

# Victims of Bullying: Loss of Childhood, Freedom and Spontaneity

By Dr. Michael Obsatz – February 2023

Recently, a young adolescent girl who was bullied by other girls killed herself. It seemed like a wake-up call for some -- about the devastating effects of this "normalized" behavior on many children, adolescents, and adults.

A lot has been written about bullying. My book, *Raising Nonviolent Children in a Violent World*, was published in 1999. Bullying exists among boys and girls, kids and adults of all ages, and of all ethnic and economic backgrounds. Bullying is part of Empire Consciousness which has been pervasive from the beginning of time. Empire Consciousness has the following characteristics:

- domination
- hierarchy
- scarcity
- fear
- oppression
- shaming
- blaming
- labeling, grouping
- stereotyping
- violence, hitting, punching, shooting
- destruction
- war, bombing, killing
- entitlement

An example of this is Russia's war on Ukraine. Clearly, an Empire dominated a smaller and weaker country.

As a boy, I was bullied by a gang of boys who hated me because I was Jewish. It was the 1940s and 1950s -- and Anti-Semitism was rampant in America. I was repeatedly hit, punched, slapped, spit on, shamed, called names, and had my belongings taken away. I lived in constant fear. My bullying took place in the classroom, on the playground, on the school bus, in the hallways, and in the cafeteria. Almost all of the adults looked the other way. One teacher told me that I probably did something to deserve it.

No place felt safe. When we talk about bullying, we rarely go deeper into the traumatic effect it has on children, adults, and entire cultures. Bullying takes away one's feeling of safety. A child becomes hyper-vigilant.

In one's mind is: When is it coming next? How can I avoid this? Where can I hide? Who can I safely tell? (By the way, "telling" often makes the bullying worse). If I cry, do they hit me more? If I don't cry, do they hit me more so I will cry?

Boys aren't supposed to cry -- so crying erodes a boy's sense of personal masculinity and strength. Why is this happening to me? Did I do something wrong? All of this second-guessing is mind-exhausting.

What we don't usually talk about regarding bullying is the loss of freedom, curiosity, spontaneity that victims of bullying feel. One is trapped, limited, and life is not under one's control. No one can be trusted.

It is terrifying and terror-fying. Feeling constant terror, the possibility that violence could erupt at any moment creates anxiety and long-lasting grief. Children of bullying lose their innocence and their light-heartedness. Life is stressful -- every minute, all the time. Victims can't study, learn or concentrate. My kindergarten teacher bullied me. She told me I would never make it to first grade.

Constant fear and stress, along with lack of freedom and spontaneity, results in the loss of a free childhood. No matter what you do, you will be criticized, blamed or hurt. There is no escaping it, and one is doomed. This feeling of impending doom results in severe depression, and sometimes suicide.

The losses: childhood, spontaneity, freedom, hope, trust, and safety.

The effects: are anger, shame, need to control, rage, depression, hopelessness, and suicide.

As long as we allow this consciousness to pervade our culture, no one will be safe. That is because no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Abraham Maslow, my psychology professor in 1960, taught us that safety was the first and most important need that human beings have. Oneness Consciousness is the acceptance of all others, and the equality of all humanity.

Millions of victims of bullying are currently grieving losses and suffering with anxiety, depression, and fear. It is an international affliction, often minimized and normalized.

Let's get real.