

2.BULLYING

This unit deals explicitly with *bullying*. It develops the children's understanding of the nature and consequences of bullying and also gives them hints on how to cope or ask for help. The unit should take the teacher approximately 5 hours. However, a number of extra activities have been prepared to address the diverse learning needs of students.

Before the students begin the unit the teacher might want to introduce the idea of violence (which later generates cases of bullying) and how it forms inside the human being, as expressed by Sigmund Freud (father of psychoanalysis):

According to Freud, the human beings naturally possess two basic instincts, the *life instinct* (=eros) and the *death instinct* (=thanatos). Human behaviour is shaped by these two forces. When these two instincts come into conflict within an individual, they can only be appeased by directing the destructive force against another person instead of oneself. According to this view, aggression, or violence, is a trial to keep an equilibrium in an individual and is beyond the control of the individual.

Considering this idea (all through the credit) the teacher could start the unit by having students explore the meaning of bullying enacting the types of behavior which bullying implies.

The word *bully* was used in the eighteenth century to describe a pimp or villain. Bullying behavior has always been part of the human condition. It has always been with us in a more or less visible way. The teacher should ensure that students understand that bullying is a sustained activity (as they will learn as the unit progresses) rather than a one-off event.

Olweus, a leading researcher on bullying defined bullying as 'When a young person is exposed repeatedly and over time to intentional, negative, aggressive behaviour from an individual or group. This can be physical, verbal, spreading rumours or by excluding someone. Bullying involves an imbalance of power. It is also considered bullying when a young person is teased repeatedly. But it is not bullying when two young people of the same strength have the odd fight or quarrel.'

Let students first read the introductory poem by *Vijay Singh*. The teacher must ascertain that the students understand the meaning of the words within the poem along with the consequences of the treatment perpetrated upon the victim. Students should provide some feedback on what they believe the causes to be that pushed this young student to take his own life.

Group work- They will most certainly have to use the dictionary to look the following words up: *bully*, *bystander* (stand by), *tease*, *shun*, *taunt*.

Once they feel comfortable with the new vocabulary, the teacher will have the children

discuss bullying; what it is, what the different actors do, etc.

Bully (or “taunter”)– the person who bullies (or taunts) .

Bullied – the person who is bullied (or taunted).

Bystander- person who stands watching and does nothing to stop the harassment.

Tell students that bullying can take many different shapes. These are some ways young victims have described bullying. They should give students a clear idea on how bullies act:

- ❖ having your bag and other possessions taken and thrown around
- ❖ having rumours spread about you with false information
- ❖ being ignored and left out
- ❖ being forced to hand over money or possessions
- ❖ being attacked or teased or called names because of your sexuality, your height, your religion, your race, etc.

Bullying experiences. To introduce this activity the teacher might consider passing out photocopies of the *Bully control questionnaire* to be found in the *additional materials* section. The teacher should tell students that there is no need to provide names. Otherwise that might refrain more reserved students from doing the activity.

Answers: they all are forms of bullying except John and Jordi’s stories

Teasing and bullying

Essential difference: Teasing is done in a playful way and in such a way that no harm is meant, unlike bullying, which has more hideous intentions.

THE THREE KINDS OF BULLYING

Explain to students that there are three different kinds of bullying: physical, psychological (also called relational) and verbal bullying. After going over the different forms of bullying you may want to ask kids if they have ever suffered from any one of them or if they know of someone who has.

PHYSICAL BULLYING

Even though it is the most visible and striking form of bullying it is by far the less common. It includes slapping, hitting, beating, kicking, spitting, scratching, etc. It also implies damaging or destroying property or belongings of the bullied person. The bully who often

engages in such acts is often the most troubled of all three different kinds of bullies and is likely to move on to more serious criminal offences in the future.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLYING

It is the hardest to detect from the outside. It is the continuous diminishment of someone's sense of self by means of ignoring, badly staring, shunning, spreading rumours (the person may not know about it but he/she still suffers from the consequences of such rumours as: *"Stay away from him, he has the leprosy"*, or *"you know? I have heard she has slept with all the boys in the class"*).

It can be used to alienate or to reject someone or to ruin friendship someone might not feel comfortable with. It has devastating effects on the child's mind as he/she feels excluded from many classroom activities or social events (such as field-trips, parties, etc.) and although the results are not as easily seen as a black eye, for example, they still have enough power to bring somebody down.

VERBAL BULLYING

"Sticks and Stones Can Break My Bones but Words can Never Hurt Me"

Or, can they? words can have a tremendous negative power and therefore, can have devastating effects on the person to whom they are addressed. This kind of harassment is the most often used and it can often go undetected. Bullies can get away with it easily and they can use this form of bullying in the presence of teachers, parents or any adult, in the middle of the classroom or in the playground, in the street or at home. It is quick and painless for the bully but extremely harmful for the bullied person. A simple word (Ex. "faggot") can break anyone's defenses and if the insult becomes a natural thing the victim's self-confidence gets undermined.

Why do you think bullies bully?

Ask students to read the text and say whether they find that a plausible explanation of the bullying phenomenon. Ask for some more feedback from them.

Roleplaying activity (students' own work)

Consequences of bullying. At this point, ask students to complete the diagram using a dictionary if necessary. Tell them about the negative consequences of bullying as detailed below:

Bullying can have serious negative consequences on young's people health and wellbeing and on their future opportunities in life. Victims may suffer from a wide variety of physical complaints such as faints, vomiting, general pains, hyperventilation, headaches, sleeping difficulties, sadness, etc. In addition, mental health of the victim is seriously put at risk if bullying persist for a long period of time, leading to general depression and even to suicidal thoughts as it can sadly happen in some extreme cases. The effects of bullying can continue long into adult life. In a recent study in which adults were questioned about their experiences of being bullied as children, respondents were found to have low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and difficulty relating to people (Kldscape 1999).

Bullying, nevertheless, not only causes severe distress among young victims, it also affects how teenagers perform at school. Victims may decide to quit school, where they feel threatened and terrorized; they are often absent and they get away with that by feigning sickness or forging sick notes.



Creative writing

Some students find writing more inspiring. They might not have enough confidence to voice their ideas in public but given the chance they might do so in writing and, to a high standard.

In ***What is it like to be bullied?*** Students have to use the words in the box to obtain the following paragraph:

Bullying **hurts**. It makes you **scared** and upset. It can make you so worried that you can't work **well** at school. Some children have told us they have **skipped** school to get away from it. It can make you feel that you are no **good**, that there is something **wrong** with you. Bullies can make you feel that it's your **fault**.

Ben's Story requires the students to use the internet and elicit information to answer the questions on Ben.

Before asking students to go over the story itself, show them the following presentation about Ben on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2e35qrG4w4>

Note: if the link on the website is dead try the following one:

<http://www.bullying.co.uk/article/ben.aspx>

Questions and answers:

- How would you describe Ben when he was in junior school?
(answers may vary) **An active, friendly, lovely boy.**
- What happened to one of his friends in year 7?
A friend of his was being bullied.
- When did he start being bullied?
After the bullies forgot about his friend. They turned to him.
- What kind of things did the bullies do to him?
They stole his properties, punched him and hit him.
- Whose fault did he think it is?
He concluded it was his fault.
- What did he then decide to do?
He took his life.
- How did his parents react?
They cried every day.

Alternative task

Ask students to visit the following site and post a comment regarding Ben's story:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-422949/Boy-11-hanged-bullying.html>

WHAT CAN YOU DO? HOW CAN YOU DEAL WITH BULLYING?
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Let students read the introductory information on tackling bullying. The teacher should remind students how important it is to be there for a friend who is the objective of bullies. It is, therefore, paramount for them to learn how to tell if someone is experiencing bullying. Students write their own ideas in the three boxes. Have the whole group share their feedback.

In **What if you are the target?** students are expected to tick the logical options, which are all except the following ones:

- I would not talk it over with my true friends.
- Tell the bullies how brave they are.
- I would beat the bully up.

The teacher should point that there are a lot of ways to deal with bullies:

The key is to not feed into the bully and argue with him/her. Here are a couple of examples or tactics:

- a. Turn insults into compliments. Reply as if the bully has just said something nice.
- b. Ask questions. For every insult, ask a question. For example, if the bully says, "You are ugly," you could say, "I guess that's your opinion, but why do you want to tell me that?" For

every response, ask another question.

c. Agree with the bully. The bully has nothing to fight about if you agree. If the bully says you have big ears, you could say, "Why, yes, my ears are a bit large. How nice of you to notice." This kind of response often surprises the bully, who expects you to get hurt or mad. When they can't get the reaction they want, the "game" is no longer worth playing.

The **post-it board** is an activity that boosts students to express what they feel about a specific issue. The fact that it is expressed in writing offers them a more thoughtful way to do so. Put a board up on the wall for students to place their stick-ons and, once they have done so, tell students to read the messages posted there. Ask them to comment on them within groups.

IN SCHOOL

Students read the poem and consider, for a minute, whether a poem contest would be a useful tool to eradicate bullying from school.

School survey

Unfortunately bullying is rather common in schools. Bullying is not only physical (remember); it not only has the clear effects a punch shows (like a black eye) or it not only implies the disappearance of somebody's belongings, it may be anything that makes a person feel uncomfortable, degraded, etc. and it occasionally can mean a dramatic change in a person's life, specially among teenagers. Remind your students that they have certain rights and that the school must follow a procedure to protect them. The problem with certain Catalan high schools is that such procedure may not be clear. This is what this survey is trying to address: students need to find out what the school behavior policy regarding bullying is. They should find information regarding the boundaries of what is acceptable, the punishment for exceeding those boundaries and what the arrangements are for the consistent application of this punishment. In order to carry out the survey ask students to write a list of questions they may want to ask the Head Teacher or the Administrators in general. Let them share the results with the class then. Have students do a school survey to find out what children, teachers and staff think about bullying. Is it a problem, should it go on, should children tell if they are being bullied?

THE POSTER ACTIVITY

It is a common practice in schools all over the world to display student's work to spread a message and encourage other students to act appropriately. Posters is a good tool schools often use make the message as widely known as possible.

Ask your student to make a poster on bullying. Ask them to look at the posters they have

on that page as examples.

VIDEOSONG

Sound the Bugle by Bryan Adams is a low-paced song that will make them think about the general message of the unit.

KNOWLEDGE QUEST (in the *Additional Materials* section)

The teacher has a good chance to check on the students' progress by reading their report on the unit. Particularly important is the fact that students have understood what was expected from them and that they have developed the necessary strategies to react against injustice.