

EMPOWERING YOUTH TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

The Target

The most effective intervention comes from the target, since most repetitive aggression occurs because the aggressor is getting the wanted response from their “victim.” Youth and adults who have been targeted and survived will often relate that their best defence was a good offence—or no reaction at all.



Targeted youth need to develop both **external** and **internal** messages and skills:

EXTERNAL	INTERNAL
change what you can if you want to; accept the rest	don't believe the message that you are worthless; view the aggressor as the one who has the problem
become friendly with peers who are friendly with everyone	know that “different” isn't ugly or bad—it is what humans are about
stand up for yourself—in words and actions; be calm and assertive	don't join the aggressors in putting yourself down—listen to <i>what you tell yourself</i> about yourself
tell the aggressor to stop—and look like you mean it	change the internal message tape—list your positive assets and tell them over and over again to yourself
use humour or wit—not emotion	learn how to like yourself
stop the rumours—“Is it true that....?” “Do you believe it?”	nurture your strengths
don't get physical	honour your individuality
ignore it—but really ignore it, all the time	accept your anger; express it in healthy ways
choose your friends wisely	don't cast yourself as a “victim”
know that everyone gets teased at some point—but there is a difference between teasing and bullying or harassment	think about the qualities you want in a friend; do you live up to your own list?
ask for help	know who can help you and when to ask for help: telling is not the same thing as tattling
document	document

Advice for

Targets: **ACT**

Avoid being alone with the aggressor

Call for help

Take a stand—stop it or ignore it.

Page and Perlman, 2000

Know that if you are being bullied or harassed, **IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT!**

DO NOT:

- Dismiss bullying as a natural part of growing up
- Use violence against the bully
- Take on the problem completely on your own; DO find people who will be supportive and work to change the situation



TAKING ACTION ON CYBERBULLYING

If you are being harassed online, take the following actions immediately:

- ◆ Tell an adult you trust—a teacher, parent, older sibling or grandparent.
- ◆ If you are being harassed, leave the area or stop the activity (i.e. chat room, news group, online gaming area, Instant Messaging, etc.).
- ◆ If you are being bullied through e-mail or Instant Messaging, block the sender’s messages. Never reply to harassing messages.
- ◆ Save any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet Service Provider (i.e. Hotmail or Yahoo). Most service providers have appropriate use policies that restrict users from harassing others over the Internet—and that includes kids!
- ◆ If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police as well.

Take action if your child is being bullied online:

- ◆ Watch out for signs that your child is being bullied online—a reluctance to use the computer or go to school may be an indication.
- ◆ If the bully is a student at your child’s school, meet with school officials and ask for help in resolving the situation.
- ◆ Report any incident of online harassment and physical threats to your local police and your Internet Service Provider (ISP).
- ◆ If your child is bullied through a cell phone, report the problem to your phone service provider. If it’s a persistent problem, you can change the phone number.

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The Aggressor

Interventions for aggressors must focus on the **unacceptability of bullying or harassment** and the **consequences established in a code of behaviours**. These consequences need to be formative: to teach the aggressor about the impact of his or her actions, and then establish other avenues for power and leadership. Some aggressors are also targets; these youth (“bully-victims”) are most at risk and require support in developing healthy interaction styles.

Aggressors need to learn to (Davis, 2001):

- acknowledge their own actions
- acknowledge the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others
- develop remorse and guilt
- develop empathy
- change their actions to stay out of trouble
- find other ways to get their needs met
- trust
- delay gratification.

Advice for Aggressors:

STOP

Stop the behaviour

Take responsibility & think about how to make amends

Open your mind to helping, not hurting

Prevent situations that influence you to bully or harass.

Page and Perlman, 2000



Youth who feel they have little control over their environments and their own lives are much more likely to be involved in aggressive acts (Hopkins, 2000, as cited in B.C. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2001). Adults involved in schools and youth-serving organizations can help create an environment where youth feel a sense of personal control. Teaching social skills and encouraging youth to take leadership roles are essential to giving young people a healthy sense of power over their surroundings, their communities and their lives. In addition, adults can invest time to develop healthy social relationships with youth to deter their feelings of social isolation. “Students who feel recognized and appreciated by at least one adult at school will be less likely to act out against the school ethos of non-violence” (Walker, 1999, as cited in B.C. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2001).

The Bystanders

Bullying and harassment are often “performance” acts. A psychologist named Peter Fonagy states, “The whole drama is supported by the bystander ... the theatre can’t take place if there’s no audience” (as cited in Labi, 2001, p. 2). Peers can play a role as instigators, models, participants or audience; they can choose to refuse to watch the bullying, report bullying incidents or distract either the bully or the target.

Bystanders need to learn that:

- they have a responsibility to either stop the bullying or harassment or get help
- an audience fuels the mistreatment
- the role of the instigator results in serious consequences
- identifying with the aggressor will have a negative impact on all who are involved, either actively or passively.

References

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Advice for Bystanders: **CARE**

Check the scene for safety

Affirm the target and speak up against the bullying

Retreat and Report the situation to an adult

End the incident by documenting what happened.

RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention

