Bullying and Victimization: What Adults Can Do to Help

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Lesson Goals:

The goal of this program is to help people working with children and youth:

1. identify some of the most common forms of bullying and victimization, and
2. be able to effectively work with children and youth experiencing these kinds of conflicts and abuses.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify bullying and victimization and know some of the key differences in the types of bullying.
2. Participants will understand some of the processes that lead to bullying and victimization.
3. Participants will be able to identify some of the differences in bullying and victimization linked to gender and age.
4. Participants will be able to identify some common strategies and actions that might help reduce bullying and victimization (and some that are *not* effective).

Before the Meeting:

Read the Leader's Guide and Participant's Manual. Select one or more of the activities presented in this manual that you feel will be most appropriate to the group to whom you are presenting. It is not necessary to do all of the activities. Finally, prepare the necessary materials.

After the Meeting/Evaluation:

At the end of the discussion, ask all participants to fill out the evaluation forms anonymously and leave them with you. Please return copies to University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension, P.O. Box 880703, 211 Agriculture Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0703

Recommended Resources:

Websites and multimedia

Stop Bullying Now, *www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov*
This U.S. government Web site provides several resources and suggested programming.

Committee for Children, *www.cfchildren.org/*
This site provides an extensive set of programs designed to reduce peer conflict and bullying.

Bullfrog Films, *www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/bully.html*
This commercial site sells an excellent film to use with elementary-age children that shows scenarios and different types of bullying that will help start discussions and brainstorming about what to do in various bullying situations.

UNL College of Education and Human Sciences,
http://cehs19.unl.edu/wpmu/brnet
This site, run by CEHS Associate Professor Sue Swearer, offers several options and discussion points about bullying.

Books

Randazzo, M., S. R. Jimerson and M. J. Furlong, editors, *Handbook of School Violence and School Safety*, Routledge, U.K., 2006. *www.routledge.com*

Smith, S. and P. Smith, *Tackling Bullying at Your School: A Practical Handbook for Teachers*. Routledge, U.K., publisher, 2004. *www.routledge.com*

Espelage, D. and S. Swearer, *Bullying in American Schools: A Social-Ecological Perspective on Prevention and Intervention*, Psychology Press, *2003. www.routledge.com*

Activities:

Choose from the activities below and adapt them to your group of participants. These are designed to support participants as they begin to think about addressing bullying in their own lives and work.

Activity 1: Bullying by any other name…

Divide participants into smaller groups (two to four in each group) and have them generate short lists of the most common kinds of bullying that they see and are concerned with. If they work with a range of age groups, it may help to assign each group a different age range (e.g. toddlers, K-3rd graders, middle school, etc.). Encourage them to discuss differences they may see between girls and boys, schools and neighborhoods, etc. Return to the larger group and use the small groups' examples to address discussion questions.

Discussion Questions

— How often do you think your groups of kids bully? Is it more common in some groups or settings than others? Why is this so?
   • Bullying can be more common in groups of kids that are less familiar with each other as they establish new social groups.

— What are adults' most common responses when they see bullying? Why are some of these perhaps more/less effective than others?
   • It is often more effective to talk with bullies and victims (separately) in private locations so the *social theater* aspect of the bullying is not reinforced for the larger peer group.

— Why do you think the bully acted the way he/she did? In other words, what are his/her goals for bullying?
   • Bullying is often proactive and designed to get something for the bully. This can be many things, but often social/physical dominance and control over group membership are powerful goals. Some bullies may bully to keep others at a distance (as a defensive measure) if they are anxious or insecure and lack social skills.

— Compare your answers to the information on the participant's manual regarding the definition of bullying, reasons why kids bully, who is commonly victimized, and what adults can do to help. Were your responses consistent? Were there misconceptions?

Activity 2: Are you looking at me?

Elect some participants to role-play bullying episodes. You will need a bully, a victim, 2-3 bystanders, and an adult bystander. A child/adolescent version of this may also work with kids' groups if small groups generate stories of bullies and victims and discuss them rather than role-play — a role-play may be too emotional for some kids if they have participated in bullying/victimization.

Possible Scenarios (feel free to generate others):

1. The relational bully. The relational bully is someone who does not use physical aggression but instead tries to hurt another through emotional or psychological means, or by trying to negatively influence the victim's relationships with others. The bully does not talk to the victim, but spreads nasty rumors to peers, in order to exclude the victim from social activities (recess games, parties, etc.).
2. The physical bully. The bully pushes the victim and calls him/her names. The peers watch, laugh, and do not interfere.
3. The group of bullies. The bully and his/her peers gang up on the victim, with the peers actively participating.

Discussion Questions

1. How realistic was your portrayal? Would kids really do it that way? How might it differ?
2. What do you think the bully in these scenarios wanted? Were there multiple goals? What do you think the victim's goals were as the situation unfolded?
3. How/why were different *peer* reactions making the situations better or worse? Why?
4. How/why were different *adult* reactions making the situations better or worse? Why?
5. Do you think that peers or adults would be more effective at intervening? Why? Would this vary for different kinds of bullying or for different age-groups?
6. What other concrete steps could be done to help the situation?

Activity 3:

Invite a school counselor or someone familiar with bullying issues to share information. You might have people who are familiar with the policies surrounding bullying to talk to your group. Find out what types of steps are being done to curtail the problem. Learn about what types of rules there are regarding how they deal with the situation and what types of policies they have in place for safe and anonymous reporting.