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# Weighing the Risks: A Child's Decision to Disclose Peer Victimization

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## Abstract

It is disturbingly common for victims of peer victimization, also referred to as bullying, to withhold disclosure of their experience. This is so despite the

implementation of numerous programs to increase the ability and willingness of victims to disclose and to improve the capacity of others to intervene. Disclosure is a complex matter that may not always result in desired outcomes. The authors use illustrations from their research to examine peer victimization disclosure by children and the factors that inhibit it. Secrecy, powerlessness, victim self-blaming, retaliation, child vulnerabilities, fear of losing the relationship if the bully is a friend, and expectations regarding the effectiveness of adult interventions all impede disclosure. Based on these factors, the authors make suggestions for general social work practice when working with children who have experienced victimization by their peers. This knowledge will contribute to the interventions of mental health and health care practitioners, educators, and administrators.

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