

Bullying Prevention Resource Guide

FOR SCHOOLS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

TIPS AND TOPICS FOR BULLYING PREVENTION SUCCESS

VICTIM OR BULLY — WHAT TO DO?

Imagine this student: They have no friends among their peers and no friends among adults. Youth and adults alike avoid them. They often appear to be a bully, but always seem to end up the victim, losing no matter what they try. Even adults have a difficult time empathizing with this child. This child is often more disengaged from school than their peers, achieves less academically, and has higher rates of smoking, alcohol use, depression and is at a higher risk for suicide. These students display confusing and frustrating behaviors and it seems every school or after school program has at least one of them. These students are Provocative Victims (aka the bully-victim or aggressive victim) and up to as many as 6 percent of students report that they both bully others and are bullied “sometimes” or “more often.”

How Provocative Victims and Bullies Differ

Provocative Victim or bully-victim	Bully
Exhibit poor social skills and misread social cues and has no power	Uses social skills and cues to obtain their desires and power
Appear restless, irritable, clumsy, immature, unfocused, awkward, impulsive, temperamental	Appear more mature, patient, focused, socially and athletically adept
Have reading and writing problems often due to a learning disability	Average to high academic abilities
Have little tolerance for obstacles or delays	Work their way through obstacles and delays
Relate to adults in an aggressive manner	Relate to adults in an acceptable manner
Have a difficult time understanding and conforming to rules	Know what the rules are and find a way around them; believe that rules don't apply to them
Fight back against bullies	Patient with provocative victims, but sometimes react
Prolong the conflict even when they are losing	End the conflict
Lose conflicts	Wins conflicts
Have ADHD or autism	Rarely has learning disabilities
Comes from a socio-economically disadvantaged family	Comes from a middle-high class socio-economic family

Motivations and Power Differentials

The motivations for provocative victims are much different than the motivations of the more common bully. One of the main differences is how they read social cues in a conflict or bullying situation: the provocative victim bullies out of retaliation or frustration while the child who is just a bully (and not also a victim) manipulates a situation for social and material gain. The provocative victim comes from a position of little or no power, while the bully displays an intensified amount of power. (See chart on page one.)

Strategies for Managing a Provocative Victim

It is difficult to intervene in any bullying situation, but intervention becomes even more difficult when it includes a provocative victim. It's important to understand that this child has less power in any conflict than his or her peers, because of their possible learning disabilities and an inability to understand social cues. Therefore, while some of the provocative victim's behavior appears to be bullying, it is the victim in the provocative victim (bully-victim) who is lashing out and

losing. When dealing with a provocative victim, it's important to support the victim, but also to correct the thinking errors that lead to bullying behaviors. Moore and Kirkham point out that, "It would appear that children who bully and in particular bully-victims need rehabilitative programs rather than punitive approaches to help them overcome their strong feelings of inadequacy. A greater emphasis of the multidimensional nature of self-esteem among children involved in bully/victim problems should allow for the specific areas of inadequate self-worth to be addressed." With that in mind:

- Provide consistent structured time and activities for this student to develop self-esteem and discipline
- Teach skills to reduce impulsive behavior (positive self-talk, problem solving, etc.)
- State expectations and consequences clearly that directly relate to the student's behavior
- Draw up behavior contracts with this student and consistently follow them
- Analyze interventions that have and have not worked over time with this student. Reinforce what has worked in the past and try new strategies where needed
- Discuss with the student ways they can get their needs met that are acceptable and safe
- Talk to this student's other teachers as well as his or her parents to ensure clear and consistent messages and strategies for dealing with difficult situations.

Whole School Strategies

Provocative victims, although they are the most difficult youth to manage, need more support than the average victim. Therefore, it's extremely important to understand that the whole community needs to assist with helping this child.

- Help all students develop a strong sense of self, learn to be a good friend, make one good friend or ally, and relate successfully in a group
- Create a caring school environment among all students and adults who show empathy to one another
- Create formal peer helpers, through circle time and other programs, to support all victims of bullying
- Establish regular classroom meetings to improve acceptance and inclusion of all students, hear all student voices, solve problems, address issues or situations that occur in the school community

Circles of Support

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests peer support can reduce the amount of bullying. Peer support can help those who are bullied through active listening, mentoring and friendship. A Circle of Friends is a group of peers that gathers around the youth who has behavioral problems and is easily upset. Peers, as part of a circle, have been effective in helping the bully-victim manage their anger, read social cues, and help de-escalate situations where the bully-victim feels slighted or singled-out. Also, the peer helper's motivation appears to improve the bully-victim's self-esteem, because they feel someone cares for them. The Circle, when it meets together to check-in, is lead by an adult facilitator who establishes ground rules with the youth and guides the conversations and problem solving. (Newton, Taylor and Wilson, 1996. See Article on Page 3.)

Adults outside the circle should be informed of the circle's existence as well as support it and the youth for the best possible outcome. (Parsons and Blake, 2004)

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT: HOW IT WORKS

The aims of the approach include the following:

1. To create a support network for the child
2. To reduce the child's challenging behavior
3. To enable the child to deal successfully with victimization
4. To increase the child's understanding of their own behavior and give them more choices
5. To help the child make more friends

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT: HOW IT WORKS, *con't.*

Where best to start

It is essential that a key member of staff understands and is committed to using the circle approach with the young person identified. They will need to be able to give sufficient time to supporting the circle of support (friends) on the weekly meetings that follow the initial meeting of the circle. They may also have to deal with issues that arise from the work for the young person, the group of pupils, for parents or even for other staff.

The child's parent or care giver will need to have had the approach explained to them and given both their consent and support. New issues may emerge for them. For instance, the child may have more successful friendships, so children will come knocking on the door asking if their child can come out to play. Be sure there is support available to parents or care givers when they are challenged with these new issues.

It is vitally important that the staff explains the approach to the child properly and thoroughly in basic terms; and, the child needs to accept the offer of help from his or her peers. When such an approach is described to a child emotions can range from angry resistance to ambivalence to over heightened enthusiasm. The child's responses are most manageable when the explanation is entrusted to an adult who knows the young person very well.

Facilitating a Circle

1. Introduce self to the youth and have youth introduce themselves.
2. Establish and agree to ground rules and explain confidentiality.
3. Agree to the aims of circle e.g.: To help Craig make and keep friends and to help him get back on track with his behavior.
4. Invite group members to tell the child why they volunteered to be in his or her circle — emphasize the positive.
5. Elicit and list positives and areas the child needs to work on, from the group.
6. Brainstorm strategies.
7. Agree which strategies can be tried and ensure commitment to these from the circle. Be clear with the circle about responsibilities, disclosures and boundaries. Let them know what is expected of them and the limits to this.
8. Agree to a name for the circle, avoiding child's name.
9. Describe the meeting and follow up arrangements and encourage mutual support in the circle.

The circle quickly becomes a learning experience for all the children in the group as they talk about feelings, problem solve, listen, empathize, challenge, and work out better ideas for dealing with peers and adults. Experience has show that there is a need for clear boundaries throughout and clarity regarding how circle members should be dealing with disclosures from the child they are supporting. Circle processes and content can vary enormously and are affected by the style and strengths of the facilitator and what they feel able to handle or pursue. This can range from deeply emotive material to 'straight forward' behavioral strategies. It is also important to hold follow up sessions to maintain and support the circle. The facilitator needs to keep in touch with the circle and school staff, especially in a new situation. (Newton, Taylor and Wilson, 1996)

**For more information on establishing a Circle go to:
<http://www.inclusive-solutions.com/circleoffriendsaut.doc>**

Conclusion

Provocative victims need to feel that they are valued and respected members of the school community and deserve to feel safe in the school environment. Even though provocative victims irritate others and seek attention in negative ways, they experience the same anxiety and unhappiness that all victims experience. This student almost always needs more one-to-one time to learn and to exhibit the same positive results as their peers.

Challenge yourself to rise above the negative perceptions and attitudes about this child and develop a true sense of empathy, which you can then pass on to others in your environment. This will go a long way to creating a safe place for this student as well as develop the caring environment you want for all your students and teachers.

Resources:

Circles of friends: An inclusive approach to meeting emotional and behavioural needs by C. Newton, G. Taylor and D. Wilson, Educational Psychology in Practice 11:4, 1996

Peer Support: An overview by Marion Parsons and Simon Blake, 2004, Spotlight Briefing, National Children's Bureau (www.ncb.org.uk)

Anti-Bullying Interventions by renewal.net Solving the Problem, Government's National Strategy Action Plan, United Kingdom

The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander by Barbara Coloroso, 2003

Olweus' Core Program Against Bullying and Antisocial Behavior: A Teacher Handbook by Dan Olweus, 2001

Bully-Proofing Your School—A Comprehensive Approach for Middle Schools by Marla Bonds, Psy.D. and Sally Stoker, M.S.W., 2000

Bully-Proofing Your School—Working with Victims and Bullies in Elementary Schools by Carla Garrity, Ph.D., Kathryn Jens, Ph.D., William Porter, Ph.D., Nancy Sager, M.A., Cam Short-Camilli, L.C.S.W., 2000, 2004

HRSAs' Stop Bullying Now! Campaign: Bullying 101 by Marlene Snyder, Ph.D., Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life, Clemson University, November 1, 2006, International Bullying Prevention Association Pre-Conference

Learning difficulties, social intelligence, and self-concept: Connections to bully-victim problems by Ari Kaukiainen, Christina Salmivalli, Kirsti Lagerspetz, Milla Tamminen, Marja Vauras, Hanna Maki, and Elisa Poskiparta, Centre for Learning Research and Department of Psychology, University of Turku, Finland

Self-Esteem and Its Relationship to Bullying Behaviour by M. O'Moore and C. Kirkham, Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre, Education Department and Centre for Health Informatics, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

Bullying Prevention Initiative Common Elements:

- Partnerships
- Positive Youth Development
- Interventions for Students (bully, bullied, and bystander)
- Cultural Competency
- Sustained Climate Change

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