Bullies are Just Really Insecure

March 18, 2010 By David Evans

I'm not sure how many times I've been told, "He's just really insecure," after regaling a friend or family member with my woeful tale of being treated like dog doo by a horribly mean person. Usually, I want to exclaim, "No, he's just a d%&k!"

But researchers at George Mason University have just published a study suggesting that my friends and family weren't being insensitive to my righteous pain, they might actually be right.

"We often miss the underlying problems of people around us. Parents and teachers might think their kid is a bully, acts out and is a behavior problem because they have a conduct disorder or antisocial tendencies," says Todd Kashdan, PhD, one of the study's authors. "However, sometimes when we dive into the motive for their actions, we will find that they show extreme social anxiety and extreme fears of being judged. If social anxiety was the reason for their behavior, this would suggest an entirely different intervention."

Kashdan and his colleagues found that some people diagnosed with social anxiety disorder behave contrary to our expectations that people with social phobias will be timid, shy and non-confrontational. They say that a subset of people with social anxiety actually become aggressive and impulsive in the face of anxiety.

I'll try to be more compassionate the next time someone tries to bully me or cuts me down, but I can't pretend it's going to be easy.

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