Tackling Bullying Behaviours
Non-Punitive Approaches


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Tackling Bullying Behaviours – Non-Punitive Approaches

Introduction

Tackling Bullying Behaviours - Non-Punitive Approaches is intended to stimulate discussion and help you question how you as a school are currently dealing with bullying issues. This program is divided into the following sections:

1. No Blame Approach (Maines and Robinson)
2. Shared Concern Method (Anatol Pikas)
3. Restorative Justice
4. Parents

Program Timeline

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Other Relevant Programs Available from VEA

Bullying Behaviours – Investigating Myths and Facts
Girls’ Business – Friendship and Bullying in Schools
No Bullying in Our Community - Home/School Partnership Strategies
Not in My Class – Managing Classroom Bullying Behaviour
Not in Our School – Creating a Non-Bullying Culture

Please visit our website for many more relevant programs www.vea.com.au

VEA – Bringing Learning to Life
While Viewing the Program

Each section covers a different intervention practice to deal with the issue of bullying. It is recommended that not just your welfare co-ordinator, class teacher, year level co-ordinator but the entire staff view and discuss these intervention practices.

You may wish to view one intervention practice at a time during your staff meeting. This can generate discussion, questions and improvements on your current practices and procedures. The following staff meeting, view the next intervention practice so on and so forth until all intervention practices have been viewed. The following points can then be discussed:

- Which practice do you prefer to implement?
- On what grounds?
- How will it be implemented?
- Who will co-ordinate this?
- Who amongst staff need further training to ensure its success

Collaboratively establish an agreed set of procedures and practices. This then allows teachers to feel more confident in taking action.
After Viewing the Program

BACKGROUND ON INTERVENTION

It is necessary for a school’s stance on bullying to be transparent to its community and that the school is serious in bringing forth resolution and restitution. When a school is uncertain in its intervention practices it may serve to prolong the incident or create negative outcomes.

Inevitably school bullying does exist and unfortunately there is no one simple solution. Many issues need to be considered, such as the school environment, its values, beliefs, attitudes and current practices.

The checklist below has been devised to assist schools in dealing with bullying incidents using a whole-school approach.

Consider Prevention

- Does the school maintain a climate of respect?
- Do your leadership and management practices contribute to a safe, supportive environment for all students?
- Is the curriculum covering life skills and inclusiveness?
- Does the school have an existing student management policy understood by all staff?
- Does each class have a clear set of rules outlining expectations of student behaviour?
- Are playground rules clearly stated, understood and practiced?

Consider Intervention

- Are staff committed to an agreed response to bullying when it occurs?
- Does the school adopt a punitive or non-punitive approach and for what reasons?
- Do teachers speak respectfully to those students concerned?
- Do teachers steer students towards solutions or do they focus on blame and shame?
- Are parents resourced with appropriate education and services in the community as necessary?

THE NO BLAME APPROACH (Maines and Robinson)

This non-punitive method uses a problem solving approach which gives responsibility rather than blame to the group when dealing with a bullying incident.

It works on four principles:

1. non specific allocation of blame
2. raising empathy
3. shared responsibility amongst the group
4. problem solving

Preparation for Implementation of the No Blame Approach

- The teacher does not need to get to the “bottom of it”
- The teacher collects information from students and teachers discreetly.
- The teacher who will be conducting the meeting seeks the victim’s permission to hold a group meeting of those involved and invites other students to join in, who are seen as socially responsible.
- If the victim does not agree to this the meeting does not go ahead.
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**Step 1** **Interview Victim**
Teacher interviews the victim to ascertain how he or she is feeling and to seek permission to hold the meeting. The victim is reassured that the bullies will not be in trouble. This is done to avoid reprisal. The meeting is not about collecting all the facts otherwise it may be seen that the victim has told.

**Step 2** **Group Meeting**
The teacher meets with the bullies and also selects prosocial students to be part of the group. This takes place without the victim.

The teacher assures the group that they are not in trouble, explaining that they have been chosen as they can offer helping some way to the victim.

**Step 3** **Teacher Shares How the Victim is Feeling**
The teacher shares indirectly how the victim is feeling without apportioning blame or retelling details of the incidents. The aim is to raise empathy and gather solutions from the group.

**Step 4** **Teacher Hands Responsibility Over to the Group**
The teacher explains that everyone has the right to feel safe at school, reassuring the group that they can support the victim thus handing the over responsibility to them.
The emphasis is on solutions not blame.

**Step 5** **Group Offers Solutions**
The teacher listens to the solutions and suggestions from the group offering encouragement and ignoring negative comments

**Step 6** **The Group Implement Their Plan**
The teacher closes the meeting by handing over to the group the responsibility and ownership and reassurance and sets a time to review with each student individually.

**Step 7** **Teacher Monitors the Group**
The teacher checks in with the victim to ascertain how he/ she is feeling. The teacher then meets individually with each of the students from the group reviewing their solutions and monitoring if the bullying has stopped. If it has the teacher congratulates each student. Reviews continue as required. Usually no more than two are necessary.

**SHARED CONCERN METHOD (Anatol Pikas)**
This non-punitive approach uses a non-confrontational counselling style with the main aim being to find a solution. It comprises of five stages.

**Stage 1** **Meeting One to One With the Bullies**
- Each bully is interviewed separately commencing with the ringleader.
- The teacher shares his/ her concern about the victim with the bully. Awareness and empathy is the focus to begin to change the bully’s understanding and behaviour.
- The teacher waits for the bully to share constructive solutions as to how he/ she can make it better for the victim.
- A date and time is set for the following week to ascertain how the bully is going with the solutions made.
- The teacher follows the same procedure with the other bullies in the group. Each is spoken to individually
Stage 2  Teacher Meets With the Victim

• The teacher meets with the victim individually, building a safe and supportive environment, acknowledging the victim’s feelings.
• Together the teacher and victim develop suggestions and devise a management plan.
• The teacher ensures that the victim does not feel blamed and sets a time and date for follow up in the proceeding week.

Stage 3  Review Solutions With Bullies and Victim Individually

• Commence with the victim to ascertain how he/she is feeling and how effectively the bullies are carrying out their solutions/suggestions.
• Review how the bullies are going, offering support, praise and encouragement.

Stage 4  Group Meeting With the Bullies

• A supportive, non-judgmental environment is established.
• The teacher checks in with how the bullies are continuing to implement their solutions/suggestions.
• The students are then encouraged to formulate positive statements they can say to the victim when they meet together as one group.

Stage 5  Group Meeting With Bullies and Victim

• The teacher reassures the victim.
• The bullies in turn share their agreed constructive statements to the victim.
• Before leaving together establish a workable agreement to create a better co-existence.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN BOTH INTERVENTIONS

• Training in chosen intervention is crucial to ensure success
• Remain empathic during meeting times with the students
• Seek solution not blame
• Listen without looking judgmental
• Inform necessary parties such as teachers parents and counsellors
• Document outcomes

Discuss with staff the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. You may come up with a list similar to the one below.

ADVANTAGES OF NON-PUNITIVE INTERVENTIONS

• Solution focused rather than blame
• Avoids reprisal for the victim
• Aroused empathy for the victim
• No time wasted trying to get to the truth
• Can protect the social reputation of those students involved

DISADVANTAGES OF NON-PUNITIVE INTERVENTIONS

• May be seen as time consuming due to training and implementation
• Parents may think it’s a soft option
• Not as effective if the student is low in empathy
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

“Restorative justice is a participatory and democratic justice that focuses on the community defined by the incident and not just the offender.” (Restorative Practices In Schools -Rethinking Behaviour Management, Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2002, p.6)

What is a Community Conference?

According to Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2004) it is a restorative process, bringing together those who have been affected by the negative and wrongful behaviour of a person. Individually and as a group those involved in the conference address the cause of the hurt and harm and its impact. Solutions are explored as a group to make amends and to prevent any future risk.

Who is Involved in the Conference?

- Facilitator
- Victim
- Supporters of the victim (family, friends, colleagues)
- Offender
- Supporters of the offender (family, friends, colleagues)
- Agency staff
- Witnesses to the incident who may have been impacted
- School Principal, Deputy Principal, school counsellor and those who have been involved in the investigation.

Preparing for the Conference

- As the facilitator, explain the process to the families concerned also outlining its benefits.
- Investigate the issue.
- Meet with the participants prior to the conference
- Be aware of what circumstances and issues need to be voiced on the day.
- Organise a time and appropriate venue.
- Check you have access to a photocopier so as participants can sign the appropriate copies.
- Seat participants in a circle with similar height seating.
- Provide refreshments (allows facilitator time to write the agreements at the end of the conference).
- Engage an interpreter if required.

Convening the Conference

As a beginner in conducting conferences, scripts are available for you to follow in supporting you to keep to the plan.

Stage 1 Introduction and Explanation

- The facilitator introduces the participants clearly and succinctly stating why they are at the conference

Stage 2 Offenders are Questioned

- The facilitator outlines what happened and the circumstances that led up to the incidents.
- The offender has already admitted wrong therefore the emphasis is on understanding their reasons why.
- The victim needs to understand why the wrong was done to him/her.
Stage 3 Understanding the Harm Done

- All participants have an opportunity to share their thoughts about the incident(s)
- This section of the conference allows the offender to reflect and develop a sense of right and wrong by understanding the consequences of his/her behaviour on the victim.
- The order of the participants is important. Commence with the victim telling their story, followed by his/her parents/carers, then their supporters.

Stage 4 Acknowledging and Apologising by the Offender

- The offender is given the opportunity to show that he/she has understood the negative consequences of their actions towards the victim.

Stage 5 Coming up With an Agreement

- The facilitator’s role is to negotiate by supporting participants to reach a mutual agreement.

Stage 6 Closing the Conference

- Prior to closing the meeting the facilitator records the agreement.
- Each participant signs the agreement and is given a copy.

PUNITIVE APPROACHES

In some situations where little progress is being made or in situations of physical bullying a punitive approach may be adopted, such as:

- Clearly stated graduated warnings that the bully understands.
- Reflective response sheets - bully answers questions either orally or in written form in reference to his/her behaviour towards others.
- Sanctions - detention
  - in school suspension
  - out of school suspension
  - Time out (Glasser)
  - denial of privileges
  - expulsion

PARENTS

One of the schools greatest resources can be its parent community. The key to addressing bullying is to create healthy partnerships amongst teachers, parents and students. Schools need to educate their parent community about the school’s policy, practices and procedures regarding bullying.

For Discussion

During staff meeting time discuss how parents can be better informed about what the school is doing to address bullying. Has the school provided the following?

- Parents given a copy of the school’s anti-bullying policy
- Parent information evenings to provide a clearer understanding of the issue
- Correct protocol expected when they approach the school
- Who to report the bullying is sue to
- Newsletter updates about what the school is doing to address the issue
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Tips for Conducting a Parent Meeting

The teacher’s role is crucial in determining the tone and outcome of the meeting. Where necessary a colleague could be present, whether it is the principal, deputy principal, school counsellor or member from your student welfare team.

Many parents enter the meeting wanting revenge and punishment for the bully. It is important to offer reassurance and explain that the school will deal with the issue carefully and according to the latest research and practices. Explain that a non-punitive approach will be adopted first as this avoids reprisal for their child and allows them to come to school and feel safe.

To ensure a successful meeting consider the following:

- Collect as much information as possible
- Speak to each set of parents separately
- Organise a colleague to sit in with you to take the minutes
- Establish the purpose of the meeting
- Express empathy for the parents
- Inform parents of the school’s anti-bullying policy
- Together develop a plan as to what the school can do and what the parents can do at home
- Provide information of outside agencies if required
- Set a date for a follow up meeting

Summary

1. Non-punitive approaches aim to seek solution, increase empathy and can avoid reprisal.
2. Non-punitive measures are the first steps to solving the problem.
3. Teachers need to educate parents on non-punitive approaches.
4. Non-punitive approaches are not suitable in issues of physical violence.

Taking Action

After viewing the program and working through the discussion points as a staff it’s now time to take action. Whether simple or comprehensive it is best to act promptly.

- Develop an action plan
- Nominate who will be on the working committee
- Work out a realistic time line and stick to it
- Establish how best to report back to all members of staff
- Set a date for implementation
Useful Resources


