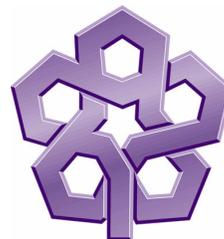


Making a Difference in Bullying

What teachers of high school students
need to know



**Networks of Centres
of Excellence**
**Réseaux de centres
d'excellence**

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is a relationship problem.

Bullying is a form of abuse at the hands of peers that can take different forms at different ages. Bullying is defined as repeated aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the child who bullies and the child who is victimized (Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Olweus, 1991; Pepler & Craig, 2000). Sometimes bullying in adolescence can take the form of sexual harassment or dating aggression.

Through our research, we understand bullying as a disrespectful relationship problem:

- Youth who bully are learning to use power and aggression to control and distress others
- Youth who are victimized become increasingly powerless and find themselves trapped in relationships in which they are being abused.

Read on to learn about how you can make a difference in bullying.

Are your students being bullied?

Sharing these tips with them may help

- ◆ Talk to someone you trust, like a parent or teacher. They can offer support and develop a plan to end the harassment.
- ◆ Think about how your behaviour may be making the problem bigger or smaller.
- ◆ Ignore the bullying and walk away...make them think you just don't care.
- ◆ Try not to show that you are upset when bullied.
- ◆ Laugh it off...humour shows you're not bothered.
- ◆ Stay close to students you can count on to stick up for you.
- ◆ Stay away from areas where bullying happens.
- ◆ Act confident...hold your head up, make eye contact, walk confidently.
- ◆ Make time to do things that make you feel good about yourself.
- ◆ Do what's right...carrying a weapon may get you in trouble
- ◆ Be assertive, not aggressive...fighting back can make things worse.

10 THINGS TEACHERS CAN DO TO ADDRESS BULLYING. . .

BE A ROLE MODEL

Think about how you use power in your life. Model the use of positive power by respecting and supporting others. Avoid the use of negative power, such as bullying, yelling, and manipulating. Teachers and staff set the tone for the school environment and youth learn relationship skills by watching their teachers' behaviour. Set a good example by coping with frustration and resolving conflicts in productive ways.

ESTABLISH A CODE OF CONDUCT

Involve students in developing a code of conduct for what they consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in your classroom and in the school. Post the code of conduct to remind students (and teachers) about what will and will not be tolerated at school. Establish consequences for violations of this code.

DEVELOP FORMATIVE CONSEQUENCES

These are consequences that are designed to send the message that bullying is unacceptable while also providing support for adolescents who bully to learn the skills and acquire the insights they are lacking. For example, a student who bullies may have to spend time in detention but uses that time to write a letter of apology or write an essay about bullying and the negative effects of this behaviour. Adolescents who bully need help understanding the impact their behaviour has on others.

PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND ACCEPTANCE

Talk to your students about the inaccuracy of stereotypes with regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, and other individual differences. Help your students understand that unique attributes make people special. Try to convey the message that being different does not mean you are less deserving of respect from others. Even though these lessons may not be part of the curriculum, all students learn better in a respectful and accepting environment. Be sure to monitor your own use of stereotypes and derogatory language.

TALK ABOUT BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Many adolescents are reluctant to come forward and talk about bullying...therefore, it's up to you to start the conversation. Talk to your students about the importance of healthy relationships and what constitutes bullying, sexual harassment and dating aggression. These types of conversations let your students know that you care about what they're going through and that you're a source of support for them.

Do your students watch bullying?

Sharing these tips with them may help

- ◆ Talk to someone you trust, like a parent or a teacher. It's their job to intervene and make the bullying stop.
- ◆ Walk away and get help...if you stay and watch, you are part of the problem. If you get help, you're part of the solution.
- ◆ Be assertive, not aggressive. Speaking out helps, fighting and insulting others doesn't.
- ◆ Ask for help from others in speaking out against harassment...there's strength in numbers.
- ◆ Make an anonymous report to school staff if it's too hard to speak out publicly.
- ◆ Invite the student being targeted to leave with you
- ◆ Stand up for those who are targeted...they may not be able to do it for themselves.
- ◆ Stay safe...if speaking out doesn't make the harassment stop, get help from someone who can safely intervene.
- ◆ Be aware...wouldn't you want someone to step in if you were being targeted?

Do your students bully others?

Sharing these tips with them may help

- ◆ Talk to someone you trust, like a parent or a teacher. They can offer support and help you find ways of getting along with others better.
- ◆ Put yourself in other teens' shoes...think about what it must feel like to be picked on, put down, or left out. Would you want to be treated that way?
- ◆ Make an excuse and walk away from situations where you might bully.
- ◆ Resist peer pressure to bully...do what's right
- ◆ Find ways to use your power and influence in a positive rather than a negative way.
- ◆ Apologize to the people you've hurt.
- ◆ Hang out with friends who will keep you in check.
- ◆ Remember that everyone is unique and different... different doesn't mean worse or better than you.
- ◆ See people as individuals, not stereotypes.
- ◆ Know that if other teens watch and laugh, it doesn't mean they like it when you target others.

MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BULLYING

Organize classrooms so that the adolescent who is being bullied is always surrounded by students who will stand up for him/her. How do you do this? Teachers should be responsible for selecting seating arrangements and group work. If students are allowed to make these decisions, those adolescents who are bullied will always be left out and teased. Break up groups of students who may act aggressively together.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO REPORT

Convey the message that it is the teacher's job to deal with bullying and that you want to know about all incidents. Providing alternative ways to report bullying at school, such as an anonymous bullying box, can help reduce the discomfort adolescents feel around reporting bullying.

BUILD ON ADOLESCENTS' STRENGTHS

Adolescents who are bullied often have low self-esteem. Encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy so they can start to feel good about themselves. Highlighting their talents for other students to see can change their reputation in the peer group. For teens who bully, provide opportunities for them to use their power and natural leadership skills in a positive way (e.g., teaching siblings and younger children a new sport or skill).

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If you suspect that a student is being bullied, you're probably right. Adolescents will often deny bullying out of shame or fear of retaliation. If it looks like bullying and feels like bullying, it most likely is, even if students deny it. Trust your instincts and take action that will ensure this student is protected and supported.

BE READY TO LISTEN

If a student reports being bullied, be ready to listen right away. Don't put it off. Thank the student for being brave enough to come forward and explain that it is his/her right to feel safe. Ask for details about the incident and convey your concern. Be willing to respond to all reports, even the seemingly trivial ones such as name-calling. Consistency matters! Work with the student to develop solutions to a bullying problem.

THE MANY FORMS OF BULLYING IN ADOLESCENCE

Physical bullying

- ◆ Hitting, shoving, kicking, spitting, using objects to cause harm, stealing or damaging property

Verbal bullying

- ◆ Taunting, mocking, name-calling, humiliating, threatening, racist comments

Social bullying

- ◆ Excluding, gossiping, spreading rumours, setting others up, attempting to ruin reputations

Cyberbullying

- ◆ Threatening or harassing emails/text messages, distributing personal or embarrassing images, offensive websites, insulting messages posted on public forums

Dating aggression

- ◆ Any intentional sexual, physical, or psychological attack against a partner in a dating relationship

Sexual harassment

- ◆ Unwanted comments, gestures, or behaviour about sex or gender that makes one feel uncomfortable

HOW DO TEACHERS KNOW IF A STUDENT IS INVOLVED IN BULLYING?

Bullying is a covert behaviour and is usually hidden from adults. Look for the following clues:

SIGNS OF BEING BULLIED

- Afraid to go to school or other activities
- Appear anxious or fearful
- Low self-esteem and make negative comments
- Complain of feeling unwell
- Lower interest in activities and performance
- Lose things, need money, report being hungry
- Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing or articles
- Appear unhappy, irritable
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- Threats to hurt themselves or others
- May appear isolated from the peer group

SIGNS OF BULLYING OTHERS

- Aggressive with parents, siblings, pets, and friends
- Low concern for others' feelings
- Bossy and manipulative behaviour
- Unexplained objects or money
- Secretive about possessions and activities
- Holds a positive view of aggression
- Easily frustrated and quick to anger
- Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour
- Has friends who bully and are aggressive
- Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure

WHY TEACHERS SHOULD CARE ABOUT BULLYING

Many people feel that bullying is “*just kids being kids*” and that it’s “*harmless.*” In fact, bullying is anything but harmless.

RISKS FOR ADOLESCENTS WHO ARE BULLIED:

- Depression (low mood, a sense of hopelessness)
- Social anxiety, loneliness, isolation
- Poor health (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)
- Low self esteem
- School absenteeism and academic problems
- Aggressive behaviours
- Contemplating, attempting, or committing suicide

RISKS FOR ADOLESCENTS WHO BULLY OTHERS:

- Not knowing the difference between right and wrong
- Delinquency and substance use
- Academic problems and school drop out
- Adult criminality
- Difficulties in their relationships with others
- Being bullied at the hands of others