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Inclusion, Exclusion, and Bullying

THE CHICKEN SPENDS ITS WHOLE LIFE . . .

The school and a student's mom asked me to consult about and to observe her four-year-old son, Eddie. She felt that another boy, Mitchell, was bullying him. The school officials were somewhat ambivalent about how much Eddie was being victimized. However, they admitted that something was going on. Eddie's days in preschool were not times of joyous exploration, social interaction, and academic stimulation. His calm immersion in playful exploration would be suddenly interrupted, as he caught a sudden movement or a discordant sound. "What's that? Is he coming this way?" he would say silently to himself when he saw Mitchell look his way. Trying as hard as he could to become invisible, he could tell that it was happening . . . again. "Please, not me again. How come not Billy? Or Juanita? Why me? Always me?" Anxiously, he looked for the teachers. No luck. One was by the sink helping clean a mess. The other was in the corner reading to a small group of kids. "They're not looking! Don't they know? Don't they see, it's happening again? Teacher! Mitchell's going to get me . . . again!" Mitchell was ready to "play" with Eddie. I had been watching unbeknownst to the children from outside the classroom door. I did not need to hear what was said. The body language and facial expressions of both Mitchell and Eddie communicated the bully and victim dance. I entered the room and caught Mitchell's eyes. He immediately disengaged from Eddie. Mitchell was smart enough to not only pick up on

Eddie's vulnerability, but also to scan the environment to see what he could get away with. An adult was watching. Eddie was "lucky" this time.

Eddie's family had experienced trauma previously, when a stray bullet shot by an unknown shooter had killed his father at the park. His mom was terrified that violence in the form of bullying had found her family again. Were they doomed? Were they somehow attracting violence? She anguished, "Why is my son targeted by this new bully?"

Targets for harassment can be chosen for any number of reasons. They aren't necessarily victims nor do they necessarily seek or need acceptance from the bully's peer group. Simply being a newcomer to a school without immediate friends or alliances might be enough to draw a bully's attention. A perceived slight, a manner of dress or deportment, association with a disliked peer or relative, or even success in school could be reason enough for one person to bully another. On the other hand, bullies become emboldened if they sense that a potential target is vulnerable. (Parsons, 2003, p. 45)

When I initially went to observe, no one pointed out either the supposed victim, Eddie, or the supposed bully, Mitchell. I didn't immediately identify Mitchell as the bully, but I easily recognized the "victim" among the twenty children in the classroom. Any bully could have picked Eddie out among the children as the "One." In my psychotherapy practice, an adult client, KC, felt she was, from early childhood, the one always picked on. Since childhood, bad things always seemed to happen to her, the favored victim for the world's bullies. Anguished, she cried out,

Why always me? How do they find me? The other night . . . I went to dinner with my grandma. Waiting for a table, we ordered wine and sat at a small table in the bar. There I was . . . baggy sweats, hair in a ponytail, no makeup . . . minding my own business. Out of the corner of my eye . . . or, maybe I heard a tone . . . or, some kind of sixth sense . . . I looked up and there in the doorway was . . . trouble!

How did KC know with just one look that he was trouble? She knew because the chicken spends its whole life learning how to recognize the hawk. Children who are bullied, victimized, or picked on from early on or throughout childhood often learn quickly to recognize their predators, the bullies. The experience of KC was not an isolated adult incident, but a continuation of childhood traumas. At one time, KC had been the "Eddie" to the bullies in her childhood. And she was still the "one" to adult bullies in adulthood.

A classroom cannot just throw children together and assume a cohesive community will result. Inclusion puts children with others who may have aggressive to toxic emotional or behavioral energy—bullies or "mean" kids. Unfortunately, teachers, parents, and other adults can hold an illusion of childhood, classrooms, and playgrounds as idyllic sanctuaries of warm,

loving innocence. They deny the existence and actions of bullies or mean kids. They then fail to anticipate or prepare children to deal with such realities. Children with special needs may come from compassionate, nurturing, and protective environments supervised by conscientiously dedicated adults. In other words, they initially grow up in a loving sanctuary without harshness and mean kids. Or the adult management had been so vigilant that otherwise problematic interactions are nipped in the bud or resolved by adult interventions. Unfortunately, such adult intervention does not empower children to care for themselves. If overprotected, some children do not learn how to protect themselves from aggression. Children with processing issues may have trouble recognizing the predatory children. Other children with distraction issues may not perceive warning cues. Still other children may note cues but misinterpret them. After repeated experiences of being picked on or bullied without sufficient recourse and support, victimized individuals may learn to recognize perpetrators. They may become hypervigilant and hypersensitive to any potential interaction, threatening or benign. Feeling vulnerable, unable to protect themselves, their only hope becomes to recognize the predator before it attacks and hopefully avoid it. Eddie and my client KC had both become hypersensitive and hypervigilant to anticipate potential abusers. Unfortunately, hypersensitivity and hypervigilance were not only ineffective, but increased the probability of harassment.

THE HAWK SPENDS ITS WHOLE LIFE . . .

KC had seen him before—not him specifically, but bullies like him back in elementary school, just as Eddie experienced bullies in his preschool. She saw them later in middle and high school, and eventually, at work, in social situations—everywhere. She had met bullies all her life. With a glint in his eyes, the smirk, and the body posture, the hawk had found her again. A tremor crept into her voice:

I turned away quickly to avoid eye contact! Out of the corner of my eye, I watched . . . standing with hands on hips. Scanning the room . . . and, then he walked right up to me! And started messing with me! Why me out of all those women in the room? A dozen others . . . some dressed up . . . pretty makeup . . . some sitting alone! Why not them? But he came up to me! How do they always know that I'm the one? The easiest to abuse?

Predatory individuals seek power and control over others, but carefully aggress against the weakest or most vulnerable. Any individual (particularly, any child) identifiably different becomes a potential target for bullies. If children's vulnerabilities are not mitigated through a process of empowerment, they risk continuing to be prey to bullies for decades as KC had been. Being special or gifted distinguishes individuals as different and

thus potential victims. Once victimized, a cycle of vulnerability may build upon itself. Thoughtful teachers are wary that greater diversity in classrooms does not result in greater exclusion and bullying. They are adamant and assertive that any bullying is unacceptable. Unfortunately, some adults accept and implicitly condone such aggression as “kids being kids.” Or they may give gender permission by accepting that “boys will be boys” or all female socialization is innocent. The classic novel, *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954), where shipwrecked schoolboys without adult guidance descend into barbaric murder reminds us of how boys can be! Exclusion from cliques is a painful memory for many women. Effective teachers consistently set clear boundaries and consistently follow through with clear consequences about hurtful behavior. Then boys and girls will be citizens in healthy communities—first, the classroom and later in society.

For example, teachers may need to help children understand and respect the special name that his or her parent chose through a lesson on names and meanings from different cultures. For many children, having what others may call a special quality does not result in them feeling special in any positive way. They may feel they don’t belong because of their special challenges or capacities. If they become marginal members on the periphery of the social group, they become like the crippled deer on the edge of the herd. The wolf pack targets them. Abusers know individuals with higher status, confidence, and social-emotional and peer resources (friends) can and will resist and fight back. Bullies leave them alone as too much trouble to mess with. This is especially true if there is easy prey they can pick on or exclude without objection from the community.

The life of the victim is a miserable existence. Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, and Kernic (2005) reported in their study of over 3,000 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students that “only 42% of students defined as victims and 44% of those defined as bully-victims said that they had reported their victimization to someone” (p. 1026). When not being picked on, they worry if and when they will be picked on again. There were not any places at school that seemed safe, including those with adult supervision. “The playground was the most likely site (71%) for victimization followed by classrooms (46%), gym classes (40%), lunchrooms (39%), halls and stairs (33%), and buses (28%)” (p. 1026). Paraprofessionals, parent volunteers, or teachers’ aides often supervise the playground where most of the abuse occurs. Unfortunately that may mean that the least trained and aware of bully and victim dynamics, including playground supervisors who may be the least aware of problematic students from not having observed classrooms, are witnesses to most of the events. Teacher scrutiny and intervention on the playground may be more important than classroom supervision. Children may experience both vulnerability to being bullied and vulnerability caused by being bullied.

Being bullied frequently is likely to be a considerable source of stress. Depression among those who were frequently bullied might be expected. However, adolescents who are depressed may also

attract negative attention from their peers. Previous research suggests that compared with their peers, those who are bullied are more introverted, less assertive, and are overinvolved in their families. Victims also tend to be rejected by peers. Depression could thus be both a result of and a reason for being bullied. (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999, p. 350)

Being victimized or exhibiting consequences of victimization doesn't always draw empathy or support. People may begin to avoid victims. They can become more isolated in their communities: the office, playground, classroom, and family. Unrecognized consequences from extreme stress may occur in addition to emotional, psychological, social, or academic consequences. In a study of 15,686 students (including 8,370 girls) in Grades 6 through 10, "girls who experienced bullying at least once a week were more likely to experience headaches, backaches, and morning fatigue compared with girls who had not been bullied during that term" (Ghandour, Overpeck, Huang, Kogan, & Scheidt, 2004, p. 801). Some children come to hate or fear going to the school (school phobia). Somatic problems may develop: stomachaches, headaches, or other maladies so Mommy or Daddy keeps them home. Social phobia (fear of social situations) or agoraphobia (fear of leaving the house) may develop. People, even close friends, teachers, and parents may get frustrated or even angry with depressed individuals, resulting in subtle and not-so-subtle messages implying something is wrong with them as victims. Eventually they believe something must be wrong about them; often what is special about them is what is "wrong." When teachers and other adults recognize that being a victim can result in a victim personality, there is less likelihood of pathologizing, that is, blaming the victim.

ANXIOUS VULNERABILITY

Victimized children are often younger than their bullies. They tend to be more naturally sensitive, cautious, quiet, and anxious, tend to have negative views of violence, and are fairly nonaggressive in interactions. Physical weakness (youth or size) and anxiety potentially targets them. Relational and physical traits alone, however, are not predictive of being victimized. As opposed to sensitive, healthy, nonvictimized children, victims tend to withdraw from confrontations of any kind and respond to confrontations (attacks) with crying. Faced with conflict, they become paralyzed with fear. Children with gifted or mature intellectual abilities may understand logical and appropriate behavior, but be unable to comprehend other's impulsive behavior. Short-term gratification resulting in long-term negative consequences doesn't make sense to them. Nor do they understand the complex emotional and psychological motivations for bullies' aggression. This may cause them confusion in how to respond. Children with LD or AS may misinterpret cues that reveal aggressive mood changes. This can result in

being surprised and feeling ambushed. Eventually, some children may exhibit an “anxious vulnerability.” Easily recognized by bullies, it is as if floating over their heads were flashing signs broadcasting, “Attention: Victim here!” Once children feel that they can do nothing if bullies attack them, then avoidance of bullies is their only defensive strategy. By being hypervigilant and constantly scanning the environment, such children hope to see the bullies before they get too close to strike. Victims also must become hypersensitive to any sound, movement, expression, or energy that potentially could be indicative of an attack. Guessing incorrectly and moving away or otherwise avoiding innocuous play invitations and social interactions becomes a common response. Such children prefer erring and wasting energy and losing opportunities for play and friendship, rather than missing an impending attack and getting annihilated. Getting immersed in any activity because it is fascinating, exciting, or fun is to be avoided because it would cause them to lose their alertness and become vulnerable to an ambush. Such children show anxious vulnerability even in nonconflict situations. With his anxious vulnerability, his rabbit eyes and nervous energy, Eddie had internalized the trauma, loss, and fear that he and his mother experienced with his father’s murder. Tense and hyper-vigilant, Eddie inadvertently broadcast to the predator that he was the easy prey to attack.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE . . .

Victim personalities’ approach to conflict is often passive (with important exceptions to be discussed later regarding the bully-victim or reactive bully). Unassertive, victims tend not to try to negotiate and make few or no demands, requests, or suggestions. They hope that things will get better (“please please please . . .”). Since they don’t “make their luck,” their reality often is miserable. They don’t initiate interactions. They tend to be passive in play. Despite other developmental maturity beyond appropriate parallel play (three and under), they continue to play next to rather than with others. They are often socially incompetent, but not aggressive or anti-social. Often unable to handle aggression alone, they need to be rescued. Adult rescue or intervention, however, can backfire on everyone. Children who are victimized and then rescued do not need to and subsequently fail to learn how to manage or problem solve aggression against them. In addition, adult rescue confirms these children’s victim identity of being inherently helpless in the face of aggression. Ongoing victimization is often a consequence of adult failures to give empowering support. Victims feel worse and worse, ever more anxious, which increases their “anxious vulnerability,” leading to further victimization. They are submissive in the face of aggression, which rewards bullies’ egos. Bullies continually return to them for further satisfaction, rather than seek new targets. Despite being told to avoid bullies, victims seem to gravitate to them anyway. Bullies and

victims coexist at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Victims often become socially isolated, so needy for attention that negative attention from association with bullies can become desirable over no attention at all.

Adults must intervene when circumstances are overwhelming or too dangerous for children to handle alone. It may be beyond their developmental capacities, emotionally, socially, or cognitively. Or simple boundaries will not suffice because of the intensity, relentlessness, or insidious creativity of the abusers. Children in these cases will be greatly challenged to succeed and may try and still fail. However, when adults step in immediately, they steal children's opportunities to struggle successfully, or to fail, but survive. Children need encouragement, training, and empowerment from adults, *and* for them to let go appropriately. Only then can children struggle and suffer to build necessary skills and resiliency to handle stress, conflicts, and intrusive or abusive or exploitative people. Adults need to gauge specific situations guided by the basic principles of empowerment through doing as little as possible and only as much as needed. Whatever adults do in terms of interventions, children do not have to do or learn. Here is an example of an adult's minimal intervention, with significant guidance and empowerment, from my book, *The One-Minute Temper Tantrum Solution* (2008, p. 106). This passage is about judiciously intervening with a small child who felt helpless when a bully took his bucket. Each progressive step comes with an assessment of how much support is needed. At any given step, if the child can complete the process, the adult does not and must not continue intervening.

Jordan, that little girl took your bucket. You don't look happy. Is that okay? No? Take it back. Little girl, Jordan wants to talk to you. Don't go away. Jordan, get your bucket. Get your bucket . . . Mommy won't get it for you. You need to get it. She'll give it back to you.

[A firm glance at her would be useful here!]

Tell her, "No."

[If Jordan can successfully take it from here, let him do it. If he can't, then ask the following question.]

You need help? Here she is. Put your hand on the bucket. Hold on.

[If Jordan can successfully take it from here, let him do it. If he can't, then ask the following question.]

Okay? Now, pull it away.

[If necessary, close your hand around his hand on the bucket.]

There you go! You did it! Good job, you got your bucket. What do you want to do with your bucket now? You want to put sand in it? You want to let her play with it? Or play together with her? You decide.

Empowerment is the key to keeping children from becoming perpetual victims. The very first step is determining whether a child like Jordan needs any assistance at all. If he can take care of himself and his bucket, then adults should do *nothing!* Adults need to find whatever strength or skills a child may have. Even if the strength or skills are somewhat minuscule, adults can build upon them. If a child already has a sense of power and control, then adult monitoring and possible guidance would be based on how appropriate the response may be. Hitting, for example, would not be OK. If the child is not able or is hesitant in dealing with the aggression, then the first step in the empowerment process is to acknowledge the issues and the child's needs. Saying it out loud, so that the transgressor hears it, sets the context and requirement for both Jordan and the other child. Observe if Jordan can get the bucket back without further guidance. If yes, great! Affirm Jordan's act of self-care! If Jordan isn't able to act or doesn't know how to act, then the adult provides language: "Tell her, 'No!'" Observe if Jordan can proceed successfully from this. If yes, great! Affirm Jordan's act of self-care! If not, then provide more but limited guidance or assistance.

If Jordan refuses or is otherwise unable to complete the necessary behavior, the adult should complete the process, including disciplining the other child as is appropriate, so as not to reward the other child his or her aggression. However, the adult should also not reward Jordan for failing to take care of himself. In this scenario, that would mean get the bucket back, but not to give it to Jordan. This may sound harsh or uncaring, but getting the bucket back is not as important as the potential lesson. A child like Jordan needs to learn that his action or inaction creates the consequences of his life. Passive inaction cannot be rewarded through adult rescuing. Both Eddie and KC had to be supported, guided, and required to confront their bullies. With Eddie, teachers set the situation up for him to confront Mitchell. They monitored the interaction so that it would not get out of control. However, they did not confront Mitchell *for* Eddie. Eddie was able to gradually become more competent at standing up for himself or asking for help if necessary. This growth took a fair amount of teacher energy and several weeks, but Eddie became practiced and empowered. Mitchell learned that Eddie wasn't an easy victim anymore. He had learned to tell Mitchell, "No!" and to report Mitchell if necessary. KC's process was essentially the same but done through therapy and coaching her through life challenges. She talked about her original vulnerability as a child and how she was victimized. KC was able to recognize that she had power as an adult that she had never had before, and she began asserting her power. She set boundaries and applied consequences to others depending on how they treated her. As she became more effective, her confidence

grew, gradually replacing anxious vulnerability. When the predators scanned the room for easy victims, she no longer stood out.

THE LOUD AGGRESSIVE “VICTIM” BECOMES A BULLY

Some children become reactive bullies, also known as bully-victims. They are ineffective aggressors who get the worst of being both bullies and victims. Rather than passively accepting powerlessness, these children may assert loudly, aggressively, or violently their victimization. They may justify their own aggressive behavior as retaliation against others. “What did you expect me to do? I had to hit him!” Ineffective bullies, unable to be socially successful with other children, get stuck associating with other bullies, including more dominating bullies. Since they are often very insecure being in the bully social group, they are easily provoked. Unable to calm down, they escalate minor incidents into aggressive situations. They may make threatening comments or gestures. The more powerful and intimidating alpha bullies provoke, threaten, and intimidate them back. Since they know the more aggressive bullies can and will bring greater violence into an actual confrontation, they get overwhelmed by them and feel forced to back down. The cross-cultural research of Nansel et al. (2004) found severe consequences for the bully-victim.

The most striking pattern of psychosocial adjustment was demonstrated by the bully-victims, who reported levels of emotional adjustment, relationships with classmates, and health problems similar to those of victims, with levels of school adjustment and alcohol use similar to those of bullies. Moreover, in some cases, their scores were significantly worse than those of either bullies or victims. In 8 countries bully-victims reported more health problems than the other 2 groups, and in 5 countries they reported more school adjustment problems. (p. 734)

Bully-victims have the highly negative social consequences of the bully (antisocial behavior, poor academics, crime, and so forth), and the internalized negative consequences of the victim (anxiety and depression). More powerful and aggressive bullies repeatedly provoke them because of their highly emotional responses. Other bullies subjectively experience benefits with gains of power and control and possible social status from their behavior. Reactive bullies are actually ineffective at gaining these benefits! With a growing sense of powerlessness, resentment, and domination by more powerful bullies, reactive bullies become increasingly likely to victimize others, be oppositional, defiant, and passive-aggressive.

Adults may not recognize that reactive bullies have core emotional experiences like classic victims. As a result, adult boundaries and consequences

for their bullying activities accentuate reactive bullies' already existing feelings of victimization. Their feelings of victimization, unlike as for other children, don't draw any real compassion from adults. These children may be more prone to developing increasingly resentful victimization or paranoid feelings. Reactive bullies need especially skilled adults to manage the balance between validating their feelings of victimization while setting appropriate boundaries against their aggressive behaviors. They need to be given specific instructions how to express frustration and gain healthy power and control without resorting to aggression. For example, "I know you feel it's unfair, and you will not get what you want by hitting." The energy to seek more power and control can be acknowledged as a strength that is exerted ineffectively. The choice, "You can make it better or make it worse," becomes a reminder of the power and control children have in their lives. Reactive bullies and many other children need to be reminded that they often make their lives worse with their choices. "Screaming at them doesn't make them like you better. It makes them really dislike you." They need repeated reframing of what they perceive as their dire circumstances to realize that they are not helpless. "You're not happy with this. If you quit, you make it worse. If you talk to me, you might make it better. You choose." They also need clear alternatives to the aggressive behaviors they assert they have to do. Tell them, specifically, do this, say this, and so forth. If teachers can see through the whining and bullying behavior, they may be able to find the compassion to support reactive bullies.

VICTIM ENTITLEMENT TO BULLY AND INTELLECTUAL BULLYING

Reactive bullies, like some overwhelmed or victimized children, may develop a sense of entitlement to be spiteful and vindictive. They can accrue gigantic reservoirs of resentments and grievances. Family members, teachers, or other children become targets. For example, a child with LD or ADHD may load up with negative feedback at school and, as a result, throw tantrums at home. Academically gifted but unfulfilled by schoolwork, a child may sneer when her mother asks if she has any homework. A child with AS, excluded by classmates, may cruelly tease and manipulate his younger sibling in turn. Any of these behaviors will draw further reprimands, negative feedback, and problematic social consequences. If the consequences are experienced as being unfair, they further reinforce frustration and resentment. Cycles of aggression must be interrupted, if not by children's actions, then through adult or classroom intervention.

Children may attempt intellectual aggression, while asserting other people are stupid or that their actions justify verbal assaults. Adults need to recognize the "invitation" to engage in the fruitless debate and name the disrespect. They need to assert clear boundaries and consequences not only about overt verbal insults, but also about heavy sighs, rolling the

eyes, smacking lips, blank stares, and other passive-aggressive nonverbal communications. Teachers can acknowledge that children are trying to make a point and that they want to hear it. They can give feedback that the communication style is ineffective. “My attention is drawn mostly to your tone, instead of what you’re trying to say. Please, tell me same thing in a more respectful tone, so I can hear it.” With this statement, the boundaries are asserted without being drawn into a fruitless argument. Often a direct confrontation about disrespectful passive-aggressive behavior draws outrage. “Whaaat!? What’d I do!? I didn’t do nuthin’!”

Passive-aggressiveness gives individuals the illusion of power and control. Unfortunately, it also precludes them from learning how to develop appropriate means to gain true power and control. Aggressors seldom realize that they trigger the ensuing resentment, exclusion, or negative treatment by others. Healthy and successful life and relationships are severely compromised with cycles of interpersonal communication that include passive-aggressive behavior. Teachers can best reach passive-aggressive individuals by avoiding getting caught up in the moral or inferiority versus superiority argument. Focusing on everyone’s relative roles and requirements in the situation may help. “Whether you’re right or wrong, or everyone is stupid, you cannot scream in class.” They should constantly refocus children on the functional result of their being so adamant. “Even though you’re sure you’re right, you won’t get what you want.” Sometimes when their self-righteous arousal is intense, none of this will work. It is best not to cycle over and over with the same arguments. Instead, set a boundary and consequence, and follow through immediately. If there is outrage and further attempts to continue the argument, then prompt, “You make it better or make it worse. Continuing to argue will make it worse. Cooperating will make it better. You choose.” Children best learn about their power and control in life when adults assert clear boundaries and clear consequences. When adults allow passive-aggressive children to keep them in an argument, the children feel they are in control.

CLASSIFICATION CREATES TARGETS FOR EXCLUSION

A respectful classroom is more than promoting acceptance and “niceness.” Children who are victimized often find that being nice doesn’t protect them from bullies. Reactive bullies often forget about being nice when they feel victimized. Bullies can be nice, but sometimes their need to dominate and intimidate is much stronger. Teachers encourage students to accept everyone as the same, but discover students notice differences in the “same as themselves” children. Pretending everyone is the same disrespects the uniqueness of individuals. Ignorance leads to assumptions that differences are “bad.” And bad things or people get punished. Classmates may punish others with exclusion from friendships, games, and activities. Exclusion or

being ostracized extends to the playground and beyond. It may be the first step toward even more severe aggression. Throughout history, individuals, religions, races, communities, or groups (“those people” or “them”) have been classified as different and then targeted for abuse or exclusion to serve individual, social, or political agendas. Stanton (1998) names classification and dehumanization as keys, along with denial, to genocide. While genocide is a societal act upon another group, abuse and bullying are the acts of individuals or a group upon others. Teachers set the tone about differences, inclusion, aggression, victimization, and bullying. Children want to get along with each other. They want to belong. They want to be liked, including by teachers. Teachers are the guardians of the classroom community and must activate these positive energies to create a respectful community. Teacher silence about bullying gives permission for children to be victimized. Teacher communication and action takes that permission away.

Chapter Highlights

- ◆ Children who are bullied, victimized, or picked on from early on or throughout childhood often learn quickly to recognize their predators, the bullies.
- ◆ Predatory individuals seek power and control over others, but carefully aggress against the weakest or most vulnerable. Any individual, particularly any child, identifiably different becomes a potential target for bullies.
- ◆ Some children come to hate or fear going to the school (school phobia). Somatic problems may develop: stomachaches, headaches, or other maladies so Mommy or Daddy keeps them home. Social phobia (fear of social situations) or agoraphobia (fear of leaving the house) may develop.
- ◆ Eventually, some children may exhibit an “anxious vulnerability.” Easily recognized by bullies, it is as if floating over their heads were flashing signs broadcasting, “Attention: Victim here!”
- ◆ Adults need to gauge specific situations guided by the basic principles of empowerment through doing as little as possible and only as much as needed. Whatever adults do in terms of interventions, children do not have to do or learn.
- ◆ Ineffective bullies, unable to be socially successful with other children, get stuck associating with other bullies, including more dominating bullies.
- ◆ With growing sense of powerlessness, resentment, and domination by more powerful bullies, reactive bullies become increasingly likely to victimize others, be oppositional, defiant, and passive-aggressive.
- ◆ Some overwhelmed or victimized children may develop a sense of entitlement to be spiteful and vindictive.
- ◆ As self-righteous aggression without overt verbal or physical attacks, passive-aggressiveness gives individuals the illusion of power and control. Unfortunately, it also precludes them learning how to develop appropriate means to gain true power and control.
- ◆ A respectful classroom is more than promoting acceptance and “niceness.”