Seniors Bullying Seniors: Out of the Playground and into Senior Living Communities

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Ruben’s Experience

25+ years of experience working in the health, human and social services sector.

Education: MNPL, GMHS, PSC, and CDP.

Senior Resident Services Manager, 10 years
- 28 mixed population buildings public housing developments serving older-adults and younger adults with disabilities.
- 8 RSCs
- 1,563 households
Congratulations on bullying everyone into signing up for your anti-bullying seminar
Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the characteristics of bullying behaviors.

2. Learn the five different types of bullies.

3. Understand the psycho-social impacts of bullying behaviors.
Learning Outcomes

4. Identify Organizational interventions that may help minimize bullying among older-adults.

5. Pinpoint skills to share with older-adults to avoid them from being bullying targets.
Hands-Raised Polling Question

住房公积开发人、业主

住房服务协调员

住房财产经理

住房行政管理人员

办公室助理

行政助理

设施经理、维护人员
Adult Bullying: Not Just a Playground Issues

Self-Reflection Exercise
HAVE YOU EVER BULLIED OR BEEN BULLIED BY SOMEONE?
Hands-Raised Polling Question

- Have you personally ever been bullied?
- Have you ever witnessed someone else being bullied?
- If you are a parent, has your child ever shared with you that s/he has been bullied?
- Have you ever witnessed an older-adult bully another person?
Nursery Rhyme

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

Wikipedia: an English language children’s rhyme. It persuades the child target of name-calling to ignore the taunt, to refrain from physical retaliation, and to remain calm and good-natured. It is reported to have appeared in *The Christian Recorder* of March 1862, a publication of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.
Impact of Negative Terms

How do you feel when you are referred to by words you consider negative?
fatty!
moron!
you’re so stupid!
Self-Reflection Exercise

✍️ Think about a time in your life where you felt bullied?

✍️ When and where did it occur?

✍️ What did it feel like?
Self-Reflection Exercise

Please share your story with the person sitting next to you.

(5 minutes)
Seniors Bullying Seniors

STOP Bullying
Adult Bullying

When we hear the word bully, we immediately think of children and adolescents, but it is very real problem in the older adult population.
Unfortunately bullying behaviors occurs across the lifespan
Late-Life Bullying Statistics

- Estimated 10-20% of older adults experience some type of senior to senior aggression, usually verbal abuse.

- Tough to tease out precise numbers because these acts often go unreported.
Barriers to Reporting

- Victims are often too ashamed and fear retaliation.

- Lack of training. Staff members may be unsure of the correct protocol or would prefer the situation to resolve itself. (Kudos)
BULLYING AMONG ADULTS
HOW PREVALENT IS IT?

OVER ONE-IN-FOUR AMERICANS (27%) ADMIT TO HAVING BEEN THE VICTIM OF BULLYING AS AN ADULT.

MOST PREDOMINANT ENVIRONMENTS FOR ADULT BULLYING

- IN THE WORKPLACE: 41%
- DOMESTIC/FAMILY SITUATIONS: 35%
- SOCIAL SITUATIONS: 25%
- SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS: 18%
- ACADEMIC SITUATIONS: 12%
- SPORTS/ATHLETICS: 9%
Bullying Defined
Bullying Defined

Form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort.

American Psychological Association (APA)
Bullying Defined

Intentional, repetitive aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power or strength.

Hazelden Foundation, 2008
Characteristics of Bullying

✓ Repetitive negative behaviors towards another person, occurring over a period of time.

✓ Behavior is unsolicited by the target.

✓ Effects are lasting and harmful.
Characteristics of Bullying

✓ Ranges from verbal intimidation to physical violence.

✓ Behavior violates the standards of appropriate conduct.
Fact or Myth

Is it considered bullying, if the incident only occurs one time?
Fact

One-time incidents may have significant negative impacts on individuals.
The Five Types of Bullies
5 Types of Bullies

1. Narcissistic Bully: self-centered, need for power and control, does not share empathy with others.

2. Impulsive Bully: Spontaneous, plans their bullying out less. Even if consequences are likely, they have hard time restraining from bullying behaviors.
5 Types of Bullies


4. Verbal Bully: Uses their words, starts rumors, uses sarcastic, or demeaning language to embarrass, dominate and humiliate another person.
5. 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.

(self-preservation, survival of the fittest)
Living in fear

Bullying targets the defenseless
Where Does Bullying Occur?

- 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 in Nursing Homes and Other Older Adult Communities
YouTube Videos

? Senior Citizens Also Targets Of Bullying - YouTube.website

? Senior citizens bullying more prevalent than you think - YouTube.website
What does Bullying Look Like?

- The situation and type of behavior determines if it is bullying.
- Some behavior may be inappropriate and violate community rules but is not bullying.
- Some people may display verbal or physical aggression as a way of communicating when they are frustrated or upset. (Dementia/Alz)
Keep Your Eyes and Ears Open for Senior on Senior Bullying
This is What Bullying Looks Like
Types of Bullying Behaviors

- Verbal: name calling, teasing, insults, taunts, threats, sarcasm, and pointed jokes targeting specific individuals

- Physical: pushing, **pinching**, biting, punching, hitting, **hair pulling**, destroying property, and stealing
Types of Bullying Behaviors

- Anti-social: shunning, excluding, gossiping, mimicking, spreading rumors, using offensive gestures and negative nonverbal body language.

- Relationship-centered: ostracizing during meal times, activities or forming social cliques.
Behavior is Communication

Dancing the Medication Mambo
WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY?

TO PRETEND THEY ARE TOUGH
TO TRY TO GET OTHERS TO LIKE THEM
TO HIDE THEIR OWN FEARS
THEY COPY OTHERS WHO BULLY
THEY ARE UNHAPPY
THEY DON'T LIKE WHO THEY ARE
ARE THERE ANY OTHER REASONS?
Why Do Older-Adults 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.
  
  (Getting old ain’t for sissies)
Why Do Older-Adults Bully?

- 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.
Why Do Older-Adults Bully?

• 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 has few positive social relationships.
Why Do Older-Adults Bully?

- 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 Gets Bullied?

- Individuals who have difficulty defending themselves. (vulnerable, disabled, and disenfranchised)

- Two types of people often targeted with bullying:
  - Passive targets
  - Provocative targets
Gender Differences of Bullies

- Women usually utilize more passive behaviors like whispering or gossiping.
- Men usually utilize more provocative behaviors like aggressive in your face gestures and negative comments.
Passive Targets

Tend to:

- Be highly emotional (drama & chaos)
- Have difficulty reading social cues (boundaries)
- Experience a heightened sense of anxiety
Passive Targets

Tend to:

- Have racial/ethnic, spiritual beliefs, political, or sexual orientation, gender identity that is perceived as different from their target.
- Immigrants & refugees
- r/o early stage dementia (r/o)
Provocative Targets

Tend to be:

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

r/o early-mid-stage dementia (r/o)
Targeting LGBT Older-Adults

1. Appearance.

2. Actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

3. Recent advances in LGBT equality rights.
Real Life Case Scenario

Wanda walked into the dining room one morning of the retirement community she had moved to wearing a pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt. Her hair was fixed, but she hadn’t put any makeup on yet. She saw a group of women at one table in the corner glancing her way and whispering. This group usually ate together and had not been overly welcoming to Wanda as a new resident. She heard a voice from the table say, “Well you would think she could dress up and at least have her makeup on to come to breakfast!” The comment was followed by snickers from the other women at the table. A week later, Wanda, who was still dressing pretty casually to get breakfast, noticed a note in her mailbox with a series of dress code suggestions on it.
Hurtful Actions

✓ Turning public spaces into private domains.

✓ Excluding individuals from social events.

✓ Formation of social cliques.

✓ Using racial/ethnic slurs.
Bullying on Social Media
Cyber Bullying
Bullying on Social Media
Hurtful Actions

- Blocking off seats for their social cliques at mealtimes and during events.

- Criticizing, spreading rumors, ridiculing, and lying about those who don’t meet their acceptance standards regarding race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, economic background, etc.
You discover that a resident has posted offensive and malicious comments and photos on Facebook.
Bullying is Not a Function of Aging

It’s a Pathology
Bullying is Not a Function of Aging

- Bullying is a function of psycho-social pathology.
- Bullying is a condition of a disease.
- Bullying is the human phenomenon of the strongest picking on the weakest. (Survival of the Fittest)
Behavioral Health Problems of Older Adults

10-28% of older adults have mental health conditions serious enough to need professional care.

80% of older adults in need of mental health services do not get the treatment they need.
behavioral health pathologies

✓ are not a normal part of aging
✓ are treatable
✓ behavioral health issues are debilitating and effect overall health and quality of life in older adults
✓ (geriatric mental health foundation)
Possible Causes

- Regressive symptoms of psychiatric illness
- Behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia
- Depression and depressive disorders
Possible Causes

- Dementia
- Schizophrenia/Schizoaffective Disorders
- Delusional Disorders
Dementia

✓ Cognitive deficits can contribute to negative behavior including aggression.

✓ The environment can increase the frustrations and challenges people who experience dementia/Alz.
Schizophrenia

✓ Disordered thinking.
✓ Distort reality.
✓ May have hallucinations and/or delusions
✓ Limited range of emotional expression.
✓ Poor social skills
Possible Causes

- Mood and Bipolar Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders
Possible Causes

- Borderline Personality and other Personality Disorders
- Urinary Tract infections (UTIs)
Keep Your Eyes and Ears Open for Senior on Senior Bullying
Behavior is Communication

MentalHealthHumor.com

By: Chato B. Stewart

Dancing the Medication Mambo
Warning Signs

Bully

- Intimidates staff and others
- Tells others what to do using a bossy style/tone
- Criticizes others
- Lacks empathy
Warning Signs

Bully

- 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

Target

- Self isolation
- Avoidance of events and activities.
- Take long and often out of the way routes to get to and from communal areas.
Warning Signs

Target

- Vague complaints, “They don’t like me” or “They won’t let me ________.”

- Depressed mood (acute onset)
Most Distressing Behaviors Reported

- Loud arguments
- Verbal abuse: naming calling and teasing
- Hurtful actions: gossip, spreading rumors
- Being bossed around
Most Distressing Behaviors Reported

- Being hounded for money or cigarettes
- Listening to others complain
- Experiencing physical aggression
- Witnessing mental health symptoms (decompensation symptoms)
He calls me fatso”. He says, “Hey there fatso” as he walks down the hall, making oinking sounds, and gets into the elevator.
The Impact of Bullying

- Withdrawals socially
- Feels rejected
- Become anxious, depressed and suicidal
- Creates insecurity

- Increased physical complaints/symptoms
- Speaks about moving out or requests transfer
- Creates an environment of fear and disrespect
Common Reactions

- Stress, anxiety, tension and worry
- Retaliation followed by shame
- Increased isolation
- May escalate to physical violence
- Migraines, GI tract/stomach problems, HBP, panic attacks, anxiety, depression, etc.
Common Reactions

- Worsening of mental health disorders
- Anger
- Frustration
- Fear
- Physical injury
STOP ADULT BULLYING
Coping Techniques

- Report! Report! Report! encourage and support targets
- Refer targets to support or self-help group
- Encourage targets to obtain a restraining order
Older Adult Coping Skills

- Just let it go or tune it out
- Avoid contact
- Walk away
- Bite their tongue
Older Adult Coping Skills

- Engage in positive self-talk (mantra)
- Pursue off-site activities
- Seek to see the other person’s point of view and show empathy
Older Adult Coping Skills

- Learn and use de-escalation skills.
- Get a pet or spend time with pets.
- Form relationships with other supportive individuals.
Coping Techniques

5 Ways to Handle a Bully

1. Hold your hand out and say: STOP IT
2. Stand up straight and say: LEAVE ME ALONE
3. Move away to a crowded area
4. Talk to a teacher, parent or friend

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Strategies and Interventions For Residents
Use your head: Don’t corner something meaner than you.
Strategies and Interventions For Residents

- 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.
Strategies and Interventions For Residents

- Maintain eye contact

- Call the bully by name.

- Remember it’s not your fault, it’s the bully that has the issue.
Strategies and Interventions For Residents

- 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.
Strategies and Interventions For Residents

- Don’t attack the individual that never works.

- Address the specific behavior you want them to change.

- Do not provoke or antagonize.
Strategies and Interventions for Staff Members
Use your head: Don’t corner something meaner than you.
“The best way to deal with bullying is to have an all-around culture where bullying is unacceptable.”

Robin Bonifas, PhD, MSW
School of Social Work, Arizona State University
STAND UP!
PREVENT BULLYING NOW!
SPEAK OUT!
Strategies and Interventions for Staff Members

- 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.
NO BULLYING ZONE
Strategies and Interventions for Staff Members

- 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.
- Encourage staff members and residents to report bullying behaviors.
Three-Tiered Intervention Model

1. Organizational
2. Bully
3. Target
Three-Tiered Intervention Model

Preventing and minimizing bullying behavior requires intervention at multiple levels:

1. Organization
2. Bully
3. Target
Organizational Level Interventions

- Create caring communities for all residents and staff members.
- Prohibit the use of obscene language, name calling, gossiping, etc.
- Use empathy as an antidote to bullying.
Organizational Level Interventions

Creating environments that promotes empathy requires that:

• All members are treated with consideration, respect and recognition of each individual’s dignity. (Tenets of equality and respect)

• Everyone is held accountable and responsible for their behaviors.
Organizational Level Interventions

- Everyone is encouraged to stand up for what is right.
- Facilitate on-going conversations about bullying with residents.
- Provide on-going trainings opportunities for staff members.
Organizational Level Interventions

- Implement and enforce Zero-Tolerance Anti-Bullying Policies & Procedures
- Transparent process for responding to reports (Grievance procedure)
- Anti-bullying pledge
Attention!

Abusive, foul, or threatening language or behavior including harassment and intimidation directed toward other tenants or Housing Authority staff will not be tolerated. Actions motivated by an individual's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, familial status, age or sexual orientation are a violation of Fair Housing Laws and specifically prohibited. Engaging in such behavior shall be considered good cause for termination of tenancy.

들거나, 협박하는 칭 호말이나 행동, 그들에 대한 협박의 행위를 포함한 편견을 기반으로 한 장려하지 않는 것입니다. 인종, 국적, 종교, 성별, 성성별, 가족 관계, 연령, 성적 취향 등의 이유로 행하는 행위는 한도 하우징 법률에 위반하며 단정하게 금지되어 있습니다. 그러한 행동은 임대 계약을 중단할 수 있는 좋은 사유로 간주됩니다.

Caay, xadgudub, ama hadal cabsi gelin ama dabeecad la socoota xaga kireysataha ah ama shaqalaha Housing Authority looma kicid shaqsiyeeed sida jinsiyaad, midab, dhalasho, diin, jinsi, cuudada, ama ololeyn galmo waxaa waaye ku xadgudubka Sharom mamnuucid gaar ahaan yeed. Sameynida sida dabeecadahaan sabab wanaagsan oo lagaaga saarayo guryaha.
Agency Policies

Plan for Responding to Threats, Harassment or Other Intimidation by Residents

King County Housing Authority
I signed the Anti-Bullying Pledge

Ruben Rivera-Jackman
Bullying is Wrong!

If you have been bullied or you have bullied it is never a good situation and needs to be stopped NOW!

Stand Up Today and take the Anti-Bullying Pledge and be an Upstander!

I pledge to never bully and stand up for myself and be an Upstander for others in a bullying situation starting today.

NAME: __________________________ DATE: __________________________

Thank you so much for taking my anti-bullying pledge it means a lot to me and together we can Stand Up Today Against Bullying! — Jacob
Organizational Level Interventions

- Publicly acknowledge members of your community that go out of their way to make others welcome. (Ambassador/Ombudsman)

- Pre move-in or new resident orientation which includes information on living peaceably together
Organizational Level Interventions

- Provide support or self-help groups for targets in your community.

- Form or encourage resident advocacy networks to bring issues to housing management (RAC)
Organizational Level Interventions

- Seek legal consult, have legal services send target a letter
- If all else fails, issue lease violation notices
- Proceed with eviction process when you have collected evidence and supportive documentation
Interventions for the Target

- Focus on skills development to them avoid being targeted.
- Encourage and support them to stand up for their rights.
- Foster their self worth and dignity and bolster self esteem. (past successes)
Interventions for the Target

✓ Refer them to mediation training

✓ Refer them to de-escalation or other direct communications skills training.

✓ Refer them to self-help group or 12 step program
Interventions for the Target

- Encourage them to continue to report
- Encourage them to call 9-1-1
- If appropriate to do so, refer them to obtain a restraining order against the bully.
Coping Techniques

5 Ways to Handle a Bully

- Hold your hand out and say: STOP IT
- Stand up straight and say: LEAVE ME ALONE
- Move away to a crowded area
- Talk to a teacher, parent or friend
- Stay Calm. Talk friendly.

www.SuccessinLearning.net
Interventions for the Bully

- Do not avoid or ignore the behaviors
- If you see something, say something and do something.
- Consistently set limits with them.
- Refer them to mental health provider.
Interventions for the Bully

- Assist them to expand their social support networks.

- Assist them in identifying appropriate outlets and alternative methods to manage anger, frustrations, etc. (refer to anger management classes)
STOP BULLYING NOW
STAND UP • SPEAK OUT
Final Thought

The world is a dangerous place; not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

Albert Einstein
RESOURCES
Information shared in this presentation was based on the following sources:

- 2013 Arizona Geriatric Society
- Linda K. Shumaker, R.N.-BC, MA Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition
- Robin Bonifas, PhD, MSW Associate Professor, School of Social Work Arizona State University
Community Partners

- Area Agency on Aging
- State/City/County Office of Civil Rights
- State/City/County Fair Housing Agencies
- Community Mental Health Centers
- Crisis Intervention/emergency services
- Community police
- Alzheimer’s Association
- AARP
AARP BULLETIN

Older Adults Can Be Bullies, Too

Seniors in nursing homes, assisted living facilities face peer pressure from other seniors

Elderly Bullies Prove That Immaturity Has No Age Limit

By Anne-Marie Botek

The word, "bully," often calls to mind images of meaty youths demanding lunch money from trembling kids in glasses and braces.

Because this scene is played out in classrooms across the country, it is usually thought of as the territory of the young. As people age we expect them become more mature, more skillful at handling interpersonal conflict.

However, evidence gathered from nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior centers across the country runs contrary to this assumption.
Resources

- Alzheimer’s Association [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- Family Caregiver Alliance [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)
- Geriatric Mental Health Foundation [www.gmhfonline.org](http://www.gmhfonline.org)
Resources

- Medline Plus [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)
- Suicide Prevention Network USA [www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org)
- Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition [www.olderpa.org](http://www.olderpa.org)
Senior Bullying Articles

- http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41353544/ns/health-aging/#.USJM36XC1H1
Beyond The Schoolyard: Bullying Among Seniors 10
Books
YouTube Videos

? Senior Citizens Also Targets Of Bullying - YouTube.website

? Senior citizens bullying more prevalent than you think - YouTube.website
Thank you for your time and attention

Q & A

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