



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Kids and Bullying

Guest(s): Panel of children and their parents

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Rogers Marsh: Hello there friend, and welcome once again to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I'm so glad you're listening to today's broadcast because it's on the very important topic of kids and bullying.

Now let's face it. When we were growing up, we know what it's like to be impacted by bullying. To one degree or another, all of us have been affected by it. These days, the CDC has found that one out of every five students in schools today reports being bullied, and bullying can manifest itself in many other ways. There's name calling, being made fun of, excessive teasing. That can escalate to threats or intimidation, and sadly, sometimes that leads to the pushing and shoving and even physical violence that we've heard so much about. Then there's the issue of being the subject of rumors online, or being left out of things on purpose, being singled out, ostracized. All of these things can scar a young person forever if left unchecked.

I remember many years ago. I've got three kids, two daughters and a son. My son, Jake is 27 years old now. He's in grad school but when he was in elementary school, he had an issue with his weight and I remember dropping him off at school one day and watching him walk around certain groups of kids and make sure he didn't get in anybody's way and I thought, "That's so strange. He is a tall kid, he's nice kid, he's got a lot of friends. Why is that happening?" Years later, he told me that there were some kids who were bullying him at school and he actually turned in, they had a program with the school where you can turn in anonymously, a report whether or not you were being bullied and the assistant principal got involved. They brought the boys who were bullying into the office, brought their parents in too and they wound up working out a deal where the bullying did stop. I have to admit I so felt horrible for him to find out that this had happened at school and he never involved his mother or me. Years later, when he told me the story, I was so proud of him for standing up for himself and taking issue with it because he was being teased and bullied and ostracized for things that he really had no control over. It was called puberty. His body was changing and it made him a little heavier than some of the other

kids but this is the way it is when it comes to bullying at a young age is often times, the kids who are around are not wanting to pick on these other kids, but they see someone else being ostracized and they think "Thank the Lord it's not me. I'm going to jump in on that too." I know what it means to see the scars and the wounds of someone who had been bullied and then when it is left unchecked, it can be very, very damaging.

Maybe growing up, you found yourself as the bully, or maybe you were bullied, or maybe you just witnessed the bullying and you wanted to do something but you felt like you had no power to help the victim. Well, in any case, there are emotional and psychological wounds that accompany any aspect of abuse, including the sometimes overlooked form called bullying.

On today's edition of Family Talk, Doctor sat down with several school-aged kids and their parents to discuss this emotionally charged topic. Their stories and their experiences are sobering, but they're also helpful and hopeful. Let's listen in now as a young girl answers Dr. Dobson's question, have any of you ever witnessed bullying in school?

- Child: Well, when I was in third grade there was a second grader who rode the bus with me, and she's a little bit overweight and kids would make fun of her a lot. Then it turned into they would hit her and stuff.
- Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.
- Child: One time her mom got on the bus and was yelling at everybody. I was really nice to her. I tried to tell people to stop and I gave her a card and a picture and stuff.
- Dr. James Dobson: Did you feel sorry for her?
- Child: Yes, I did.
- Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. When the mother got on the bus, did that stop it?
- Child: No.
- Dr. James Dobson: It kept going
- Child: Well it put it down a little bit, but it still was going on.
- Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. What do you think she was feeling?
- Child: She was probably feeling like she's really ugly and defeated.
- Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. People who are a little bit overweight are likely to get bullied. People who look in any way different, and you can imagine how it feels when you've been treated that way year after year, after year. That's what we're concerned about,

because it just goes right to the heart of the person. Anybody else experience it?
Yes.

Child: In third and fourth grade, I had a friend named Shannon-

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Child: And she was mentally and physically handicapped.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Child: And she wasn't fully potty trained yet. When she had an accident, I was the only one who would go with her and help her change. When the fifth graders came down the hallway, they would make fun of her because she had pull ups in her locker.

Dr. James Dobson: Jessica, do you know that's what Jesus would have you do? That's exactly what he wants you to do, what you did, and I thank you for having the courage to do that.

Now I want to ask you a more difficult question. Have any of you ever been bullied? Anybody been bullied? Aaron, let's hear your story.

Aaron: One time I was on the bus and this kid, he hit me across the face and I had two black eyes. I told the counselor, and then I went to the principal and all these people. He made an investigation and all these people wrote down that he hit me and everything. Then the principal gave me three days of suspension.

Dr. James Dobson: Wait a minute, he gave you three days of suspension? Why?

Aaron: Because I pushed him away after he hit me.

Dr. James Dobson: Is this your mom sitting beside you here?

Aaron: Mm-hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: What can you tell us about this situation?

Parent: This was going on for over two years, same kids, same bullying. Lots and lots of talk about his weight, calling him names at school, in class, in the halls.

Dr. James Dobson: That must have hurt you.

Parent: Yes. It got to the point where Aaron did not want to go to school. He was very depressed. Wanted to die, really. He told me he didn't want to live. It got that bad. We had talked to the principal and the counselor several times and they

kept doing the same discipline methods over and over but there wasn't an increase or any way we could see it could stop.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you stop it?

Parent: Well, at some point we decided to change their educational routine and we've started sending them to a Christian school and things are going better. We're doing some homeschooling. Both of my older kids are dyslexic, so I believe it started way back-

Dr. James Dobson: Sure.

Parent: In lowered self-esteem and lots of things going on due to being dyslexic.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank God you were on top of the issue, and even though it took you a while to find a solution you eventually made the changes that were necessary. You think of those kids who have parents who aren't sympathetic to this, and then you have a school sometime that just won't listen, or, Aaron in your case, punish you both equally. Aaron, you feel a lot better about yourself now?

Aaron: Yeah. I have friends at the new Christian school and no one makes fun of me there, so it's a lot better.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, that's good. Well, let me see the hands of any of you who are students who have not wanted to go to school because of this problem. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Anybody have any perspectives here to share with us? Tell me Rebecca.

Rebecca: Well, last year I was in second grade and school started and I was there two days late and people had already made friends and made choices who they were going to be friends with.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Rebecca: Since I was new that made me a main target to be bullied and everything. A lot of the times-

Dr. James Dobson: And that was in the second grade. That's too early to be going through something like that, Rebecca. How'd you feel?

Rebecca: Real bad, because at recess in the winter they would throw snowballs at me and stuff.

Dr. James Dobson: How long did it last?

Rebecca: All year.

Dr. James Dobson: All year. What grade are you in now?

Rebecca: Third.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you get over it?

Rebecca: Kind of.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, but it still hurts, doesn't it? You could cry right now couldn't you, because you remember what that feels like? You know what? I remember it too. I experienced it too. Almost all of us as adults have been through this, some a lot more than others. Any adults here, any parents want to make a comment? Yes.

Parent: I found something really interesting these last few years. I know that when Hannah was in elementary school we went through a situation with her over a couple year period of time. We talked to the teacher, talked to the principal, but they really wanted us to deal with it as a family.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Parent: I think that's different. I went to elementary school in the '50s, and certainly kids were bullied then and situations happened. But I distinctly remember principals and teachers and parents all being involved, working interrelated together to try to solve it as a problem and parents really being interested in solving it.

I think a couple of the situations that I've heard mentioned too that even when it goes back, I think the situation here, when it goes back to a student's parent and the parent doesn't want to handle anything or they don't want to discipline anything, the school doesn't really have any options left. It looks to me like we're dropping the ball a lot more often and the students have to suffer more as a result of that because parents are helpless if another student's parent won't take any action.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me tell you a couple of things that have changed since that time that you're talking about, because I remember it too. In the earlier days, you're right, schools felt a greater responsibility to put a stop to this. First of all, discipline was very much more tightly enforced in school at that time. You dare take on your teacher or the administrators of the school. There was just more safety for everyone because the school was more tightly governed.

But also, there was, I think, a greater sensitivity to those who were hurting. You can stop that as adults if you want to. Schools can stop it. Sure they can stop it. Of course they can. They're there to teach and you can't teach if there is disorder, and bullying is a terrible form of disorder and the schools can deal with it, but I'm not sure they always feel like they should or that they have the wherewithal to do it.

The other thing that's changed is parents sometimes don't recognize the problem. Well, the parents really do need to listen when their kids say I'm going through something tough. I'm not talking about just the ordinary complaints and fusses and fights that kids have with each other. I'm talking about when somebody has a big bullseye on them, and everything is aimed at them. In those cases, we really do need to come to the aid of those youngsters and work with the school, and if you have to, get them in another school. Okay. Yes, right here.

Parent:

Giving you another perspective on the side of the actual bully, my son, who is now growing into a wonderful 16-year-old young man. When he was in kindergarten, I came to pick him up from school and was appalled to find out, they had a play day that day, and he had been pulled from that play day with three of his friends to sit in the principal's office because he had been with a group of boys who had actually, and I'm not too sure what exactly happened, but the end result was another young boy being on the ground and they were all kicking rocks at him.

Of course, as a mother, I was appalled that my son, who is this wonderful young man, could even be involved with something like that. The best thing that ever happened to him at that point was that the teachers did take the action, and he remembers it to this day what actually happened.

But me also as a parent, first of all, getting past my pride that my son could even do something like this and saying, wait a minute, you did do that, and actually discussing with him on why. But also coming back and trying to teach Christian values that no, this is not the way we treat people. But I had to get rid of my pride first of all, and say-

Dr. James Dobson:

Any of us can fall into this. We really can. I had a very tender spirit when I was a kid. There was a youngster in our neighborhood that all the other boys disliked, and I left the safety of the gang where I was accepted to be the only friend with this young boy. Yet when I got into junior high and early high school, I got beat up pretty badly. I went through the same kind of thing, and I thought that looks like fun. I'll pass it along to somebody else.

I picked out a kid that was about my size, but I thought that he was kind of a wimp and I figured I could really give him a hard time. So I started bullying him, and I followed him into class one day and I was just really giving him a hard time. He turned out to be tougher than I thought he was, and he turned around and threw his books in my face. By the time I could see him again, he hit me about six times on my head, just bang, bang, bang, and I got over bullying. I gave it up. I decided it was a bad deal. That was my only attempt at bullying anybody.

But see that's what happens. We sometimes, who are being hurt, will turn around and hurt others to try to feel better. They're making us feel insignificant and powerless so I'll feel powerful by beating up somebody else.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thanks for spending some time with us. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcast of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, executive director of the Institute, and we've come to the midpoint of today's broadcast. On behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at JDFI, I want to thank you for listening today, and by the way for your continued support.

We're completely supported by you, our faithful listeners. We would not be able to bring programs to you like the one you're listening to today without your generous contributions. Learn how you can stand with us by visiting drjamesdobson.org. Let's get back to today's broadcast right now, here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me ask the kids who are here, have you ever bullied anyone? Let's see the hands of those of you who have. Yeah. Yeah, quite a few, and you're being honest. Tell me why you did it. Okay, right here.

Cristobel: I was in a special class with kids who were not real smart, and you either became a bully because you just didn't know how to deal with your anger or you just became an outcast.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Cristobel: A few times I just got so mad at the kids who were hurting me, I turned around and they became the outcasts and I just became the bully. I hated doing it, but it's like someone was coming out of me that I never knew before.

Dr. James Dobson: And you knew it was wrong.

Cristobel: Every day I'd come and apologize and then I do it again and I didn't know why. It'd be like I had two different personalities and I didn't know what to do.

Dr. James Dobson: Anger does that to you, doesn't it? Have you dealt with your anger? Have you learned how to handle it in a different way?

Cristobel: Yeah. Now I'm trying to be more nice. It happened when I was in elementary school, and now when I came into middle school, I was still being made ... I just turned around and I became the outcast and I was being made fun of because I was not real smart because I had dyslexia. So I would hang out with the kids who were not real smart.

Dr. James Dobson: Cristobel, I have to interrupt you. Having dyslexia does not mean you're not smart.

Cristobel: Yeah, I know.

Dr. James Dobson: It just means that you have a learning disability. We all have some kind of shortcoming. That doesn't mean you're not smart and it certainly doesn't mean

you're not worthy and valuable. I don't think you ought to refer to yourself as not smart. You sound pretty smart to me, but you can feel like you're not smart when kids tell you that all the time. Are you learning to deal with that?

Cristobel: Yeah. Not many kids make fun of me because since we became homeschooled and I go to a church for some homeschooling classes, I figured I should just act myself. In school everybody tries to find their place, but there's really no need. You just need to act yourself. You can be out loud and get in trouble or you can just be yourself and be nice.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there are a number of things that kids do when they're angry. They can fight back. In fact, some of the violence that we're seeing on school campuses today usually come out of this kind of anger, or you can withdraw and you're very, very, very shy and very quiet. You're determined that no one is ever going to get inside again, or you can find some way to succeed. You can be in the band. You can play football. You can do other things. There are many ways that you can deal with it.

Dr. James Dobson: But you really do need to deal with it because you can't just stuff it inside. That does bad things inside. We got one last comment from Jessica. Okay.

Jessica: The bullying goes on at our school. There's this kid, he's not physically handicapped but he's mentally handicapped, and he'll self-abuse himself because kids just pick on him.

In my social studies class, because he doesn't understand stuff that well, he'll get up and ask teachers questions. But kids pick on him because they think he's dumb or because ... A couple of weeks ago, kids were making fun of him and he bit himself and tore off the skin because he got so mad.

Dr. James Dobson: And you see why? He's got so much anger inside, so instead of lashing out or hitting somebody else he turns that anger on himself and that's very, very sad. Can you reach out to him? Be kind of hard wouldn't it?

Jessica: Probably.

Dr. James Dobson: Somebody needs to. Maybe there's somebody in your class who will say-

Jessica: I tried being nice to him, but everybody starts like, "Why are you friends with him? You'll just become dumb because he's dumb and he's stupid." So they start making fun of him and then they start making fun of me because I tried being nice to him.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Do you all believe when I tell you that somebody who is mentally handicapped and can't learn, I mean somebody that really has great problems, is just as good as you are, just as good as the brightest person in school? Do you believe that? Do you believe that somebody who is not attractive and really

have some serious flaw and when you look at them you immediately think of that? Is that person just as worthy in God's sight as you are?

We've got to understand that. We're all children of God. He made us. He didn't make mistakes and he doesn't make junk, and He loves each one of us and we need to treat each other like that. Right here.

Parent:

My daughter Jennifer's experience happened during fifth grade. There were a group of girls, about five or so, that just formed a clique and excluded her and would do things like take her school supplies and hide them or pull the clips out of her hair. The teachers and the principal, we all got involved but nothing really seemed to be resolved until the parents of everyone got involved. I ended up phoning the parents and explaining the problem and they were all very receptive and they were aghast at that and they disciplined their daughters and they made them accountable. That turned around the situation.

Dr. James Dobson:

Well that offers hope to those people who are listening to this on the radio, especially the kids that are out there that are suffering and hurting and they're wounded and they think this will never change. We've talked to a lot of people today who have overcome it and gotten beyond it, and I pray that will happen.

The Lord cares about this too. There's so much in the Bible about our caring for those who are less fortunate than we or those that have less power or influence than we. He says, "In as much as you do it unto the least of these, our brothers, you do it unto me." So when you all befriend someone who is really getting it, someone who is just being torn apart, it's as though you were doing it to Jesus himself, and that kind of puts it in perspective.

I want to say to all you kids who are here, don't believe the lie, the lie that you're not worthy, that you're somehow less than the rest of us, that you're a nothing, you're a wuss. Don't believe it. It is Satan's biggest lie.

You just put your shoulders back and no matter what anybody else says, this is a temporary thing. You're going to get through this. You're going to get on your feet, and God's got something he wants you to do. If you get that message from being here, it's worth our having been together.

Rogers Marsh:

Psalm 139, verses 13 and 14 say, "For you, Lord created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well."

Friend, you and I would be wise to remember Dr. Dobson's message to all of the kids in the room during today's broadcast, and that is this, God does not make junk. You, me and everyone else on this earth have been specially made by our great God. We have infinite worth and value because we are made in His image. Any other perspective is a lie straight from Satan, the father of lies. Meditate on God's truth today and maybe share it with your child or your grandkids as well.

Now to learn more about the effect that bullying has on kids and what you can do to help visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. While you're there, remember you can also listen to any of today's program that you might've missed.

As a matter of fact, if you have an Amazon Echo Smart Speaker you can listen to Family Talk every day, simply by saying, "Alexa, play today's broadcast of Family Talk," or, "Alexa play Dr. James Dobson." However you listen, we are coming to you every day with relevant, valuable content to help strengthen and support your family. Thanks again for listening to Family Talk. For Dr. and Mrs. Dobson, Dr. Tim Clinton and everyone else here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh. God's richest blessings to you and your family.

Announcer: This has been presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

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Rogers Marsh: Hey everyone, Roger Marsh here. When you think about your family and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at drjamesdobson.org for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.