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Teacher Resources

Pacer Kids against Bullying

Bullying is a problem anytime that it rears its nasty bulk and stinking frame. But in times of stress, such as when high-stakes tests are in play, when tempers connect to short fuses when stress high voltage levels; these inner tensions often precipitate outward demonstrations of frustration.

One of those symptoms of inner frustration is bullying.

What usually goes unrecognized is that the other side of the "bullying gig" is the victim's role; also often sensitized by stress.

Let's call a student that participate on the "receiver end" of the game a "Bullee" so that we recognize that they play an active (not passive) role in the drama.

In some ways, the bully and bullee (victim?) are similar; both exhibit: Diminished self-concept

Low self-esteem

Inadequate coping skills

Low frustration tolerance

Self-limiting behavioral and interpersonal options

Behavior driven by external pressure, rather than by self-directed goals

Unresponsive social support networks

Etc. Teachers to the Rescue? It is understandable, although a flawed strategy, for teachers to step in and "rescue" the bullee from the bully.

But bailing out the victim only perpetuates the integrated drama.

Sure, it is odious, and teachers can't sit idle while children are injured, maimed, bruised or battered. And, there are potential liabilities (such as lawsuits) if children lose hair, eyes, teeth, or when bones are broken while a child is under a teacher's vigilance.

Still, a teacher "coming down hard" with aversive punishment leveled against the bully can make matters worse for the bullee. Another Approach: Teach Coping Skills to both Bullies and Bullees We ordinarily think that the bully lacks coping skills and single the bully out for "social skills training." But this strategy misses the mark. The reason: This is a negative goal; removing something from the bully's repertoire instead of adding something to the skills of both participants. The reason that "teaching the bully to stop bullying" fails to work is that the goal lacks a direction. What is needed is an approach that identifies exactly what to do. The "don't know what to do instead" approach lecturing the bully, telling bullies that they should care about the feelings of others; these are non-goals.

What to Do Instead of Bullying: The Real Teaching Opportunity Real teaching is where the prescriptions and the canned solutions fail.

Why? Because teachers never guess correctly about what is going on inside the minds and emotions of either the bully or the bullee. The only accurate strategy for determining a solution is to listen, not preach, not protect.

Prepackaged, one-size solution fit too loosely on some, squeeze the toes of others. Prepackaged approaches neglect the basics; resolving real issues.

Real issues include: Emotional impact of the dynamics of the bullying situation

Open communication with all parties and stakeholders of the bullying situation

Rapport building by the teacher or counselor with all parties

Coming to agreement, rather than capitulation and surrender by coercion Fake Students can't Help As nice as the concept of creating self-help materials is, the fact is that trained communicators that can develop honest and compassionate dialog; professionals that can maintain the role of "honest broker" are needed.

For example, Pacer Kids against Bullying offers plenty of Web sources.

"Kids Against Bullying is a Web site created for elementary school children. It is a creative and informative resource to educate students about bullying prevention and provide methods to respond to bullying situations. The site features an animated cast of characters, information, celebrity videos, Webisodes, games, animation, contest and other activities. Parents and professionals will find helpful tips, intervention strategies, and resources for use at home or school.

"Source: Kids against Bullying <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/kab/index.asp>

"PACER is creating an exciting new bullying prevention Web site for teens—and you can help. Designed to reach, teach, and empower teens, the site will feature compelling stories from students, parents, educators, and community partners across the nation when it launches this summer. Here are two ways you can make a difference and maybe even change how people across the country think about bullying. Submit a video, story, poem, artwork, or audio clip expressing your ideas on bullying prevention. It can be about what happened to you or someone else, how you feel about bullying, how you think it affects students and schools, what you have done to prevent bullying, or what can be done to prevent bullying. We want to hear from everyone—teens, parents, teachers, and others with great ideas who

want to improve the world. Source: National Center for Bullying Prevention <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/mhs/index.asp>
The Pacer Program offers lesson plans, materials, and an interactive Web site. All useful and valuable resources for teachers.

But remember: to get to the heart of the bullying matter, the professional must speak from the heart, and hold the heart of the bully in as much regard as the heart of the bullee.

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