

Classroom VIDEO

Teacher's Notes

BULLYING SUX

Grades: 5-10

Duration: 20min

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Overview

Bullying behaviour in schools is increasingly being recognized as a potentially destructive social phenomenon which can have serious short and long term effects for children and young people. For some these effects can persist into adulthood. It is no longer tenable to describe the effects of bullying on victims as either trivial or character building.

School bullying must be clearly differentiated from conflict between students. Bullying can be understood as a negative social behaviour which is repeated over time, with a deliberate intent to hurt and most crucially contains within it an element of power abuse. Power imbalance is the most central notion in describing bullying behaviour and it is due to this that bullying in schools is proving to be one of the most persistent and enduring social problems. School communities with their hierarchical structure contain abundant opportunities for power abuse.

School bullying occurs in a social context. In a Canadian study using naturalistic observations of children it was demonstrated that in 85% of bullying incidents peers were involved in some capacity. Bullying is more than a dyadic relationship between the bully and the victim.

Engagement of the 60% of children and young people who are not directly involved in bullying as either a victim or a bully but who frequently witness these events is a crucial aspect of an anti-bullying program. The role of bystanders in both perpetuating bullying behaviours in schools and potentially in decreasing bullying behaviours must be acknowledged. The maxim " If you're not part of the solution to the problem then

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you're part of the problem " should be reinforced to children and young people within an anti-bullying program.

Low reporting rates of bullying in schools combined with findings which confirm that about one in five children and young people experience significant bullying each week has led some researchers to describe bullying as a "silent nightmare". Indeed the code of silence surrounding bullying in schools presents one of the major hurdles schools must overcome in order to tackle this problem. Research proves that bullying stops when it is reported and acted upon.

Research both in throughout the world has clearly shown that the most effective anti-bullying programs are those which employ a whole school approach. Anti-bullying activities and programs should target all groups in a school community if change is to be effected.

Issues raised by this video

This video explicitly challenges students and teachers to recognize the range of bullying behaviours occurring in schools from the more direct and obvious physical attacks on children to the more covert and difficult to observe social and psychological bullying which can have even more significant and chronic negative impacts on children and young people.

The importance of appropriate teacher responses to bullying incidents is also highlighted in this video. Inadvertent blaming of the victim by demanding an assertive response and placing the onus for change on the least powerful person is juxtaposed with an alternate sensitive and sensible intervention by a teacher.

While some suggestions are offered to victimized children to assist in dealing with bullying these are presented in a much larger context of community responsibility. This reflects both an ideological and a pragmatic approach to anti-bullying which is based on research and best practice in the area.

Empowering all children and young people to acknowledge the role they play in bullying at school and to see themselves as capable of intervening to stop bullying at school is a central component of this video. Indeed all the strategies suggested by the students and host in this video originate from their own experiences in implementing anti-bullying programs at their respective schools and their personal experiences of bullying. Research shows that while most children and young people feel quite distressed by witnessing bullying at school few know how to intervene effectively to stop the bullying.

As the host explains quite powerfully it can be both incorrect and dangerous to stereotype children and young people as either bullies or victims. A recent Australian study demonstrated that one in four children both bully others and are themselves bullied at school.

The role of friendships as a protective factor against being bullied as well as in reducing the negative effects of bullying is highlighted by both the host of this video and by the plight of victims within the scenarios.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of this particular video is that its portrayal of school bullying and its anti-bullying messages are delivered by children and young people who care passionately about this topic. This is very much their voice.

Curriculum issues

This video has **objectives** and produces **learning outcomes** which are consistent with those contained within the **Stage 4 New South Wales Board of Studies PD/H/PE syllabus**. **By using this video students will develop :- Values/attitudes/objectives**

- Respect for the values and attitudes of others
- A sense of responsibility for personal and community health
- A sense of belonging

Skills objectives

- Communicating effectively with others
- Thinking critically about personal and community lifestyle issues
- Interacting effectively with others
- Individual and shared problem solving
- Clarifying their own value system

Knowledge and understandings objectives

- Principles underlying the development and maintenance of positive relationships
- Factors that contribute to personal awareness and their effect on behaviour
- Personal choices and practices relevant to life issues
- The role of individuals and communities in promoting health

Suggestions for using this video

This video is suggested for use with Grades 5 – 9. Bullying behaviours are more prevalent in these middle school years. However students in grade levels at either end of this range may well relate to the issues raised in this film.

For most impact this video should be used within the context of a whole school anti-bullying program. Teachers are encouraged to read at least one of the resources suggested at the end of these notes.

Within this video there are focus points which appear as bold graphics throughout the video. Teachers may wish to introduce these points prior to the viewing of the video or alternatively within the general discussion sessions following the viewing. If used before viewing, discussion of these focus points could provide an appropriate lead-in to the topic itself as well as affording the teacher a sense of the students' perceptions of bullying.

- **In a recent Australian survey 22% of students are seen as both bully and victim. (Forero, McLennan, Rissel & Bauman, 1999)**
- **One Canadian study shows that a bullying episode happens in the primary or elementary playground every 8 minutes. (Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000)**
- **As kids get older bullying drops off. In a British survey 35% of thirteen year olds bully but by the time they're 17 this drops to 17%. (Rigby, 1996)**
- **In a survey of 10 Scottish schools half the children who had been bullied told no one. (Rigby, 1996)**

The video can be shown in its entirety of **20 mins** or it can be viewed over three sessions. As well as introductory and concluding host commentary there are three separate bullying scenarios in the video.

Timings

The playground : *Don't suffer in silence*

3:00

The bus : *You're not alone*

7:50

The classroom : *It's not your fault*

11:45

It is vital that students viewing this video be given the opportunity to relate the scenarios to their own lives. Discussion questions relating to each of the scenarios in the video and to issues raised by the film in general have therefore been included to assist in this learning process.

The playground: *Don't suffer in silence*

- What happened in this scene?
- What types of bullying did you notice?
- Why do you think the other kids joined in?
- Why did the boy's friends not help him?
- What is the difference between tattling and reporting?
- What did the first teacher do?
- How was this different to what the second teacher did?
- What would you want a teacher to do in a similar situation?
- Does ignoring bullying really work?

- What else can students do if they experience or witness bullying at our school?

The bus: *You're not alone*

- What happened here?
- What types of bullying did you notice?
- One student says "It's just a game." Do you think it is just a game? Why or why not? Give your reasons.
- Many children and young people say that they bullied someone to have fun. Is 'just having fun' a justifiable reason to join in bullying. Remember that some people have tried to take their own lives following this 'fun.' Does the person being bullied see it that way.
- Do you think the student who said that they weren't picking on him because they thought he was gay, was being truthful?
- Why do same sex attracted young people get picked on? Is this fair?
- The boy who was left on his own after his friend was teased expressed his need to have friends. How can we all support those whose friendship networks are not established?
- Betrayal and loyalty are important in friendships. What would you do if you had betrayed someone's secrets to others?

- How can body language be an important counter and defence against bullying? Who can demonstrate effective body language to deal with bullying? (stand tall, avoid looking down).

The classroom: *It's not your fault*

- What happened in this scene?
- What types of bullying did you notice?
- Why did Annabelle spread rumours about Grace?
- Why didn't Annabelle intervene when Grace was being bullied by the group?
- What can Grace do?
- When is it safe to confront a bully?
- How does it help to have friends in this situation?
- Would you have the courage to stand up for a friend?
- "Sort out your priorities" - what do you think about this advice?
- What else could Annabelle have done?
- What else could Grace have done?
- What else could the other girls have done?
- What do you think would have happened?

The concluding segment of the video asks three questions of students. These are presented in bold graphics.

- 1) Is there anything I can do or say to stop the bullying?**
- 2) Is there anything I can do or say to show concern for the person being bullied?**
- 3) Is there a teacher who knows how to deal with bullying I can talk to?**

These questions form the basis of student action to counter bullying at their school. Students themselves can offer the most effective strategies to reduce bullying at their school. Student anti-bullying committees have been shown to be one of the most effective strategies to tackle school bullying.

Even more importantly students should be guided to understanding the full meaning behind the host's assertion "**When you don't speak out you're going along with the bullying. You're on the bully's side.**"

References

Craig, W., Pepler, D. & Atlas, R. "Observations of Bullying in the Playground and in the Classroom" in *School Psychology International* Vol 21(1) 2000

Forero, R., McLennan, L., Rissel, A., & Bauman, A. "Bullying behaviour and psychosocial health among school students in New South Wales, Australia: cross sectional survey" in *British Medical Journal* Vol 19, 1999

Rigby, K. *Bullying in schools & what to do about it* ACER Melbourne 1996

Helpful Resources

Alloway, N. *Just kidding? Sex - based harassment at school.* NSW Department of Education and Training, Student Services & Equity Programs, 2000

Garrity, C., Jens, K., Porter, W., Sager, N. & Short-Camilli, C. *BullyProofing your School - A Comprehensive*

MindMatters A Whole School Approach for Dealing with Bullying and Harassment Curriculum Corporation 2000
Website: <http://www.curriculum.edu.au>

Hoover, John H. *The bullying prevention handbook : a guide for principals, teachers and counselors.* Bloomington, Ind. : National Education Service, 1996

Olweus, Dan. *Bullying at school: what we know and what we can do.* Oxford; Cambridge, MA : Blackwell, 1993

Useful websites

Kidscape UK
<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/kidscape/>

Anti-Bullying Network
<http://www.antibullying.net/>

Bullying.org
<http://www.bullying.org>

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