

Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools

AP 349.1

BULLYING INTERVENTIONS

Bullying is not about anger or conflict. Rather, it is about contempt – specifically a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone else considered to be worthless, inferior and undeserving of respect. The individual exhibiting bullying behaviour may believe they are entitled to display those behaviours and display attitudes of domination, subjugation, intolerance toward differences and/or exclusion.

Guidance and supervision is required to help a bully discover opportunities to behave toward others in caring and respectful ways. That process can include:

1. Restitution

Restitution refers to “fixing what you did.” Material damage is usually easier to fix than personal damage. If an individual’s property is damaged, it may be replaced or repaired. Emotional pain inflicted on an individual is much harder to mend. An apology can be requested but cannot be forced and generally is not sufficient. Accepting responsibility for the misdeed, admitting the wrongness of what has been done, expressing a strong desire not to do it again, assuming responsibility for the damage and beginning to mend the torn relationship are all part of restitution.

2. Resolution

Resolution refers to figuring out a way to keep the incident from happening again. Determine what happened (you can’t go back and undo the deed), what the bully did (no, it wasn’t an accident; yes, harm was intended), what the bully did to bring it about (he/she was angry, jealous, etc.), and what can be learned from the experience. (I am capable of hurting someone when I feel jealous or angry, when I disregard feelings and when I don’t try to look at a situation from the point of view of others. I can have my needs met in a way that doesn’t involve my hurting another person—an action that is never appropriate.)

Working through the process of resolution also includes understanding the consequences of the bully’s behaviour – the impact on the person being bullied, the impact on his/her relationship with others and the impact on the bully.

3. Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the process of healing with the person that has been harmed. The objective is to create a situation where the bully and the person being bullied can live together in the school community after the bullying has stopped. To simply request a bully say he/she is sorry is inadequate and ineffectual. Unless there is an attempt to develop true remorse and empathy, healing does not occur and the bullied person gets

no relief or support. A plan of reconciliation must be developed and a commitment made by the offender to honour the plan, to make restitution and to live up to other resolutions developed. Repentance is a by-product that comes about as the process of reconciliation is worked through.

Time in and of itself does not heal relationships, but it does take time to heal. The person who is bullied may need time to face the hurt, to vent his/her emotions, and to begin to release any grudges and destructive feelings so that peace of mind and security and safety can be established. He/she may need time to begin to be open to reconciliation with the bully. Initially, a plan might need to be implemented that ensures the bully and the individual being bullied avoid any situation that would put the two of them together for a waiting period prior to beginning a process of reconciliation.

The problem that needs to be solved relates to how a bully and the person being bullied can live together in the school community after the bullying has stopped and after the bully has worked through the process of restitution, resolution and reconciliation.

Source: Barbara Coloroso, *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*. Harper Collins: Toronto, Ontario, 2002.