

## *Classroom activities: Bystander behaviour*

### *How teachers can help*

Promoting safe and supportive bystander behaviour among students who witness bullying at school is an important way of reducing peer victimization.

Research has shown that student bystanders are usually present when bullying occurs and if any of them speak up to discourage it, on about half the occasions the bullying stops. Otherwise it just continues.

Teachers rarely see what is going on between students in the playground and often never learn about the bullying that has taken place. If they can influence students to act as positive bystanders bullying and peer victimization will be significantly reduced.

However, when teachers TELL students to help students who are being victimized, they commonly disregard what is being said. If, on the other hand, students learn that their peers would like them to act helpfully they are greatly encouraged to do so.

Students may also need to practise what to say and do as a safe and supportive bystander. This activity is based on the work of Professor Ken Rigby.

### *Classroom process*

- 1 Hand out the attached questionnaire and ask the students to complete it separately and anonymously.
- 2 Collect the questionnaires and review students' answers to determine how to present the findings.
- 3 In the next lesson, read back the answers that students gave on why they would choose to support the person being bullied. Hearing these views directly from students can encourage other students to act positively. Some students might 'own up' to their statements and elaborate on why they would support someone being bullied. However do not pressure anyone to speak up. It is also important to read some of the responses from students who would ignore the bullying or who would tell a teacher.
- 4 It is important to extend the discussion with class:
  - Recognise there may be dangerous situations where students should be cautious and avoid getting personally involved; and to discuss ways in which these risks can be minimised.
  - Discuss ways in which bystanders might safely help those being bullied.
  - Ask students whether they have tried to discourage bullying in the past and if it has been successful.
- 5 In subsequent lessons, allow time for students to report on what happened when they tried to help, and reinforce their successes.

## Questionnaire for students

Here is a picture of a person being bullied with a number of people watching.



1 How often does this sort of thing happen at your school? Place a tick by your answer.

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Most days of the week
- ☐ Once or twice a week
- ☐ Less than once a week
- ☐ Never or hardly ever

2 Now please think carefully about what you think you would do if you were watching what was happening. Place ONLY one tick by your answer.

- ☐ I would ignore it
- ☐ I would support the person being bullied
- ☐ I would support the person who is bullying the other person
- ☐ I would get a teacher

3 Write a sentence saying why you ticked the one you did.

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