

Ultimate goal to prevent bullying and develop effective coping strategies: An educational resource for young people

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This is a **helpful resource** for all young people to effectively manage bullying. Research suggests that bullying amongst Australian young people is as high as one in four students (Bullying. No Way!, 2003). This research highlights the need for beneficial knowledge and support to overcome this major and often debilitating problem (Bullying. No Way!, 2003, Headspace, 2011, Lamb, Pepler & Craig, 2009 & Lodge, 2008 & Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010).

Young people need to be aware of the different types of bullying. Bullying can be conducted either individually or in a group and be either obvious or disguised. It can be physical (punching), verbal (teasing), social (intentionally leaving someone out of a group) and psychological (any form of manipulating behaviour) (Bullying. No Way!, 2003). The advancement in technology has led to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying involves the use of an electronic device to inflict harm onto another either verbally such as via a mobile phone, Skype, in writing such as via text messages or on social networking sites such as Facebook and via images (Price & Dalglish, 2010). Bullying which was once mostly conducted during and after school hours is now occurring at any time, day or place (Headspace, 2011).

Bullying has serious consequences (Lodge, 2008 & Perren et al., 2010). Some of these include:-

- **Low self-esteem**
- **Debilitating fear**
- **Social isolation or withdrawal**
- **Reduced overall well-being**
- **Minimal effective coping strategies**
- **Increase in mental illness(es) such as depression and anxiety**
- **Suicide ideation and suicide**
- **Lower academic performance, absenteeism and school drop out**
- **Unemployment**
- **Obesity**
- **Anti-social and risk-taking behaviour, such as alcohol, smoking and illegal drug use**
- **Criminal charges**
- **Expensive compensation payouts**

All bullying is unacceptable behaviour regardless of who is the perpetrator, such as a peer, relation, Teacher, employer or influential public identity (Bullying. No Way!, 2003). Bullying can have detrimental short and long term emotional, mental, social, physical, legal and financial consequences (Perren et al., 2010).

Young people should not feel afraid, to blame or alone in their efforts of speaking up and putting a stop to bullying.

It is important all young people have knowledge surrounding some of the many reasons for bullying and develop effective coping strategies to manage bullying.

Some of the reasons for bullying include:-

- Low self-esteem or sense of self worth.
- Learnt or conditioned behaviour such as having poor role models, such as parents, siblings, relations or friends. The unacceptable behaviour becomes acceptable, often due to positive reinforcement and being unaware of what constitutes acceptable behaviour (Bullying. No Way!, 2003).
- It may be difficult for a young person to see jealousy as a possible reason for bullying. However a person can be jealous of another for any reason such as appearance, socio-economic background and personality.
- Minimal morals and values particularly when it comes to consideration of the feelings of others, such as treating others as you yourself would like to be treated, treating all people with respect unless proven otherwise.
- Any sign of perceived weakness or vulnerability in their victims such as mental, physical, social, emotional or learning disabilities.
- Underlying personal problems.
- Having a need for power and dominance over others. Having this power and dominance enhances their ego or sense of self worth particularly in a group setting (Bullying. No Way!, 2003) .

Effective coping strategies to manage bullying

- Bullying is unacceptable and stopped immediately.
- Being assertive to the bully by specifying their unacceptable behaviour and it must be stopped. This takes courage but in doing so the bully clearly understands the unacceptable behaviour and the request. Often simply ignoring the unacceptable behaviour exacerbates the problem (Lamb, Pepler & Craig, 2009).
- If being assertive to the bully is not possible there are other coping strategies.

- Informing a Teacher, Principal, parent/legal guardian, professional such as School Counsellor, Counsellor, Life Coach, Mentor, Psychologist or General Practitioner or a trusted peer (Price & Dalglish, 2010).
- If you feel dissatisfied with the handling of the bullying by a Teacher or Principal you can ask for a hard copy of the school's anti-bullying policies and programs. Listed in this document will be alternative contacts.
- It is important to find a trusted professional such as a School Counsellor, Counsellor, Life Coach, Mentor, Psychologist or General Practitioner to safely and comfortably express concerns (Lodge, 2008).
- It is essential to be screened for mental illness(es) and the risk of suicide by a Psychologist (Headspace, 2011).
- If the bullying is of a serious nature and occurs mainly outside the school environment, seeing the Police may be the best option as criminal charges may have to be made against the bully (Bullying. No Way!, 2003).
- Depending on the severity of the bullying and the consequences it may be necessary to seek legal advice and compensation.
- Joining with other young people as a positive force to stop bullying (particularly on the annual '**National Action against Bullying and Violence Day**', **Friday, 20 March 2015**). For instance young people with gay or lesbian tendencies may feel more supported connecting with members of the opposite sex.
- Avoiding contact with anyone who bullies or encourages this form of unacceptable behaviour or until the behaviour is addressed. This involves blocking people and de-friending previous friends on social networking sites. Also blocking calls and messages from mobile phone numbers of bullies. If unsure how to do this learn about privacy settings on all electronic devices (Perren et al., 2010).
- Having no electronic devices in the sleep environment.
- Continual daily practice of improving self-esteem. This may involve identifying personal meaning, strengths and a belief in them, unconditional love, making a conscious effort to replace negative thoughts and behaviours with those that are positive, writing down personal goals and achieving them, writing down and rehearsing affirmations such “I am lovable just as I am”, “I feel happy, content and motivated” and “I have empathy for others”, doing something considerate for another, each day participate in positive activities and make a conscious effort to accept having no control over other people's perceptions (Lodge, 2008).
- Witnessing bullying and unable to stop a bully then seek help and report the incident.

- Any witness to bullying must not positively reinforce the behaviour such as refraining from stopping the behaviour, laughing or offering praise (Bullying. No Way!, 2003).
- Making a conscious choice not to bully. Change is possible and there are trusted Professionals such as a Psychologist, School Counsellor, Counsellor, Life Coach, Mentor or General Practitioner that can provide assistance to overcome the problem (Lodge, 2008).
- Although someone may appear perfect, there is no such thing as perfection. Perfection for one person may be imperfection to another. Unsubstantiated perceptions of others are often untrue and everyone has weaknesses or problems to overcome.
- A fundamental moral is “treating others how you yourself would like to be treated”. If people were truly honest with themselves no one likes to be mistreated or to be at the receiving end of someone else's unacceptable behaviour so why bully someone else.

If you have found this educational resource beneficial please share it with others. Feedback comments and suggestions are welcome on Facebook via ME - Youth Life Coaching or contacting me via my website www.meyouthlifecoaching.com.au.

References

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