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Psychological Effects of Teasing

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Difference Between Teasing & Taunting

By [Carola Finch](#), eHow Contributor updated June 22, 2011



In recent years, the deaths of young people in highly publicized school shootings and teenage suicides have been blamed in part on the taunts and verbal abuse of bullies. Adults also can be

verbally abusive with each other in areas like the workplace. Anti-bullying educator Mike Dreiblatt says that when schools try to deal with bullying, they tend to define teasing as being the same as taunting, although these behaviors are different in numerous ways.

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Different Motives

A person who teases and a bully who taunt others have very different reasons for their behavior. When a person playfully teases another individual, the teasing person may intend to lighten a mood in a clever, lighthearted and funny way. The teasing is not meant to hurt the targeted individual and the teasing person respects his dignity by not embarrassing or humiliating him. A bully, on the other hand, deliberately uses taunting to upset another individual. The bully's words are meant to be humiliating, demeaning and cruel to his victim.

Tone: Teasing vs. Taunting

When a person teases, she speaks in an affectionate tone of voice, using repetition, rhyming and exaggeration to signal that she does not really mean what she is saying. The teasing person may mimic the high-pitched voice of whiny person and add non-verbal gestures, for example. A bully, however, will taunt an individual in an angry or sarcastic tone of voice. When a bully mimics a whiny person, he deliberately

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attacks the self-esteem of his target, adding aggressive body language like smirking, rolling his eyes or shaking his head.

Two-Sided vs. One-Sided

When someone teases another person, both share laughter that brings them into a closer and stronger relationship. Both parties may tease each other back and forth and stop teasing if someone objects to the comments or becomes upset. A bully, on the other hand, has a one-sided relationship with her victim by trying to dominate and control the victim. A bully feels she can say what she wants, but her victim is not allowed to speak. She won't stop taunting, even if her target becomes upset and objects to the taunting. Bystanders may laugh at the taunting, but not the victim.

Relationship vs. Control

The person who teases and the target are often good friends who get along with each other. Teasing is only a small part of their relationship. A bully does not have a personal relationship with the victim and uses taunting to ridicule, dominate and demean his victim. The taunting is intended to make the victim fearful of future bullying.

References

[Bullying Statistics: Adult Bullying](#)

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