Review. Researchers asked about 3,700 students in 8th, 9th and 10th grades from three counties in North Carolina about their behavior toward others and how often they were the target of physical aggression, verbal aggression (such as teasing or threats), rumors or indirect bullying (such as ostracism). Teens were also asked how often they did this to a classmate. Kids who were at the top of the social pecking order, but not at the very top, were the most likely to tease or be aggressive toward others. "Status increases aggression," said lead study author Robert Faris, an assistant professor of sociology at University of California, Davis. "For a long time, people perceived aggression as a maladjusted reaction to problems at home or mental health issues, but our research is consistent with the idea it's a nasty underbelly to social hierarchies. Aggression is perceived to be a way of getting ahead." In fact, bullying peaked at the 98th percentile of popularity and then dropped for the most popular kids -- the top 2 percent -- perhaps because they no longer feel the need to put others down to improve their own status. The average aggression rate, or the number of classmates they teased or bullied, for kids at the 98th percentile was 28 percent greater than for students at the very bottom and 40 percent greater than for students at the very top. Kids at the very lowest end of the popularity spectrum also did little bullying, possibly because they did not have the power to even attempt it, Faris said. Perhaps the good news is that about 67 percent of kids were not aggressive or mean toward anyone. Of the 33 percent who were, they picked on an average of about two classmates. The maximum number of kids any one bully targeted was nine, but targeted children were picked on by as many as 17 of their classmates, the researchers found. Girls and boys were equally as likely to bully. Kids who moved higher on the social hierarchy also increased their aggression. So what to do about it? Rather than focus only on the bullies or their victims, programs should also include the silent majority who aren't involved, but whose tacit support may encourage bullying. "The bystanders give people their status, and they can decide to reward aggression or scorn it," Faris said. Bullying causes about 160,000 U.S. students to skip school each day, according to background information in the study. Kids who are being targeted should be taught to be assertive, but also to notify their parents and school authorities if the bullying gets out of hand, experts say. "Parents need to recognize this is going to happen. They need to teach their kids to stand up for themselves and not be so fragile when it comes to teasing," Gallagher said. "At the same time, we need to watch out for its excesses."

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=649636>

Perception of Time Spent With Fathers Can Lead to Bullying

Do your children think you work too much and don't spend enough time with them? If so, their perception could lead to bullying behavior, according to research by Vanderbilt University sociologist Andre Christie-Mizell. "Our behavior is driven by our perception of our world, so if children feel they are not getting enough time and attention from parents then those feelings have to go somewhere and it appears in interaction with their peers," said Christie-Mizell, an associate professor of sociology and licensed psychologist specializing in family therapy and the treatment of children with mood and behavior disorders. His study, published in the journal *Youth & Society*, looked at two questions -- "What is the relationship between the number of hours parents work and adolescent bullying behavior?" and "What is the relationship between bullying behavior and youth's perceptions of the amount of time their parents spend with them?" What Christie-Mizell found is that it was children's perception of how much time they spent with their

fathers that had the most impact on bullying behavior. Christie-Mizell began the research thinking that mothers' work hours -- since mothers overwhelmingly are the ones to care for and monitor children -- would be more likely to have an impact on whether children exhibited bullying behavior such as being cruel to others, being disobedient at school, hanging around kids who get in trouble, having a very strong temper and not being sorry for misbehaving. However, it was when fathers worked full time or overtime and children perceived that they did not spend enough time with their fathers that bullying behavior increased. Mothers' work hours showed modest to no effect on bullying behavior. Christie-Mizell believes this is because children perceive mothers as being more accessible because they still handle most of the responsibilities at home as caregivers and family managers. His suggestion is to set up a schedule for parent-child interaction in order to guide children's perceptions -- so, for example, a child knows that every Saturday morning he or she is going to have breakfast or play ball with Dad. Christie-Mizell says the interaction has to be purposeful so children know they will have this time, rather than the random, last-minute trip with Dad to the grocery store. "Children need to know they have this scheduled time and it's important for fathers to try to keep to the schedule as much as possible. If fathers have to miss, then it's also important that they explain to the child why they have to miss their scheduled time and how what they are doing instead affects their family," he said. Christie-Mizell studied the behavior and perceptions of 687 children who were 10 to 14 years old and living in two-parent homes in 2000. He measured their bullying behavior using a scale based on the Behavior Problem Index (BPI), a 28-item scale designed to assess typical childhood behavior syndromes. He also looked at their parents' work hours, with about 40 percent of the mothers and 47 percent of their spouses/partners working full-time -- on average 35 to 40 hours per week -- and 15 percent of mothers and 50 percent of their spouses/partners working overtime -- more than 40 hours per week.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110128144324.htm>

Studies Take Aim at Playground Gossip

Gossip and social ostracization may come far down on the list of concerns for educators trying to prevent bullying, yet emerging research suggests relational bullying, though often the most frequently overlooked, may hold the key to changing an aggressive culture in schools. Of the three major types of bullying—physical, verbal and relational—relational aggression, has been the latest and least studied, both because it involves less visible, immediately dangerous behavior than fighting or verbal abuse, and in part because it involved more nuanced relationships among the bullies, victims, and bystanders. The newer research into relational aggression is bringing into focus an alternative to the stereotypical image of the dull, socially awkward, and physically aggressive schoolyard bully: a popular, socially astute student who uses rumors and social isolation to control enemies, rivals, and friends alike. While students who physically fight tend to be avoided by peers, studies show relational aggression actually becomes more socially acceptable as students get older. “A huge problem is, how do you even know it’s going on?” said Hill M. Walker, a professor of special education and co-director of the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior at the University of Oregon. “Generally, you have to rely on self-reports from victims, and children for a variety of reasons are reluctant to define themselves as victims.” Relational aggression has long been known as “covert aggression,” but the emerging research suggests that’s something of a misnomer: Social isolation, rumor-mongering, and manipulation have proven surprisingly easy for researchers to spot. In a recent [randomized, controlled study](#) of

610 3rd through 6th-grade students in six Seattle-area schools, researchers led by Karin S. Frey, a research associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Washington, found relational aggression on the playground was “semi-public” and episodes could go on for quite a while, even with adults present. “A student or students would speak negatively about a third party that was not among the listeners,” the researchers noted in a study in *School Psychology Review*. “Group members would laugh, gesture, or look ‘meaningfully’ in the direction of an isolated, unhappy-looking student.” In a way, studies like these are finally dissecting a phenomenon already well-documented in popular culture: The popular clique of “mean girls,” anonymous lists alleging the sexuality of various students, and suave but socially manipulative class presidents are all common tropes in adolescent literature and shows, from the “Mean Girls” movies to the “Glee” television series. Not every student is socially skilled enough to intervene between a bully and a victim without escalating the situation. That’s why the Steps to Respect anti-bullying program instead teaches bystanders to avoid feeding the bully’s energy by watching, laughing, and spreading rumors. Students learn to comfort and support the victim of abuse without encouraging him or her to retaliate, which can escalate the problem. In the Seattle study, researchers found “malicious gossip” dropped 72 percent after elementary schools instituted Steps to Respect, which trains teachers to identify relational aggression and encourage bystanders to stand up for ostracized children.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/02/02/19gossip_ep.h30.html

Girls Who Are Bullied Are at Risk for Substance Use Through Depression

Both boys and girls who are victims of bullying, including bullying through e-mail and the internet, are at elevated risk for depression. However, according to a new study, adolescent girls may engage in substance use as a result of bullying-related depression. As schools reopen following the holidays, the message to parents of adolescent girls is that bullying can have serious consequences: “If your daughter is a victim of bullying, take it seriously, do all possible to prevent recurrence, and attend to possible depression and substance use. For parents of boys who are bullied: depression is still an issue, but it may not explain the relation between victimization and substance use,” according to Jeremy Luk of the University of Washington. He reported his findings in the December issue of *Prevention Science*, a journal of the Society for Prevention Research. His study is the first to identify depression as a possible link to the relation between victimization and substance use among adolescents. The findings are generalizable because they are based on data from a nationally representative sample of 1,495 tenth graders. “Bullying is a serious problem among adolescents. Previous research has shown that it is associated with loneliness, depression and suicide. But no previous national studies have identified depression as an explanation for the relationship between victimization from bullying and substance use,” Luk said. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110119120539.htm>

Survey Finds Much Victimization of Children Goes Unreported

Nearly 60 percent of 10-to-17-year-olds surveyed in a new study say they were victims of violence, abuse or crime in the past year. However, fewer than half said that authorities ever learned about what happened. Researchers led by David Finkelhor of the University of New Hampshire surveyed youths 10 to 17 years old and parents of children up to 9 years old in 2008. More than 4,500 children were involved in the survey. More than 58 percent of the kids said

they'd been victimized in the past year, including reports of bullying. Of these, just shy of 46 percent said authorities knew of at least one of the incidents. Authorities were more likely to know about incidents that were more serious, such as certain cases of sexual assault, kidnapping and gang or group assaults, the survey found. "However, even emotional bullying (51.5 percent), neglect (47.8 percent) and theft (46.8 percent) were often known to authorities," the authors wrote. Kids were less likely to report assaults by peers and siblings, dating violence, sexual exposure (such as flashing) and statutory rape. "Childhood/adolescent abuse is frequently described as a hidden problem, and victimization studies regularly have shown that much abuse goes undisclosed," the study authors wrote. "The hidden nature of childhood victimization has multiple sources. Clearly, children and adolescents are easily intimidated by offenders and fear retaliation." The authors added that, in many cases, young people and their families choose to deal with incidents "informally," fearing the consequences of police and court involvement. The study did find, though, that authorities are more aware of victimization than during an earlier survey, conducted in 1992. "However, the study also shows that a considerable portion of childhood/adolescent exposure to victimization is still unknown to authorities," the authors wrote. "The study suggests that outreach needs to be particularly enhanced toward boys, Hispanics and higher-income groups. It also suggests that disclosure promotion should be directed toward episodes that involve family members and peer perpetrators."

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=648174>
