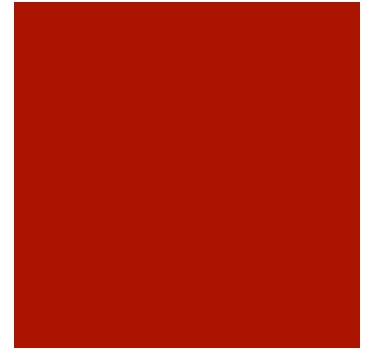




Addressing Aggression in Early Childhood

Marjorie Kostelnik
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

What is Aggression?



- Make a list of aggressive actions

Aggression Happens!

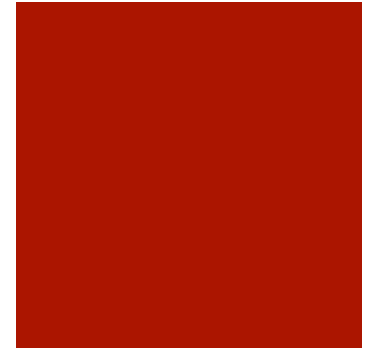
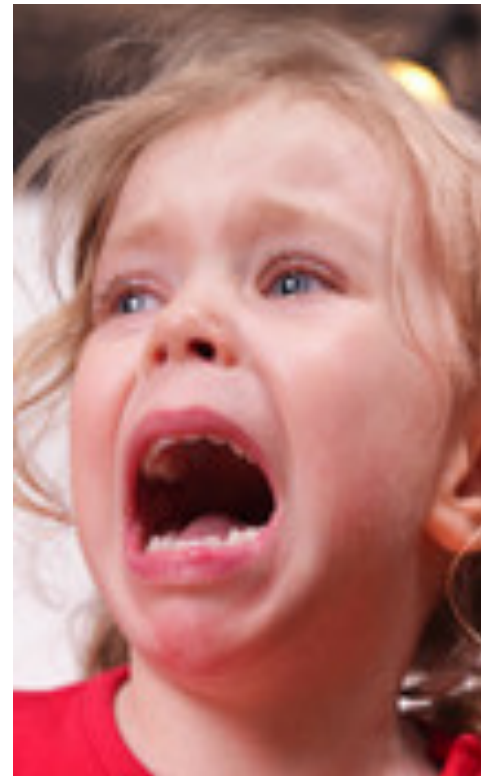
- Destroys property
- Results in physical injury
- Results in emotional harm

It may be physical or verbal



Accidental

- Hurting is NOT the goal
- Unintentional
- Still results in harm

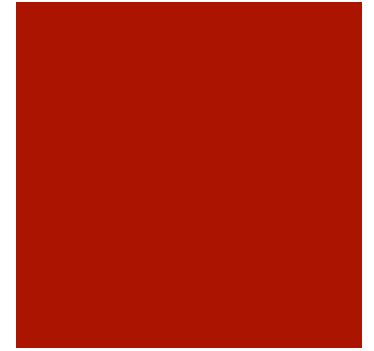


Instrumental

- Harm that occurs in conflicts over:
 - Objects
 - Territory
 - Rights
- Hurting is NOT the goal
- Goal is to get or protect

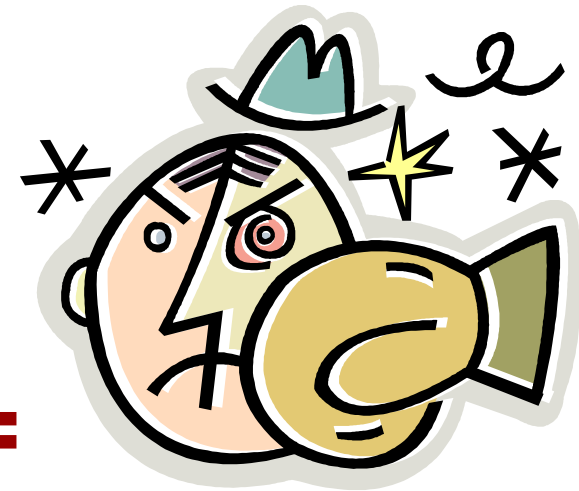


Hostile



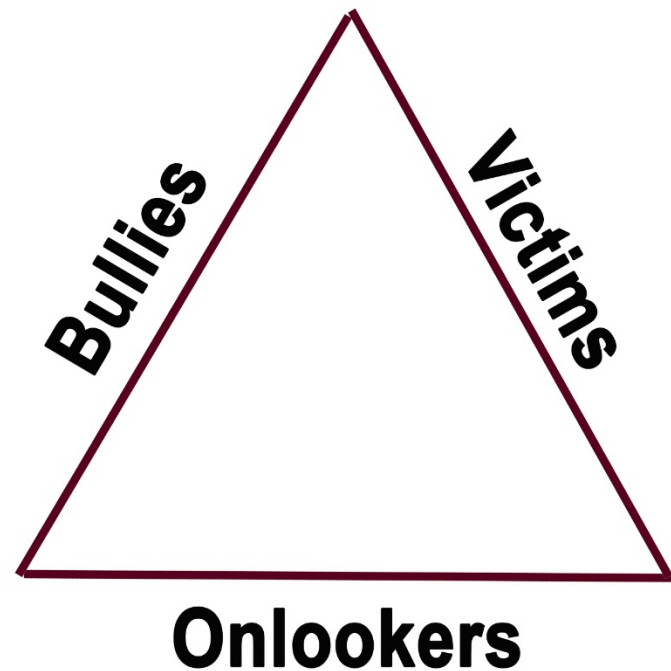
- Hurting IS the goal
- May be physical or relational
- Aim is power or revenge

**HOSTILE AGGRESION =
BULLYING**



Bullying is Serious

- 20-50% - experience bullying in elementary/ middle school
- 2/3 of students are onlookers
- Adults must intervene



Accidental, instrumental, or hostile aggression?



- Kelly unknowingly steps on Lou's fingers while they are both climbing on the climber.
- Janet hits Mark to get even for the names he called her earlier in the day.
- Beth wants to sit next to Ruby, so she pushes Jen out of the way to get that spot.

Developmental Trends



- Early childhood
 - High instrumental aggression
 - Little hostile aggression
- Later elementary years
 - Reduced instrumental aggression
 - Hostile aggression may increase

Prevention and Intervention Must Start Early



Why Children are Aggressive



- Impulsive
- Don't know what else to do
- Observe/Imitate
- Rewarded
- Poor Observers
- Misinterpret
- Direct Instruction



Ineffective Adult Strategies

Strategy	Adult Thinks	Child Learns	Result
Physical Punishment	I'll show her aggression hurts	Might makes right. I can hurt people as long as they are weaker than I am.	Aggression Increases
Ignoring	Maybe the aggression will go away	This must be OK. It doesn't matter what I do.	Aggression Increases
Inconsistency	Be firm, I'm tired, I'll look the other way, be firm	I don't know will happen until I try it!	Aggression Increases

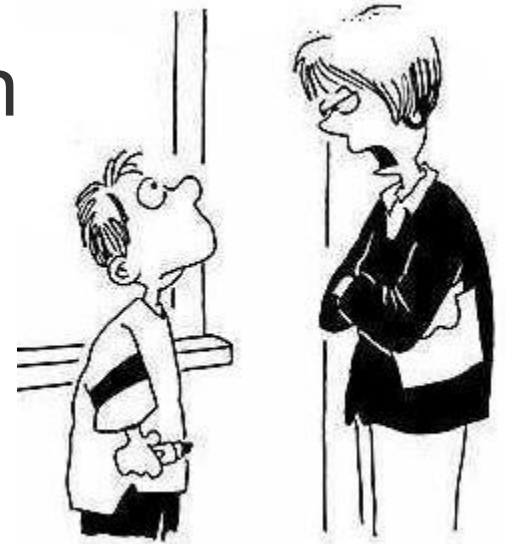
LESSONS LEARNED



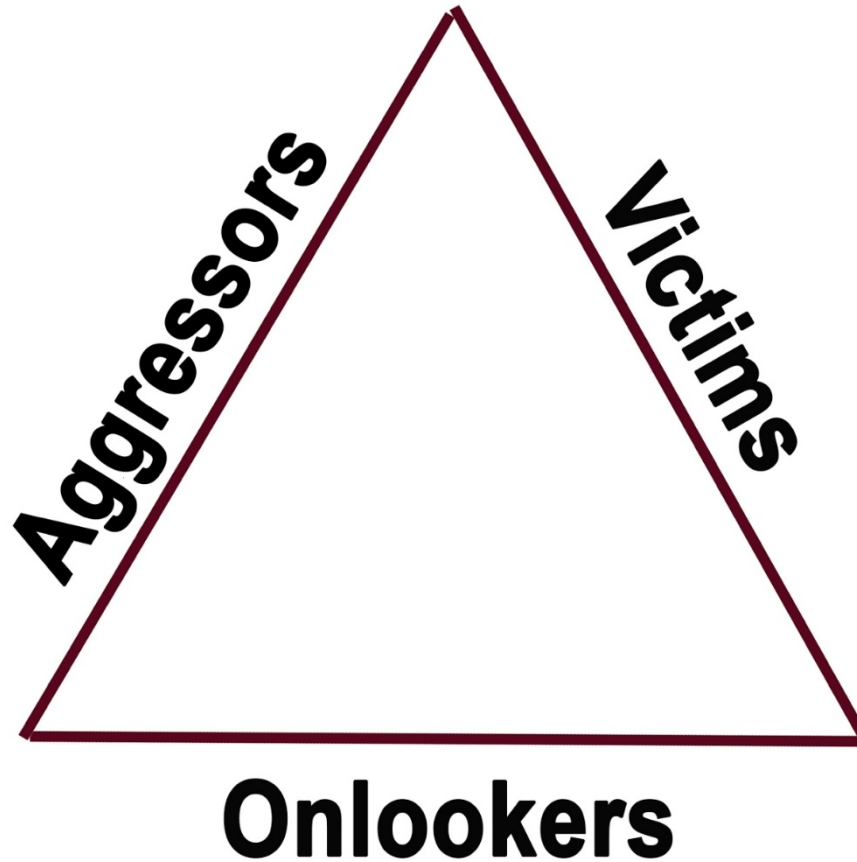
Five-year-old Remy pinches other children. Her mother has tried scolding her, denying her treats, and telling her other children won't want to play with her if she keeps pinching. Nothing has worked. Remy's mother wonders if pinching Remy would help Remy learn that pinching hurts and it is not a good way to express herself.

PERHAPS YOU SAID:

1. Aggression looks like this
2. Might makes right
3. Aggression is the only option
4. This adult can't be trusted
5. Watch out for #1
6. Don't get caught!



Better Approaches



Establish a Strong Foundation



- Give reasons for rules -- safety, rights, protecting property
- Intervene – don't ignore
- Minimize potential frustrations
- Help children develop strategies for dealing with frustration
- Model respect, empathy, reasoning

Coach children



- Provide opportunities to develop skills
- Help children interpret social cues
- Help children listen to other children
- Point out positive efforts

Assertive Children



- Resist unreasonable demands
- Do not tolerate aggression aimed at them
- Stand up to unfair treatment
- Accept logical disagreements
- Suggest solutions to conflict

Provide Assertive Scripts



- I'm still using this
- You can have it next
- I want a turn
- When will I know your turn is over
- Stop calling me names
- Don't grab – ask
- This is mine. It's not for sharing.
- I'm not ready yet

Attend to Victims



- Intervene
- Deal with victim first
- Point out accidental aggression
- Encourage aggressor to make restitution
- Talk to onlookers – enlist their aid



Work with Aggressor

- Model
 - Reasoning
 - Alternate strategies
- Reinforce behaviors incompatible with aggression
- Help children more accurately interpret social cues
- Set firm limits – STOP - restitution, rehearsal, loss of privilege

Mediate Conflicts



- Stay calm
- Listen
- Help each child express wants and ideas for a solution
- Acknowledge effort
- Restate solution
- Follow-through

Include Onlookers

- Make aware
 - What is happening?
 - Who needs something?
 - Facial Expressions
 - Gestures
 - Sounds
 - Words
 - Situation
- Invite ideas for solutions/actions
 - What is needed
 - What can I do?



Promote Prosocial Behavior

- The opposite of aggression
- No expectation of a reward
- Often involves some risk



Prosocial Behavior

- Helping
- Sharing
- Aiding
- Encouraging
- Giving
- Inviting
- Comforting
- Restoring
- Defending
- Donating
- Cooperating
- Reassuring
- Rescuing
- Volunteering
- Sympathizing
- Sacrificing



Prosocial Tendencies

- Prosocial actions outnumber aggressive acts 8 to 1
- We must look hard to see prosocial behaviors
- Prosocial not as dramatic as aggression



Model Prosocial Behaviors

- Exhibit Pleasure
- Show/
Demonstrate
- Point Out Own
Behavior
- Point Out Child
Behavior



Catch Children Being Prosocial

- Describe prosocial behavior when you see it
- Tell children when they are being prosocial
- Use a variety of prosocial words
- Describe children as prosocial people
- Give concrete examples



Provide Opportunities for Practice

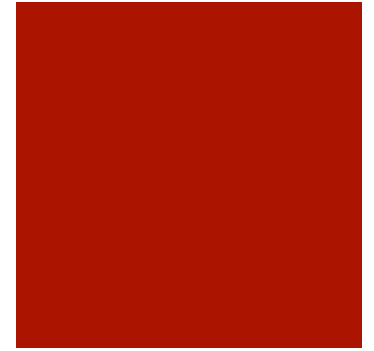
- Plan activities
- Take advantage of naturally occurring activities
- Give children space, materials, time and support



The Children Make a Super Structure



The Children Create an I Spy Sculpture



Help Children Create Prosocial Plans



- Promote awareness
- Help children identify strategies
 - Perspective taking
 - Instrumental know-how
- Encourage children to follow plan
- Reinforce effort and results

Awareness: Identifying the problem

“Somebody might hurt the nest and break the egg.”





A plan to protect the nest.

“The nest is really not in a good place. I wonder what that silly momma bird was thinking?” Meg

“We need to have nest protectors.” Grant, 5

“And the protector needs a badge so everyone knows we are protecting the nest. It should be a star” Andrew, 5

