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Bullying in Senior Care: Not Just a Playground Problem

OVERVIEW

Bullying, defined as “a distinctive pattern of deliberately harming and humiliating others,” is an increasingly common problem among seniors. While the communal-living nature of senior living communities can open the door for socialization and friendship, it can also be the location of cliques, gossip, abuse and bullying behavior. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of older adults living in senior living communities are mistreated by their peers, and often the behavior goes unreported or unnoticed by staff. Unfortunately, bullying is not just exhibited on the playground – it is a behavior that spans multiple demographics and age groups.

In senior living communities where residents are in close proximity with one another, they can form cliques, exert power over others and bully. In recent years, this issue has garnered more attention, particularly because bullying among senior peer groups is on the rise, and the negative impact of their behavior is far-reaching. As some bullied victims choose to remain silent, there is no real way to find out how significant the problem is. And, often times, even when staff or peers intervene, the problem does not seem to go away.

In this session, participants will learn the definition and incidence of bullying in adult living communities and day centers including what older adult bullying looks like in this population. Characteristics of older adult bullies as well their targets and gender differences will be explored. The reasons why bullying occurs as well as the five different types of bullies are defined.

The impact of bullying is detrimental to the health and well-being of our seniors. Even one instance can have a lasting impact! Therefore, it not enough just to define bullying – communities need to know the warning signs, the physical and emotional impact, and what to do if it happens to them. Therefore, interventions for the organization, the bully, and the target are offered to help communities minimize (and prevent where possible) bullying and mitigate the effects on the target. Addressing bullying behavior among older adults is critically important for enhancing quality of life and promoting emotional well-being; strategies to create caring and empathic communities for all residents and staff members are reviewed.

This session will provide information that you need to know about senior bullying so as to take preventive measures or intervene on time. Unfortunately, bullying is not just exhibited on the playground – it is a behavior that spans multiple demographics and age groups. This session fills a practice gap in the area of knowledge and identification. Participants in this session will learn the signs and symptoms of bullying in their communities and strategies to mitigate the risk.

LEARNING OUTCOME AND OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe the incidence and characteristics of bullying behaviors in senior living
- Identify the five different types of bullies and their intended targets
- Describe the impact of bullying on older adults
- Identify organizational interventions that may help to minimize community bullying
- Identify preventative measures communities can implement to reduce impact and mitigate bullying behaviors
- List targeted communication, responses and interventions to reduce reoccurrence of senior-to-senior bullying

INTRODUCTION: CONSIDER SOME OF THE STORIES

At a high-rise, a woman who saw herself as the queen of the parking garage would key the cars of those who crossed her. Keep in mind, there are no assigned parking spaces in this community.

Elsewhere, laundry rooms became vicious places where the bullied had their detergent stolen and their clothes thrown onto the floor if they did not tend to them in a timely fashion and someone else wanted the laundry machine.

BINGO and activity rooms so often devolve into battlefields, with the lucky newcomers made to feel unwelcome. Newcomers are not permitted a seat at the table, they are badgered and accused of cheating by veteran players.

In the worst cases, bullying goes far beyond bingo squabbles – it crosses the line into harassment, hazing, or even assault. In a true story, Marsha Wetzel moved into an apartment complex for those over 50 in Niles, Illinois after her partner of 30 years died and her partner's family evicted her from the home the couple shared. At Glen St. Andrew Living Community, she said she was met with relentless bullying, mostly focused on her being a lesbian. One man hit Wetzel's scooter with his walker and unleashed a barrage of homophobic slurs. A woman rammed her wheelchair into Wetzel's table in the dining room and knocked it over, warning, "Homosexuals will burn in hell." In the elevator, stairwell and other places, she was mocked and spit on. In the mail room, someone knocked her in the head with an object. In her words, "I'd just go in my room and barricade my door and just pray," said Wetzel, now 70 and living at a complex in Chicago. "I just felt like a slug, like I was nothing, like I wasn't even human. I felt like a person in a pool of piranhas," she said. Keep in mind that the final acts against her were not bullying but assault and seemingly the community had no other choice than to consult with authorities about the best course of action.

Maybe you have your own stories of things you have seen in your community or elsewhere?

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

What is Senior Bullying? According to the federal government, bullying is defined with the following core elements: unwanted aggressive behavior; observed or perceived power imbalance; and repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition. Bullying can be direct (e.g., bullying that occurs in the presence of a targeted individual) and indirect (e.g., bullying not directly communicated to a targeted individual such as spreading rumors). Broad categories of bullying include physical, verbal, relational (e.g., efforts to harm the reputation or relationships of the targeted individual), and damage to property.

Bullying is an increasingly common problem among seniors. While the communal-living nature of senior living communities can open the door for the formation of cliques and similar social behaviors, even seniors living in their own homes independently can be subject to bullying within their social circles. An AARP Bulletin says that between 10 and 20 percent (some stats as high as 1 in 5) of older adults living in senior living communities are mistreated by their peers. It is tough to tease out precise numbers because these acts often go unreported. Acts go unreported because of shame, fear of retaliation, and difficulty recognizing bullying for what it is. Slowly, psychologists, sociologists, and gerontologists are beginning to shed light on the bullying behaviors that are not isolated to kids and do not suddenly disappear once there's a diploma in hand.

Bullying, defined as intentional repetitive aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power or strength, has been recognized for many years as a problem among children and youth in school systems. Recently "senior bullying" has also been noted to occur among older adults in many senior housing and senior care organizations. What does bullying look like among the older generation? Surprisingly, in many ways it looks similar to bullying among younger age groups!

Bullying can happen in any number of places, contexts, or locations including:

- Senior living communities, senior centers, adult day health centers, rehab facilities, assisted-living facilities, and nursing homes.
- During community events and activities where seniors spend a lot of time together and share resources e.g. chairs, tables, and TV stations. (elevators & stairwells)
- Bullying that occurs using technology (e.g., phones, email, chat rooms, instant messaging, and online posts) is considered electronic bullying and is viewed as a context or location.

Some bullying actions can fall into criminal categories, such as harassment, hazing, or assault. Studies suggest that most senior-to-senior aggression in long term care settings is verbal abuse, and that men and women are equally likely to be the victim as well as the aggressor. However, all forms of bullying are possible.

Is It Bullying?

Sometimes behavior can appear to be bullying but is instead something else. Consider the following definitions:

Bullying: Bullying is sometimes called harassment and happens when someone hurts, intimidates or scares a peer consciously or unconsciously. When someone is being bullied they often have a hard time defending themselves. Bullying is usually not a one-time event. It can happen over and over again.

Bullying is directed at a specific person or group of people. It happens when there is an imbalance of power or a desire to gain power, or control of resources (e.g. space).

Criminal Activity: Criminal activity has a bullying element to it, but because the person engaging in the behavior is breaking the law, there is a clearer avenue to responding to these behaviors (e.g. call the police and press charges).

Non-Bullying Behavior: A behavior that could be perceived as annoying or frustrating, however there is no element of control, power and targeting a specific individual or group of people are absent.

Challenging Behaviors: When the behavior does not target a specific individual or group of individuals. The behavior may violate community rules but is not bullying because the power and control dynamics are absent.

Elder Abuse: “Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect”

The most common type of senior bullying is verbal abuse. This includes but is not limited to negative comments about another senior, ordering another senior around, or making passive aggressive comments; damage to property, such as stealing from another senior, or purposefully damaging another senior’s belongings; physical abuse such as physically harming another senior (e.g., hitting, punching, or kicking); and excluding another senior.

Let’s Practice:

Consider each of the following examples. Is it bullying? Or something else?

Example 1:

Bob is known to pinch female clients on their bottoms when they walk by him in the common room. When confronted Bob winks and laughs it off saying “I just can’t help myself with all of these lovely ladies around me.” Is it Bullying?

Answer: This is not bullying it is an example of sexual elder abuse as this is unwanted sexual advances from one person to another.

Example 2:

Jake believes that Betty’s plot in the community garden should be given to him because her plants always die. In protest, he uproots all her plants. When asked why he says that her plants were destined to die anyway. Is it Bullying?

Answer: Yes, this is an example of bullying because it is an intentional and conscious act that is carried out between peer older adults. Even though this is a one-time event it is still defined as bullying behavior because Jake is targeting Betty because he wants Betty’s garden plot.

Example 3: Rose has noticed that some of the ladies on her floor are no longer talking to her. When she asks one of them privately if something has happened she finds out that a fellow resident has started a rumor about her and told others not to speak to her. Is it Bullying?

Answer: Yes, this is an example of indirect bullying because Rose is being hurt by gossip in which she cannot defend herself.

Types of Bullying

Types of bullying include the following:

- Verbal: name calling, teasing, insults, taunts, threats, sarcasm, and pointed jokes targeting specific individuals. For example, Mary was overheard at a Senior Center luncheon saying to Grace, “You don’t know what you’re talking about. Everyone knows you’re crazy!”

- Physical: pushing, pinching, biting, punching, hitting, hair pulling, destroying property, and stealing. For instance, two residents in independent senior housing got into an argument over control of the remote control in the community room. One punched the other in the face. This was not the first time these two men exchanged words, but the first time it escalated to a physical assault.
- Anti-social: shunning, excluding, gossiping, mimicking someone's walk or disability, spreading rumors, using offensive gestures or facial expressions, turning one's head or body away when the victim speaks, using threatening body language, or encroaching on personal space, and negative nonverbal body language. For example, John was relocated to senior housing in Massachusetts following the loss of his home in the New Orleans hurricane. Several residents began spreading rumors that he was a longtime homeless man and was the first in a deluge of formerly homeless people who were going to be "dumped" into their building. As a result, other residents began to avoid John.
- Relationship-centered: ostracizing during mealtimes, activities or forming social cliques.

Contrary to the childhood adage "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me," individuals who are bullied are significantly impacted by their peers' negative behavior. Common responses include:

- Reduced self-esteem, feelings of insecurity
- Overall feelings of rejection
- Depression, anxious feelings
- Suicidal ideation
- Increased physical complaints/symptoms
- Functional changes, such as decreased ability to manage activities of daily living
- Changes in eating and sleeping
- Increased talk of moving out
- Withdrawals socially, increased isolation
- Creates an environment of fear and disrespect
- Stress, anxiety, tension and worry
- Retaliation followed by shame
- Migraines, GI tract/stomach problems, HBP, panic attacks, anxiety, depression, etc.
- Worsening of mental health disorders
- Anger, frustration, fear

Is it bullying? Or is it something else? The situation and type of behavior often determines whether or not problematic behavior is actually bullying. An individual who yells and strikes out at everyone is not necessarily a bully; similarly, behavior may be inappropriate and violate community rules, but not truly be bullying because the dynamics of power and control are absent. It is important to keep in mind that some people exhibit verbal or physical aggression when they are frustrated or upset as a way of communicating their feelings rather than to usurp others' power. The potential for this situation increases in the context of dementia, due to impulse control problems, communication difficulties, frustration regarding impaired task performance, and misperceptions of potential environmental threats.

At the same time, although some problematic behaviors may not meet the academic definition of bullying, such behaviors can still feel to those on the receiving end as if they were being bullied. For example, residents in assisted living report the following peer behaviors to cause the most emotional distress:

- Loud arguments in communal areas
- Name calling

- Being bossed around
- Negotiating value differences, especially related to diversity of beliefs stemming from culture, spirituality, or socioeconomic status
- Sharing scarce resources, especially seating, television programming in communal areas, and staff attention
- Being hounded for money or cigarettes
- Listening to others complain
- Experiencing physical aggression
- Witnessing psychiatric symptoms, especially those that are frightening or disruptive

While only a few of the behaviors on this list really qualify as bullying, residents react or respond to such behaviors in the same comparable ways as they do actual bullying behavior. The similar reactions to both bullying and “bullying-like” behaviors implies that to understand bullying among older adults, it is necessary to develop knowledge about the individuals who exhibit bullying behaviors and individuals who are bullied. Who bullies and who gets bullied?

WHO IS THE BULLY?

Recall the definition of bullying: intentional repetitive aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power or strength. Given this definition, the characteristics of most individuals who bully reflect underlying needs for power and control; the majority of bullies’ behaviors and social interaction patterns strive to achieve these aims. Although most people like to be in charge of their situation, they accomplish this in ways that do not negatively impact others. In contrast, bullies are more likely to use power and control strategies at the expense of others. Indeed, they often find it positively reinforcing to make others feel threatened, fearful or hurt, or to contribute to conflict between people. These tendencies are further complicated by difficulty tolerating individual differences, lack of empathy, and very few positive social relationships.

Typical Traits of Individuals Who Bully:

- Lacks empathy
- Has few friends
- “Needs” power and control
- Struggles with individual differences
- Uses power and control at the expense of others
- Suffers from low self-esteem
- Empowered by causing conflict, or making others feel threatened, fearful, hurt

There are 5 general types of bullies:

- Narcissistic Bully: self-centered, need for power and control, does not share empathy with others.
- Impulsive Bully: Spontaneous, plans their bullying out less. Even if consequences are likely, they have
- hard time restraining from bullying behaviors
- Physical Bully: Uses physical aggression.
- Verbal Bully: Uses their words, starts rumors, uses sarcastic, or demeaning language to embarrass, dominate and humiliate another person.
- Secondary Bully: Does not initiate the bullying, but joins in so that they do not become a target down the road. May feel bad about what they are doing, but are more concerned about protecting themselves. This is all about self-preservation or survival of the fittest.

In addition, there are gender differences in bullying behaviors whereby women tend to engage in more passive aggressive behavior and men are more likely to make negative in-your-face comments.

Women:

- Gossips
- Snipes
- Member of a clique
- Passive-aggressive behavior
- Manipulates emotions

Men:

- Direct
- Spontaneous
- Verbally or physically aggressive
- Superiority complex
- Overly protective (not just of materials and objects, but also of staff attention)

Why Do Some Individuals Bully?

If a senior was a bully in school, it's likely they won't suddenly grow out of the behavior.

Some adults may become bullies as a way to regain control of their lives.

It may be a reaction to having to share spaces and resources in living facilities.

It's important to note that some conditions such as Dementia can cause aggression, but the senior is not purposefully bullying.

The causes of bullying are multifold. Some seniors may choose to tyrannize others because of aggressive tendencies in their personalities, which does not change when they age, but merely gets carried over to whichever environment they find themselves in. Residing in a senior living community can also add stress to those who feel maladjusted in a collective setting. As such, they end up choosing to take out their unhappiness on those around them, giving them a temporary sense of power and control.

Some seniors also bully others when they experience discomfort in their bodies as a result of aging or declining health. Those with existing medical conditions like dementia, mental disorders, and body aches can become more short-tempered towards others.

It is important to acknowledge that the senior living environment may inadvertently contribute to why a resident may bully. Transitioning into an assisted living community can be stressful for some, and new residents may feel a sense of powerlessness moving into a more supportive, communal environment.

Therefore, they may seek out a way to demonstrate some form of control. Staff should monitor residents who may be having a difficult time transitioning into the community and find ways to help them manage. Bullies put others down in order to build themselves up, suggesting low self-esteem plays a role in their behavior. Many long-term care residents may not have lived in a communal setting for years, if at all. Shared living requires adjustments around territory such that feelings of jealousy and impatience often arise. Bullying behaviors related to territoriality, as with selection of channels for shared televisions, dining room seating...etc., may involve attempts to exert control and change public space into private space. Residents may also live with certain health conditions, which may contribute to aggressive behaviors. For example, individuals living with dementia may have a need they cannot express or be in a situation they cannot understand. They may also no longer have the ability to verbally communicate, and therefore, act out in a physical way. Dementia can also cause impulse controls to decrease, often stripping

residents of their mental filter. So, residents with dementia may say things that could be construed as verbal bullying.

Why do some individuals bully?

- Some people who were bullies when they were younger often continue to bully into their golden years.
- Some people do not adjust well to the aging process, so they take out their frustration on others. After all, getting old is not for the faint of heart.
- Some people experience emotional problems.
- Some people have an underlying need for power and control.
- Some people feel the need to assert their will to intimidate, embarrass or humiliate others.
- Some people have a difficult time transitioning into senior living communities due to loss of independence, relationships, income, valued roles, and social support networks.
- Some people have difficulty tolerating individual differences, lacks empathy, and have few positive social relationships.
- Some people have insecurities about themselves and enjoy making others feel bad to raise their own self-esteem/worth.
- Some people with dementia might misunderstand things as threatening and react with more primitive responses.

WHO ARE THE TARGETS?

In contrast to individuals who bully, individuals who typically fall victim to bullies have trouble defending themselves. They do nothing to “cause” the bullying, but passive social interaction styles make them ideal targets for bullies to overpower and control. Victims may also experience a sense of powerlessness, but in this case because bullying experiences are unpredictable and they have difficulty preventing them and removing themselves from bullying situations. There are two types of bullying victims, those who are passive and those who are provocative.

It is not always easy to tell when a senior is being bullied, as individuals can have different reactions to bullying. However, there are telltale signs to look out for. Victims of bullying often exhibit either avoidant or confrontational behavior to deal with the problem. Signs your senior may be a bully victim include:

- Acting out by venting or wanting to leave the community
- Emotional outbursts in the form of indignation, nervousness, sadness, or even urge to take one’s life
- Negative reactions to social activities and communal spaces
- Debilitating mental health

There are 2 general types of targets – passive and provocative.

Passive targets tend to:

- Be highly emotional. Drama and chaos seem to surround this person.
- Have difficulty reading social cues and maintaining boundaries
- Experience a heightened sense of anxiety
- Others often perceive them as shy and insecure. Among older adults, such victims may have early dementia or a developmental disorder

- Have racial/ethnic, spiritual beliefs, political, or sexual orientation, gender identity that is perceived as different from their target. (Recall that bullies have difficulty tolerating individual differences.)
- Immigrants and refugees often fit here because they are “different” from the bully

Provocative targets tend to be:

- Annoying or irritating to others
- Quick tempered
- Intrusive into others’ space

Warning Signs of a Bully Include:

- Intimidates staff and others
- Tells others what to do using a bossy style/tone
- Criticizes others
- Lacks empathy
- Makes repeated complaints about others.
- Be aware that individuals who complain in a powerful, outraged style about others’ picking on them are often bullies themselves.

Warning Signs of a Target Include:

- Self-isolation
- Avoidance of events and activities.
- Take long and often out of the way routes to get to and from communal areas.
- Vague complaints, “They don’t like me” or “They won’t let me _____.”
- Depressed mood (acute onset)

Sadly, it is common for various senior organizations to take a passive stance toward bullying. At times, a perception of “that’s just the way people are” or “there’s nothing that can be done” influences inaction, but at other times passivity is related to a belief that bullying is merely a social irritant and doesn’t really cause any lasting harm. However, nothing is farther from the truth! Research indicates that older adults experience a range of negative emotions and responses to bullying as we discussed on prior slides.

It is also important to recognize that bullying behaviors can escalate to physical violence. For example, in September 2009, a 100-year-old nursing home resident was killed by her 98-year-old roommate over ongoing misperceptions regarding unequal sharing of room space.

The harmful impact of bullying is not exclusive to the recipients of such behavior: individuals who witness bullying also experience negative consequences. A common response is feeling intense guilt for not intervening, which can contribute to a sense of poor self-worth. Furthermore, living an environment where bullying is allowed to occur creates a culture of fear, disrespect, and insecurity that can actually lead to increased bullying as individuals retaliate against one another. Such environments also reduce resident satisfaction because residents feel that staff does not care about their well-being.

Up until this point, we have addressed bullying behaviors between seniors themselves, but bullying can also be targeted toward staff members of organizations serving older adults. Some residents or consumers may view certain employees as very different from them, creating an “us and them” mentality that can result in staff bullying. These feelings have implications for retention and turnover. Furthermore, the possibility of staff retaliatory bullying and resident abuse also increases.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The first thing to do is to get to know the people in your facility and recognize when there is a change. To identify individuals who might be bullied, health care practitioners should take notice if an elder withdraws from social interactions. Maybe he or she used to go out but suddenly stops engaging in activities or remains in his or her apartment or room during mealtime. Those are hallmark signs of elder abuse and are the same symptoms we would look for in a bullying situation. The most important issue related to bullying—and the reason health care practitioners should stay attuned to it—is that it may be a sign of an underlying medical condition. Providers should use a bullying incident as an opportunity to determine what the underlying issues may be. Use it as an opportunity to look for sudden changes in personality. If suddenly a “nice old lady” begins to snap, then most likely there is an underlying reason and needs to be investigated. So do not just snap back or retreat and be offended, offer help, or seek counsel from a person in authority that can look in to the matter. Behavior should not be ignored or it can escalate. Many times you will find that the sudden out of character behavior was a way of asking for help. Most times it is due to pain or cognitive decline like onset of dementia. Taking time to understand the person or situation contributing to this one individual to suddenly become a bully is one coping mechanism we can all put into practice.

Three-Tiered Intervention Model

We consider a three-tiered model related to intervention for bullying episodes. Preventing and minimizing bullying behavior requires intervention at multiple levels:

1. Organization
2. Bully
3. Target

Of these three, organizational interventions are the most crucial!

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

Organizational Interventions

In every assisted living, independent living, senior living, or skilled nursing community, there is a culture that defines its norms, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. Each resident brings their life story to their new place they call home. They have experiences and expectations that affect how they interact with others living at the community. These interactions can be positive or negative and can affect the climate and enjoyment of the residents living there. It is critical for the organization to have a foundation to implement a positive living environment. Staff can set the tone for the culture in the community, and such an effort can go a long way in preventing bullying before it starts. Below are suggested strategies for creating a positive environment.

- Develop clear rules and expectations for resident and staff behavior; invite everyone to be involved in determining what these rules and expectations should be.
- Consider adding language around bullying to your occupancy/admission agreements to discuss in advance with new residents and their families your community's expectations and processes for handling bullying activities at your organization.
- Hold regular group discussions about the challenges of communal living and possible solutions to those challenges. This could be at resident council meetings, resident or family events, or as part of a series of training sessions.
- Provide regular employee training to recognize and respond to bullying and other difficult behaviors; include activities that promote the development of empathy.
- Review policies for potential revisions that may reduce opportunities for bullying. For example, institute a “no saving seats” policy for group events, dining and activities. These

policies must also take into consideration efforts to create a home-like environment where residents have choice and a right to privacy. Consider having everyone sign a “no bullying” pledge.

- Encourage staff and residents to report incidents of bullying and take complaints seriously; staff must feel supported in making reports and in setting limits on inappropriate behavior.
- Review state requirements to ensure compliance with staff training and reporting requirements regarding elder abuse.

Other Organizational Level Interventions

In approaching bullying prevention from an organizational level, the goal is to create a caring and empathetic community for residents and staff. Caring refers to feeling and exhibiting concern for others; empathetic refers to the presence of empathy – the capacity to recognize and share another’s feelings. Nurturing empathy is actually the best antidote to bullying! In an environment that promotes empathy, there is a pervasive culture of respect and trust where residents and staff are held accountable and responsible for their behaviors, which sets the stage for people being willing to take a stand in defense of themselves and others – a key intervention in putting a stop to bullying behaviors. Some approaches you can take at your community include:

- Create caring communities for all residents and staff members.
- Prohibit the use of obscene language, name calling, gossiping, etc. And this goes for staff as well as residents!
- Use empathy as an antidote to bullying.
- Creating environments that promotes empathy requires where:
 - All members are treated with consideration, respect and recognition of each individual’s dignity. These are the basic tenets of equality and respect.
 - Everyone is held accountable and responsible for their behaviors.
 - Everyone is encouraged to stand up for what is right.
- Publicly acknowledge members of your community that go out of their way to make others welcome.

In publicly acknowledging members of your community that go out of their way to make others welcome, some approaches you might take include:

- Pre move-in or new resident orientation which includes information on living peaceably together.
- Acknowledge members of your community that go out of their way to welcome new residents and those who are perceived as “different.”
- Institute a “Caring Squad” whose job it is to notice acts of kindness and reward them.
- Nominate “Kings and Queens of Empathy” each month to recognize residents who have been especially caring. These types of activities send the message that caring and empathy are effective ways to achieve positive recognition, which is important for bullies who may seek attention through negative behavior. In a way, this is operant conditioning.
- Create a training program with role-playing to demonstrate positive resident interactions related to conflict and bullying. Incorporate residents into the role-playing.
- In many cases, when wellness programs are developed, they focus on walking or exercise. Why not create programs that address emotional or psychosocial aspects of seniors? Create a wellness program that promotes personal responsibility, compassion, tolerance and empathy.
- Remembering that bullies often lack social interactions, help residents expand their social networks, perhaps during meals in the dining room or during activities, to alleviate “cliques.” Consider introducing individuals who have similar interests at lunch, activities, or during therapy.

- Host a mixer type event for all new residents monthly or quarterly. Invite their families and friends, as well as with current residents.
- If all else fails, seek legal consult, have legal services send target a letter, and/or issue lease violation notices and proceed with eviction process when you have collected evidence and supportive documentation. This is a tough step to take, but sometimes one that is needed to curb the specific issue.

Bonifas and colleagues in 2017 conducted a study of assisted living residents where they asked what suggestions they had from a resident perspective to address bullying and decrease bullying and other problematic behaviors. Some of their recommendations included:

- Offer anger management classes to all residents as another wellness option.
- Set limits with people who bully or “pick on” others. Moreover, ensure the limits are enforced by everyone on staff equally.
- Hold regular meetings to promote resident communication. While staff assume residents will communicate with each other directly, this is not always the case and, in some cases, need to be fostered.
- Develop rules and expectations for resident (and staff) behavior. Residents should be part of the decision-making process when outlining expectations.
- Foster partnerships between residents and facility management. This means that when bullying occurs, it is addressed by staff each and every time. To do otherwise creates an environment of fear and disrespect and creates a culture where staff have lost the trust of residents.

It is important to recognize that developing a caring community is a process and organizational change is slow; improvements will not happen overnight, but gains can be made over time.

Interventions for the Bully

Keeping in mind the reasons why people bully or exhibit bullying behaviors, now we will begin talking about how to intervene with the bully him or herself. Some interventions to consider include:

- Do not avoid or ignore the behaviors.
- If you see something, say something and do something.
- Consistently set limits with them. The individual who bullies needs to hear the same message from everyone that his or her behavior is not acceptable.
- Refer them to mental health provider. Recognize what social work can handle and what should be referred externally.
- Assist them to expand their social support networks. Not surprisingly, individuals who bully have few friends, which can complicate matters. Helping bullies connect with others in positive ways can help bolster self-esteem and provide motivation for behavioral change. Introductions centered on shared interests or experiences can be a helpful way to begin.
- Identify alternative methods for individuals who bully to feel in control – we all want to feel in control of our environment and situations, so it is important to help individuals who bully to develop positive methods to feel like they are in charge. Maybe we can include them in a community project, council, or committee.
- Assist them in identifying appropriate outlets and alternative methods to manage anger, frustrations, etc. This may include referrals to anger management classes. Other ways to manage frustration might include journaling, art, music, or some other activity the person finds meaningful and purposeful. Sometimes individuals who bully have a difficult time tolerating others who they perceive as different or deviant. These are legitimate feelings and we cannot expect individuals to simply not feel what they feel; remember many older people

have not been socialized to welcome diversity like people from younger generations have been. In keeping with social work's values of beginning where the client is and working from the client's world view, it can be helpful to offer a bully who is intolerant an alternative venue to talk about his or her difficulties.

- Foster the development of positive communication skills – sometimes people do not know how to speak assertively, but only know how to speak aggressively; work with individuals who bully to enable them to express wants and needs without hurting others. This might be as simple as helping them practice making “I statements,” for example, they might learn to say something like “I feel frustrated when I can't sit in my favorite chair; it reminds me of one my husband bought for me long ago. I'd like you to let me sit here during lunch, and perhaps you can sit here for Bingo” rather than “Get the heck out of my chair! I told you it was mine for lunch and you could have it at Bingo! Are you deaf or something?!”
- Foster the development of empathy – empathy refers to the capacity to tune into another's feelings, to understand the pain they may be feeling; individuals who bully often lack this ability. Fortunately, long-standing research suggests that empathy can be learned. Modeling is one method for fostering empathy and involves sharing your reflections on the victim's feelings associated with a bullying incident and inviting the bully to elaborate on your reflections. Having the victim share how he or she felt directly to the bully, with someone from one of the helping professions there to provide support and safety for both individuals, can be especially powerful, but it is important to recognize that not all victims of bullies will feel up to such a challenging encounter.

Interventions for the Target

It is helpful to consider the characteristics of the target when designing interventions for them.

- Focus on skills development for them to avoid being targeted. Assertiveness training can be a helpful approach. Things like: Seeking respect and understanding of one's feelings regarding the impact of the bully's behavior, managing feelings of anger, using “I” statements, setting boundaries, and creating win-win situations. Individuals who are learning assertiveness skills can initially have some difficulty differentiating assertive behavior from aggressive behavior, so it is important to really help individuals understand the difference. If this distinction is not clear, victims can become “victim bullies” – people who are the targets of bullying but also bully others in return. Teaching targets to make “I” statements is a useful strategy to both practice assertiveness and emphasize how it is different from aggressiveness. For example, in learning how to tell a bully about the impact of his or her behavior, victims might take aggressive statements like “You make me so mad” and “You are such insensitive person” and reconstruct them into assertive statements: “When you raise your voice at the table during mealtime, I have difficulty enjoying my meal” and “When you imitate the way I talk, I feel angry and embarrassed.”
- Encourage and support them to stand up for their rights. And encourage others around them to also stand up for what they know is right and just.
- Foster their self-worth and dignity and bolster self-esteem. Given that individuals who are targeted by bullies often have low self-esteem and negative self-regard, it is important to foster their self-worth and dignity. This is true regardless of whether the individual has dementia or not! Make special efforts to notice and comment on the individual's strengths and showcase those strengths to others as appropriate. Involve them in activities and projects that provide a sense of accomplishment. Assure that they are able to get to the barber or beauty shop, have their nails done, beard trimmed – all those little things that help people feel good about themselves.
- Refer them to mediation training. This might be a helpful way of working through the issues.

- Refer them to de-escalation or other direct communications skills training.
- Refer them to self-help group or 12-step program.
- Encourage them to continue to report each episode of bullying they encounter. It is up to staff to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed.
- Encourage them to call 9-1-1 or the local Ombudsman.
- If all else fails, and it is appropriate to do so, refer them legal counsel to obtain a restraining order against the bully.

As in any other situation – the best way to halt this behavior is intervention. Identify the cause and who is doing the bullying and provide intervention. If you see someone getting picked on either verbally or physically or you yourself feel like a victim -- speak out! Let someone know what is going on! Talk to the staff. Remembering that there are barriers to reporting ... victims are often too ashamed and fear retaliation and staff training is sometimes an issue. Staff members may be unsure of the correct protocol or would prefer the situation to resolve itself.

CONVERSATIONS WITH A BULLY

How to Stop Bullying?

To begin, we should examine some guidelines based on behavioral science. To get a bully to stop – you have to stop rewarding/reinforcing them. They are seeking attention and without the attention, they theoretically will stop. Next, we can break the cycle by being nice and compassionate, despite their being mean. Is a great way to remove their reward. Why? Because they most likely are trying to upset you and if you are not upset, they fail. Keep in mind, too, that stopping a behavior or extinguishing a behavior takes time. It is a process. There is not a quick fix to this.

What To Say to a Bully

- Whatever you choose to say, you are going to need to repeat it, probably a lot. So, the less emotional the better and the more humor, the better.
- Do not be mean. This justifies the bullying and turns bullying into a conflict, so, just do not do it. You can still be witty, and nice.
- How you respond depends on what is happening. If the bullying is verbal, you can respond verbally. If you are being hit or hurt (what is happening is no longer bullying), it is assault and battery and you need to get to safety.

What this means for comebacks is that you are looking for something you can say that will NOT reward the bully and that is something you can repeat easily. In fact, the easier it is for you to say the better, since you will need to say this when being directly challenged by a bully. Also, understand that what you are saying is more for the audience than it is for the bully. Your goal is to make it not fun to bully, and give the bystanders motivation to intervene on your behalf to make the bully stop. Your audience is the bystanders. Brainstorm and practice coming up with their own “zappers” to say in a bullying situation. Practicing snappy comebacks to use when faced with the situation.

What are some comeback lines that will work?

If you or someone else is insulted, you can say the following things over and over again until the bully gives up and leaves. Feel free to choose one and practice saying it out loud until you can say it in an unemotional way, or at least with some humor. You do have to practice saying these things out loud – or they won't come out of your mouth when you need them.

- Thank you for that information – it's very helpful.
- I didn't know that. Really?
- I'm so sorry you feel that way.

- Ok.
- Whatever you say.
- Stop. (said as an order – not as a plea).

You don't need to be creative. You just need to be consistent. And either unemotional or slightly amused. And again, you can just repeat this until the bully gives up and goes away or worse if their friends encourage them to give up and go away. When you say these things, repeatedly, to ANY mean thing that is said to you or someone else, you will not be fun to bully. Period. The bully cannot perform if they do not have a foe in you, not being fun will make them look like a bully. And they do not actually WANT to look like a bully. So, just repeat the chosen phrase over and over.

Newer research related to bullying and aligned with the positive parenting paradigm says that all behavior is communication, and sometimes that communication is a cry for help. While we are not parents in this situation, bullying is the same regardless of age. When we see bullying as communication or a cry for help, we begin to break the cycle where trauma begets more trauma and create room for love and kindness to those who likely need it most.

Empathy

Looking through the lens of empathy, we ask, what could be underneath the behavior of someone who bullies? Here is what professionals in the area tell us:

- People who bully are often recipients of hate or abuse themselves and can feel powerless or unsafe. As a result, to feel a sense of control, they may try to assert power over someone else.
- People who did not create secure bonds in their lives, who were not taught about their emotions, and who had little guidance/involvement from others are at greater risk for engaging in bullying behavior.
- Sometimes bullying is an outlet for extreme stress or change in the person's life.
- There is a tendency for some who have been victims of bullying to look for ways to retaliate or to seek revenge. They often feel justified in their actions because they too have been harassed and tormented. When they bully others, they may feel a sense of relief and vindication for what they experienced. Sometimes they target someone weaker or more vulnerable than them and other times, they will target the person who bullied them directly.

Overall, experts stress the importance of teaching about emotions and teaching the skills of empathy.

Empathy includes three phases:

- Emotional sharing: feeling distressed when seeing another in distress
- Empathetic concern: motivation to care for others who are in distress
- Perspective-taking: consciously putting oneself in the mind of another to better understand their feelings, thinking, and actions

Instead of bullying the person who bullies, what if we loved them, heard them, and truly saw them? Maybe then we could teach them a new way.

How is this accomplished?

Shift Your Perspective

Typically, when someone does us wrong, we hurt, and a normal thought pattern is to think negatively about them, dwell on it, or magnify it. However, when we become curious as to why someone may bully, we can create a small space between what they are doing and who they are. Hold this person in your heart, cancel the negative thought you may have, and replace it with one positive thought about them. It

isn't always easy yet where your thoughts go, your feelings will follow. "You will gain the ability to see past their masks of hate and see a heart full of hurt."

Look To Your Actions

Love isn't just thinking about bullies differently, love also requires a change in actions. Consider doing a small, kind gesture for the person who bullied you. Write them a note, offer a smile, or give them a sincere compliment. Mother Nature programmed us to treat other people the way they treat us. By extending the olive branch of kindness, it may just spread and grow.

Forgive And Set Boundaries

Forgiveness is a skill, and it isn't always easy. Unforgiveness re-victimizes us upon every remembrance, yet when we learn to forgive, we begin to heal. "Forgiving someone sets us free from letting them hurt us over and over again." As you lead with love for someone who has bullied, also lead with love for yourself by setting boundaries. Make agreements with yourself based on what you want, and state what you will do. Be firm and clear in your physical and emotional limits.

Say This ... and Not That

Say This	Not That
You seem like you're hurting.	Stop! Why would you hurt him like that?
It is ok to be sad, angry, confused, etc.. It is not ok to hurt others with our words or actions.	You are such a bully.
You are safe. I am here for you.	Go away, no one wants to be around someone acting like this.
You are not defined by your behaviors. I believe in you.	You are not nice ... kind ... good.
Can you help me understand what's going on?	What is wrong with you?

Additionally, some helpful phrases for setting boundaries with someone who is showing bullying behaviors include the following:

- I am going to choose to walk away.
- What you're doing feels hurtful. I understand you are hurting, too.
- When your voice is calm, I'll share my thoughts and feelings.

Spark Empathy! Urge the bully to put themselves in the recipients' shoes. And of course, there's all kinds of evidence that social and emotional learning (SEL) — including healthy empathy — is a key to increasing the quality of relationships and decreasing problem behavior.

- "Imagine if someone just said (or did) exactly what you just did to someone you really love and care about."
- "What you're doing is hurting someone, but I understand you're struggling too."

Deontology

“Treat people the way you want to be treated.”

The deontology applies when you think about our duty as human beings not to let other people feel hurt, humiliated, scared, etc. We have an obligation to make others feel welcomed. For our residents, they should “treat people the way I would like to be treated”. Deciding not to stoop to their level of name calling, threats, and physical abuse shows the virtue stance. I considered whether to approach the bullies with the same things they were doing or approach them with confidence and take the “high road” as people would say. I took the time to weigh my options before acting. Taking a look into deontology will show how we as humans have a duty to help our fellow-man. We should all live by the “treat people the way you want to be treated” mantra.

One of the things we have to recognize is that bullying does not happen in isolation. People bully for many reasons, whether as a response to trauma or stress in their lives. They may not even realize what they are doing is really hurting someone else. It's often not as simple as telling them not to bully. We have to give them the tools to address the reasons why they're bullying and change the climates that reinforce the behavior.

- “How would you feel if someone did this to you and what will you do to make things right?”
- “You never know what somebody might be going through; your actions and words could be the thing to push them over the edge. It's not worth it.”
- “Do you realize that your behavior is not nice? Have you stopped to think how your behavior is affecting her/him? How do you think you would feel if someone did that to you?”
- “If someone did that to you, what would you say to them?”
- “You never know a person's struggle, so treat people with kindness; your cruel actions could send them over the edge.”
- “Would you like it if this was happening to your _____ (insert relation)?”

Say “STOP!” simply and directly.

- Stop doing this — no one deserves to be treated this way!”
 - Then take the arm of the victim and lead them away, even if the bully is still talking.
- “Stop. We need to talk.”
- “Stop, you have no idea what your actions can cause someone else to do and the price for finding out is more than you or anyone should ever have to pay.”
- “Stop! You're hurting him/her!” Then befriend the victim and walk away.
 - Most bullying happens when peers are together, nearly 90% of the time, but most bullying will stop in less than 10 seconds when peers intervene to befriend those being bullied. This means that those who witness bullying have the power to stop it and cannot continue to give bullies power by being silent bystanders. Speaking loudly calls attention to a bullying problem and can help prevent it from getting worse.
- “I need you to stop treating X that way. It's hurtful and completely inappropriate.”
- “Stop and think about what you're saying.”
 - Consider how they would feel if someone was treating them the way they were treating the victim. I am someone that believes there is a learning experience in all situations — and hopefully the bully and the victim can walk away shaking hands.
- “Stop that. You are bothering and offending me when you behave that way, and we don't do that here. I know you can behave better than that.”
- “Excuse me, it's not OK to make fun of another person (or whisper behind their back or exclude someone). That's not how we treat people here. Please stop.”
 - Start by addressing the behavior — what you see — and then emphasize the damage it causes the whole climate — not just the victim.

Explicitly saying “Stop” is clear, direct, and simple. The word can be pivotal to use as an adult, and as you saw in Ross Ellis’s response above, STOMP Out Bullying recommends it for kids too — in situations where they feel safe and comfortable using it.

Ask “WHY?”

This behavior-questioning approach views not the person as a problem, but their behavior as what requires change.

- “Why?”
 - There is always a story; there is always a reason, and it is our job to get to the bottom of it and to help the bully stop and the victim heal.
 - Go to the person being targeted and remove them from the situation. Make sure they know we are a resource for them.
 - “Why?” is a great place to start because behavior is a form of communication. It’s up to us as adults to listen to bullying behaviors and get to the root of what the person who’s doing the bullying is really trying to say. The roots of a behavior can help you predict its path, intervene effectively, and prevent future bullying.
 - It’s also important to remember that bullying is a learned behavior. If you work with hurt people, you know how common it is that people who hurt others have been hurt themselves, sometimes horrifically so. Again, it’s about looking to the roots as the fundamental place to promote healthy growth and positive change.

Say That the Behavior Is Not Right, OK, or Allowed

- “No more, not here, never.”
 - That’s the beginning of stopping the behavior, then the follow-up is to hold those doing the acts accountable.
- “We don’t do that here.”
- “Hey man, you don’t have to treat people like that. That ain’t right.”
 - Teach the three things that residents can do:
 - Number one is you can step in. If you’re comfortable, you can step in, and you personally can say something to that person that’s the bully.
 - Second thing is you can reach out. That means reach out to the person who’s being bullied, attacked, or talked about and just let them know that you’re a friend, you’re there for them, and you can be there for them long-term.
 - The third thing is to get help, and that means reach out to someone at the facility and let them know what’s happening so they can intervene in the situation.
- “It’s not okay to say that to someone living here. Are we clear?”
 - Many adults struggle with finding the “right” words to say. The most effective messages are the ones delivered in under 15 seconds, such as:
 - “It’s not okay to say that to someone living here. Are we clear?”
 - “Sending that kind of text is unacceptable. Are we good?”
 - “Leaving one person out of the group is not going to work. Let’s fix this and move on.”

Brief messages have the distinct advantage of sending a clear message to the person who is bullying that their behavior will not be tolerated while, at the same time, definitively signaling to a vulnerable person that they’re safe and have the backing of the facility. Moreover, brief statements don’t humiliate anyone but do let everyone know that we are attuned to social dynamics and not afraid to step in to bring an end

to bullying. It's important to ensure that the person who's doing the bullying knows which behaviors are wrong, why they're wrong, and what the consequences are.

Tell the Person That You Want to Talk

Start a conversation about stopping cruel behavior.

- “We need to talk.”
 - It is so important that you do say something to those involved in the behavior, that you do take action. To not address it, to not say that one sentence, your silence sends the clear message to the person bullying that their behavior is acceptable and within the norms. To the person being bullied, your silence implies that they are not safe in that environment.
- “I'd like to talk to you, may I?”
 - One-on-one with someone is where it's possible to make a real difference. In a firm yet non-shaming way I'd ask what's going on with them. And then I'd be prepared to really listen. Because people who bully are people, too—hurt people, and “hurt people hurt people.” Hurt people who seek to hurt others need to know there are other ways to manage their hurt.
- “Tell me, please, what's making you so angry that you want to get back at him/her?”
 - By giving them opportunities to express their destructive emotions (anger, hurt, jealousy, rejection, fear, frustration) to people who are really listening, we help them get back in control of their emotions while helping them think more clearly about their options for getting their needs met.
 - Taking the time to really listen will help you better understand where they are coming from. And by modeling respect yourself, you have the power to help them start showing respect too.
 - It's also important that your policy be clear about communication, definitions, reporting, and expectations.

Acknowledge What the Person is Trying to Achieve

- “I know bullying her gives you this ‘high’ and makes you feel almighty and powerful. But the truth is, when you look back on what you've just done, I promise you won't feel all-mighty or powerful; you will just look in the mirror and feel sad.”
- “Your abuse of others does not make you better.”
 - To get to the root of the behavior, she recommends asking yourself these questions:
 - What's going on in their life that makes them turn to bullying?
 - What do they have to gain?
 - What do they have to lose?

Offer the bully help. Don't give up on the bully, but instead channel their power into positive outlets. It's common for people who are violent to have learned somewhere along the way that power is finite, and that if they don't exert power over others, they will be overpowered themselves.

Teaching by example that “power given is power gained” is, well, a powerful way to empower people to replace problem behavior with positive behavior.

- “You don't need to be this kind of person. You have the power to make the world better, so let's figure out how you're going to use that power.”
- “You wanted attention and now you have mine. Bullying him will not relieve the hurt you're feeling. But I can certainly help.”
- “Though I cannot assure you that I can fix this immediately or completely, I will not give up on helping you if you do not give up on me while I try to help you.”

Ways Seniors can Counter Bullying

Victims of bullying tend to become nervous and timid, or are prone to anger themselves. There is no quick solution for bully victims, but here are ways seniors can act to protect themselves:

- Think twice before telling the person to just outright ignore the bully and do nothing to change it. “With that approach, you have to be prepared for it to get worse before it gets better. The bully will try to be meaner to get that same reaction. Instead, teach them tools to break the cycle.”
- Teach the 5 W’s of reporting bullying: who, what, when, where, and most importantly, witnesses.
- Involve a family member during visiting hours to take note of the bullying in action.
- Show the bullies they have no power by not reacting to the intimidation.
- Stay composed and grounded when standing up to bullies instead of mirroring the aggression.
- Look at bullies in their eyes.
- Depending on how bad the bullying is (and as long as you don’t feel at risk, scared or physically threatened) you might want to try and work it out yourself – as a first step.
- The more empowered you are, and the more you can help yourself, the better chance you have to stop the bully.
- If the bully doesn’t change their behavior, that’s when talking to someone else can be really helpful.
- The bully wants you to react. Their goal is to take away your power, make you sad and scared. And if you show them you are not sad and scared, they will often lose interest and they cannot take away your power.
- Remember they want to upset you constantly so you get angry. If you don’t get angry, the bully will lose their own power.
- Remember that bullies are human - they eat, sleep and live just like you do. The only difference is that you are NOT a bully! Bullies act the way they are insecure and bully only to feel powerful.
- Bullies look for a reaction from you and often lose interest if they aren’t given the satisfaction of getting one.

COPING STRATEGIES

Like instances of bullying in other age demographics, coping with senior bullying is a long and sometimes complex process. Identifying coping strategies to help seniors cope with bullying and fostering appropriate behaviors and responses among senior bullies is the best approach, but it takes ongoing effort and careful consideration to dissolve situations in a positive manner. In senior living communities, setting expectations and providing clear rules and policies from the start helps to ensure a positive living environment for all residents. Older adult coping skills that can be taught include, but are not limited to:

- Just let it go or tune it out.
- Avoid contact.
- Walk away. This will diminish the power of the one verbally bullying.
- Bite their tongue.
- Engage in positive self-talk (mantra).
- Pursue off-site activities.
- Seek to see the other person’s point of view and show empathy.
- Learn and use de-escalation skills.
- Get a pet or spend time with pets.
- Form relationships with other supportive individuals.
- Let your emotions settle first before you approach so you can speak with a clear head.

- If your emotions are really high, walk away and regain your composure.
- Approach the conversation firmly and confidently.
- Maintain eye contact
- Call the bully by name.
- Remember it's not your fault, it's the bully that has the issue.
- Do not make any aggressive motions or innuendos.
- Have a fact-based conversation about what you observe or is being reported and give the bully a chance to respond to their behavior.
- Don't attack the individual that never works.
- Address the specific behavior you want them to change.
- Do not provoke or antagonize.

If You Feel Safe, Here Are Some Ways To Handle The Bully:

- Walk away when the bully approaches you. Try and imagine you're walking away from a stranger. Both you and your body language will show you don't care.
- Concentrate on thinking about something else. When the bully approaches you, count to 100 and keep walking. They'll never see how upset you are.
- Yelling STOP and walk away. Keep walking and don't turn around no matter what they say.
- When the bully harasses you and calls you names, look them in the eyes, LAUGH and walk away without any additional conversation.

Bullying Do's

Just Walk Away from the Bully

Once you give your comeback line --- IT'S SO IMPORTANT to just walk away and keep walking! Do not react or respond. That's what the bully wants!

When you walk away you're taking away the bully's power!

Stay Positive

It can be hard to remember all your good points when someone is doing their best to be negative.

However, try to think of all the things you do well and remember that you are a valuable person. Thinking of how bad the bully must be feeling may also help you to stay positive.

Build An Armored Shield Around You

Visualize a tall armored shield. Build that shield around you and when it's up, imagine all the things the bully is saying bouncing off that armored shield.

Be Confident

Bullies usually pick on people that they think are weaker than they are, so stand up to them. You might be scared but if you keep standing up to them they'll stop.

For Staff: Bullying Do's

When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time.

Do:

- Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another person to help you to do this.
- Separate the individuals involved.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.

- Stay calm. Reassure the persons involved, including bystanders.
- Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

Bullying Don'ts

What NOT To Do If You Are Bullied

DO NOT...

- Think it's your fault. Nobody deserves to be bullied!
- Fight back or bully a person back
- Keep it to yourself and just hope the bullying will "go away." Make sure you report the bullying.
- Skip an activity or event because you're afraid of the bully
- Be afraid to tell. Telling is NOT tattling! It's the right thing to do!
- Hurt yourself. Nothing is that hopeless that it can't be resolved. As painful as bullying is, NOTHING is ever that bad that you should hurt yourself in any way.

For Staff: Bullying Don'ts

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Don't ignore it. Don't think they will always work it out without assistance.
- Don't immediately try to sort out the facts.
- Don't force other people to say publicly what they saw.
- Don't question the person involved in front of other people.
- Don't talk to the individuals involved together, only separately.
- Don't make the individuals involved apologize or patch up relations on the spot.

Staff training is crucial for preventing bullying and addressing it if it occurs.

- Prevent bullying by educating people on the ways it occurs and encourage onlookers to intervene.
- Create, implement, and disseminate zero tolerance policies and procedures on bullying, including channels for reporting incidents and resolving them.
- Confront bully and inform them that their behavior may result in an eviction.
- Intervene: If you see something say something and do something.
- Support the target. Always support the target. In doing so, the bully does not receive the attention that he or she seeks.
- Encourage staff members and residents to report bullying behaviors. Everyone should know the policies, to whom bullying should be reported and what actions will be taken when it is reported.

Find Out What Happened

Whether you've just stopped bullying on the spot or a person has reached out to you for help, follow the steps below to determine the best way to proceed.

- Keep all the involved parties separate.
- Get the story from several sources.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
- It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple people are involved or it involves cyberbullying. Collect all available information.

Heightened media exposure for the issue increases the likelihood that potential residents and their adult children will be asking about bullying prevention when they're searching for a senior living community.

In order to address bullying in long-term care and senior living, several steps should be taken:

- Assess the extent of the problem within your community. Ask the question: "What are the conditions in your community that allow bullying to occur?" A bullying needs assessment can

help determine, among other things, the type of bullying that is occurring, where bullying “hotspots” lie (the dining room, for example), and the effectiveness of your program.

- Create policies and procedures: Schools and workplaces have anti-bullying policies that long-term care organizations can use as models for their own guidelines.
- Train staff: Employees need education so that they recognize bullying behaviors and understand the procedure to handle them within your organization.
- Establish ongoing bullying prevention programs: Preventing bullying cannot be accomplished in a single staff meeting. It requires regular training and ongoing discussions with staff and residents. Some examples of programs to reduce bullying are bullying awareness sessions, civility training and interventions that directly address the person who is bullying.
- Familiarize residents with an effective, confidential reporting process so that staff members are aware that there is a problem.
- Provide anger management classes or counseling that can help seniors deal with the problems that may be contributing to aggressive behavior.

Communities must take steps to protect their residents from bullying. Additionally, communities should have policies to address a bullying incident, including required staff education, reporting requirements, and protocol when bullying is identified. Every resident is different, and every incident is different. This is where continuous staff education is vital, so all employees are alert to any occurrences and properly follow your community’s policies and procedures pertaining to the circumstance. The following list is an outline of a sample process for how to address bullying when it occurs:

1. Staff member observes or is told about a situation involving bullying behavior.
2. Staff member assesses whether there is a potential for immediate or imminent physical danger to anyone, and if so, takes immediate steps to de-escalate the situation.
3. Staff member notifies the appropriate leadership (e.g., immediate supervisor or executive director).
4. Once notified of the situation, leadership/management also assesses the potential for physical danger, and if so, whether appropriate steps have been taken to safeguard the victim or if necessary, all within the community.
 - If a crime has been committed, leadership/management reports the incident to the proper authorities (consult all relevant law and regulation).
 - Leadership/management also assesses whether to notify the families, guardian or legal representation of the residents involved with the incident.
5. If the incident is less severe, staff may be able to help resolve the situation. Management or a community social worker should gather as much information or evidence as possible. Collect accounts from witnesses among staff and residents, and talk with individuals who may have additional background information on the residents involved. Staff should also take into account what it already knows about the individuals involved (personalities, conditions, etc.).
6. With all the information, brainstorm possible solutions, while still adhering to residents’ rights. For example:
 - Would the bully benefit from counseling, or do these residents need mediation?
 - Are there environmental factors that could help deter bullying (e.g., adjoining rooms, proximity to one another at social gatherings)?
 - If a resident living with dementia is exhibiting bullying behavior, what is possibly triggering the resident, or how can they be redirected?
7. Develop a corrective plan, and communicate the plan to the impacted parties and staff. Consider whether the plan should be incorporated into residents’ care plans and whether family members of residents should also be notified.

8. With staff educated on the corrective plan, they can help implement, monitor the residents and report back on progress.
9. If a resident is still exhibiting bullying behaviors—whether chronic, non-discriminatory, or purposeful—staff should reassess possible solutions. If others are at risk, voluntary or involuntary transfer, may be necessary. Again, consult all relevant law and regulation.

CASE EXAMPLES

The following case examples are offered for you to consider. Consider the following case examples. Discuss among your team. How would you handle each of these? What might you do to keep all parties safe and to reduce incidence of bullying behavior?

1. There's a clique system. It goes beyond seat saving at activities and in the dining areas. The unwanted are turned away from cafeteria tables. It has come to yelling and fistfights at times.
2. A Jewish individual in a senior housing community wakes up every morning to hate filled propaganda including swastikas drawn on his door and photos of Hitler slid under his door.
3. There is a group of women who use any excuse to gossip and spread rumors about specific women. Others within the community are beginning to believe what they say and are shunning these women.
4. At a senior high-rise, there are no assigned parking spaces, but a woman who sees herself as the queen of the parking garage will key the cars of those who crossed her or parked in what she considers to be "her parking space."
5. Two men, both from different branches of the US military have taken it past good-natured ribbing and are squabbling and fighting. It is making others feel uncomfortable.

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are offered for you to consider. Discuss among your team. For each of the scenarios, consider the following discussion questions/prompts:

1. Identify the major issues relating to the behaviors and factors that contributed to this bullying incident.
2. When considering all parties involved, how could this situation be dealt with effectively?
3. What could have prevented this situation from occurring?
4. What could be done to prevent this situation from occurring again?

Case Study 1:

During Tuesday's bridge game a verbal exchange occurred between two card players Sam and Ned. The conflict escalated between the two players with Sam accusing Ned of cheating. Sam then pointed out that everyone knows that Ned is a cheater at Bridge. The other card players were visibly uncomfortable during the verbal exchange, but nobody stood up for Ned. Finally, the activities professional who arranged the bridge game came over to Sam and Ned to try and diffuse the situation. The two men agreed to disagree on Ned being called a cheater for the purpose of completing the game. After all the residents left for their rooms, the activities professional went to the administrative staff to let them know about the incident.

Case Study 2:

Liam lives in an assisted living building and is ignored and often feels isolated. Sometimes he is discussed by other residents while he is present. Liam comes from a cultural background that is different than the majority of residents who live in the building. Some feel that Liam presents in a way that is not deemed acceptable to the majority of the group. Liam is not able to pick up on the social cues demonstrated by members of the majority group and tried to join in on various activities/socials in the activity room without success. Liam has been spending more and more time in his unit alone and refusing the invitation of the recreation staff.

Case Study 3:

A few residents were sitting around a table speaking loudly and complaining about everyone. This group often believes they have priority to use the lounge because they have lived there the longest and volunteer to run activities. They are known to gossip and monopolize the space between certain times of the day while they knit. One of the people being gossiped about, Francesca, later came into the community space and overheard what was being said. Francesca requested that the group stop gossiping, and offered them an opportunity to reflect upon how they might feel if the roles were reversed. The gossiping residents became defensive for being called out about their behaviors and started shouting at Francesca, causing Francesca to eventually leave the community space because she was upset and started crying.

CONCLUSION

Research suggests that at least as many elders are bullied as high schoolers nationwide. Current bullying estimates misjudge the problem since staff acknowledge higher rates of bullying but also acknowledge an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge a problem. As the population ages and the number of elderly residents living together in communal settings increases, bullying among residents will likely only continue to rise. Just as our American understanding of bullying developed throughout the 1900s, so too must our current understanding change. Bullying is no longer an issue that solely impacts adolescents. Learning about the problem and adopting some of the strategies as outlined in this session provide elders and their families proactive and reactive solutions so that elders are no longer ignored.

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POST-TEST

1. According to the federal government, bullying is defined with which of the following core elements?
 - a) Unwanted aggressive behavior
 - b) Observed or perceived power imbalance
 - c) Repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition
 - d) All of the above
2. Which of these is not characteristic of elder bullying?
 - a) Between 10 and 20 percent of older adults living in senior living communities are bullied
 - b) Bullying can happen in any number of places, contexts, or locations including online
 - c) Most senior-to-senior aggression is physical abuse
 - d) Men and women are equally likely to be the victim as well as the aggressor
3. Which of these is not a type of bully?
 - a) Narcissistic bully
 - b) Impulsive bully
 - c) Primary bully
 - d) Secondary bully

-
4. Which of these describe the impact of senior bullying?
 - a) Bullying behaviors can escalate to physical violence
 - b) Impact is not exclusive to the recipients of such behavior; individuals who witness bullying also experience negative consequences
 - c) Bullying can also be targeted toward staff members of organizations serving older adults
 - d) All of the above
 5. Which of these is not a reason why older adults might bully?
 - a) Some people were bullies when they were younger
 - b) Some people have a difficult time transitioning
 - c) Some people have insecurities about themselves
 - d) All of the above
 6. Typical traits of individuals who bully include which of the following?
 - a) Lacks empathy
 - b) Has few friends
 - c) Struggles with individual differences
 - d) All of the above
 7. Which of the following statements is FALSE regarding bullying?
 - a) It is common for communities to take a passive stance
 - b) Individuals who witness bullying never experience negative consequences
 - c) Bullying behaviors can escalate to physical violence
 - d) Impact is not exclusive to the recipients of such behavior
 8. Which of these is not a phase of empathy?
 - a) Emotional sharing
 - b) Empathetic concern
 - c) Perspective-taking
 - d) None of the above, they are all phases
 9. Which of the following statements is true regarding bullying?
 - a) There is rarely a story behind bullying
 - b) Staff should not remove the person from the situation, they need to learn how to work it out on their own
 - c) Bullying behavior is a form of communication
 - d) Bullying is not a learned behavior
 10. Which of the following is NOT a bullying “Do?”
 - a) Fight back or bully a person back
 - b) Just walk away from the bully
 - c) Stay positive
 - d) Be confident

The post-test and corresponding course evaluation can be accessed at:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Senior_Bully_Take_Home_Course

Or by using the following QR Code:



If all course requirements have been met, a certificate will be emailed from Select Rehabilitation to the email address reported in the course follow-up survey.

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