Collaborative Anti-Bullying Checklist: For Parents, Schools, Clinicians and the Community

☐ Awareness:

Make sure awareness campaigns do not focus on or “patheticize” the victim. Don’t show “Bully” or “Don’t Laugh At Me” unless you are processing how the scenes would be different if the bullies were exposed as unstable, the victims made paper reports and did not care, and the bystanders had no fear of or desire to fit in with the bully or bullies (i.e. Where are the different characters in the bully pool? What will it take for them to get out?)

Social skills for the victim or diversity training for the bystanders are good empowering practices but they should not be used in association with or as a solution to the bullying problem or they will make matters worse.

Focus on the facts we know about bullying behavior and bullying outcomes. Focus on group dynamics. Groups only contribute to bullying if they are in and out, fear and comparison based (or “in the bully pool”) groups. Groups based on inclusion, acceptance and understanding can be catalysts for great good (safe, solid self-esteem groups). Competitive groups such as sports teams are healthy as long as you handle the comparison with resilience - We didn’t win YET. What ELSE are they good at? Etc.

☐ Whole School Programs:

Make sure the program has empirical data showing it's effectiveness. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Stop Bullying Now (Stan Davis, also based on Olweus), Steps to Respect, Peacebuilders, Bully Blockers, etc.

☐ Increase Supervision

More Adults and more vigilant eyes trained on the bullying hot-spots in unstructured situations will minimize opportunities for bullying. This is the most powerful way to put a stop to bullying. If your whole school program does not call for this, advocate for increases in supervisors and video cameras where possible.

But ultimately, bullying occurs where adults cannot see. Teach victims and bystanders alike to “self-supervise” by filling out a bully report. (See www.questforwhatsbest.info Resources-Bullying for a downloadable copy.) Remember that Safe-School Violations need to be reported immediately and also noted on the bully report. Kids need to be taught to show that the bullying has gone on over time and that there is an imbalance of power. All they have to do to prove an imbalance of power is not to bully-back. Emphasize that patience and paper are power!
Empower Bystanders

This is by far the most complicated step on the checklist and the second most powerful way to put a stop to bullying. Group dynamics are complex and multifaceted. One brave bystander can catalyze an entire group to action, but not if the one aggressive bully is perceived as more powerful. Discrediting and exposing the instability of bully will break the hold they have on the group and eliminate their fear-based reactions. See the attached Bully Pool handout and the references for an easy way to teach all facets of the group dynamics involved in bullying and how to turn the bystander tide.

Consequences for the Bully:

Should be significant. Consequences should be unpleasant, but not excessively so. They should be given as “matter of fact” consequences for the bullying behavior. They should be visible to the other students (they should not be secret) but not used to humiliate.

Minimize talking with the bully, especially asking or trying to get into a discussion about why they did what they did. For some bullies, talking is an anger trigger. For others it is a tool of manipulation. Minimize the opportunity for the bully to deny guilt and deflect blame and further abuse the victim. Olweus recommends saying something minimal like, “We know what you did.”

Post consequence, bullies need to be discussed in Local Case Management meetings and have future help and assistance discussed:

- The possibility of neurological disorders should be eliminated. Parents should know this is their responsibility, schools can help with testing if requested.

Empathy, according to Dr. Gwen Dewar requires 3 capabilities that can be taught:

1-A sense of self-awareness and the ability to distinguish one’s own feelings from the feelings of others. Michelle Garcia-Winner’s www.socialthinking.com is a great resource for accomplishing this.

2-Taking another person’s perspective. Dr. Ross Greene’s “Collaborative Problem Solving” (www.livesinthebalance.org) can help teach this - besides teaching problem solving it also reinforces resilience. Not to mention that it is very easy to learn.

3-Being able to regulate one’s own emotional responses. Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman’s optimistic thinking or resilience principals have decades of research behind their ability to do just this. (A power point and handouts for teaching the underlying principles of his resilience can be found on the Prevention page of www.questforwhatsbest.info The Optimistic Child and Learned Optimism are Dr. Seligman’s first books on Resilience.)
Encourage Development to Higher levels of Morality. Present moral dilemmas without giving the right or wrong answer. Bullies will be at the lower, more self-centered levels of moral development. And they are usually quite oppositional. Telling them what the right or wrong choice is will not help them. It is the process of evaluating their own moral beliefs of right and wrong in the controversial situations that will help them progress to the higher, more altruistic levels.  [http://tigger.uic.edu/~lnucci/MoralEd/practices.html](http://tigger.uic.edu/~lnucci/MoralEd/practices.html)

Safety and Support for the Victim
Do not further abuse the victim by asking why they did not report sooner or what they might have done to provoke the bully. This makes bullying worse because it implies that it IS about the details and takes the focus off of the bully as the cause. No one has to be perfect. No one deserves to be bullied. It’s not about the details. As stated earlier, If there is a need for assertiveness training or social skills support for the victim, this should be addressed separately, well after the bullying incident has been resolved. Help the victim fill out their bully report. Even a Kindergartner can keep tallies. Ask them what they have tried already.

Ensure the safety of the victim. Increase the supervision of the bully and when necessary, restrict the bully’s freedom. (Have the bully play where the playground duty can see them, require an escort to and from the restroom, etc.) If the bullying is pervasive (i.e. the child is being bullied randomly by many children in different grade levels) significantly increase the supervision of the victim without restricting their freedom. If the safety of the child before or after school is in question, establish a safety plan for transportation to and from school. (i.e. keep the bully at school until the victim has called in that they are home and safe. Require a parent to drop the bully off and pick them up from school. If the parent of the accused bully insists the victim is to blame, assure them the separation is also in the best interest of their child!) Consider between class or between school suspensions for the bully.
I do care what's best

Solid Self Esteem

say or do
think
people
care what
I Don't

Bully Pool

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Resources:


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