



Bullying  
Hurts!

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**Bullying is intended to cause distress.** It is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a power imbalance. Bullying behaviors are typically repeated over time and may include teasing, name-calling, threatening, embarrassing someone in public, hurting someone's reputation, or hurting someone physically. Cyberbullying takes place using technology, which can give it an immediate and huge audience, while offering anonymity to the perpetrator.

**Bullying does not only affect children.** Though we tend to think of bullying in relation to children, adults may also be targets. Adults who bully may have authoritarian tendencies and a need to control or dominate. Unless bullying is challenged in a group, a "culture of bullying" may develop. It can happen in families, in work environments, and in churches.

**Bullying is serious.** Studies have revealed major social, educational, and health impacts related to bullying. It can be emotionally devastating, leading to such things as anxiety, depression, anger, humiliation, shame, isolation, sleep disorders, addictions, violence, and suicide.

**Bullying has a spiritual component at its source.** Those who bully demonstrate contempt and disrespect for people who are created in the image of God. When it happens at church it can shape a person's ideas of God, exclude someone from a loving faith community, and have long lasting spiritual consequences.

**Bullying requires the church to respond.** The prevalence is too great and the impacts too severe for the church to ignore the problem of bullying. Nurturing empathy in the church community is one way to prevent bullying. Setting good examples by showing empathy and respect in healthy relationships is critical, because empathy is "caught" rather than "taught".

To nurture empathy in your church practice:

- Active listening – give feedback, ask questions, encourage deeper thinking
- Acknowledging feelings – provide a safe space for expression and working through feelings
- Positive discipline – not punishment but learning new ways of behaving
- Fellowship and friendship – we are all designed to belong to a community characterized by genuine Christian love and positive affection – no place for bullying here!

For more information visit the Safe Church Website [www.crcna.org/safechurch](http://www.crcna.org/safechurch)