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# When it comes to childhood bullying, four key factors help with coping, study says

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A new study from researchers at Macquarie University has identified four coping factors that can help children overcome victimisation and lessen the impact of bullying on their future happiness. The report concludes that helping children developing these characteristics can reduce depression, anxiety and behavioural problems when victimised by their peers.

Most children will experience some form of bullying as they grow up. A study published by *Cross and Colleagues* (2009) suggests that as many as one in four children will be harassed by their peers at some stage. However, not all children suffer the same long term effects, and some recover better than others. Dr. Puneet Singh and Associate Professor Kay Bussey from Macquarie University's Department of Psychology

have identified four factors that help children cope with victimisation.

“Unfortunately, many children will get victimized during school and this can continue into adulthood,” says Dr. Singh, “so it all comes back to your personal ability to deal with it.” Their research suggests that children who have more confidence in their ability to be proactive and seek support or resolve conflicts are less likely to experience anxiety. Those with a greater ability not to blame themselves, to focus on their positive attributes, and not take victimisation personally were found to be less anxious and depressed. Finally, students who felt confident not to strike back or seek revenge exhibited fewer behavioral problems.

“They should take action, get support, and not seek revenge. Children who don’t strike back but forgive are less likely to have behavioral difficulties,” says Dr. Singh. She stresses the importance of helping children to develop confidence in their own abilities to feel more in control of a situation. “Look out for signs,” she says, and urges parents and teachers to encourage development of the identified coping factors. “It is not only what children do in response to being victimized, but also how they think about themselves that helps them overcome long-term difficulties.”

**More information:** ‘Peer Victimisation and Psychological Maladjustment: The Mediating Role of Coping Self-Efficacy’ was published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. A full copy of the report is available for download.

Provided by Macquarie University

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