



# National Safe Schools Week

25 May - 1 June 2007

## Effective Bullying Prevention

### What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to bungy jump through life and rise above adversity.

The development of resilience in young people is linked to long term occupational and life success. The sense of belonging to family, friends and school that underpin resilience may be the most powerful antidote against bullying, substance abuse, violence and suicide.

Resilience is a feature not only of effectively functioning people but also applies to schools.

### Bullying Prevention is Everyone's responsibility

Bullying is a major problem in Australian schools with as many as one in six students reporting being bullied each week. Bullying may take the form of verbal abuse, particularly comments about physical appearance or sexuality; it may also be physical, involving hitting or kicking; and it may also happen through deliberately excluding a person from activities or discussions. Bullying can happen in person, or it can happen indirectly with the use of technology such as mobile phones or the internet. Bullying in schools is a repeated behaviour, involving a more powerful student or group of students acting against a less powerful student or group of students.

The consequences of bullying can be negative both for students who bully others and their victims. At its more severe, bullying may be related to an increased likelihood of later criminal convictions. People who have been bullied may experience lowered self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, and isolation and rejection by peers. Prolonged bullying can lead to post traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicidal ideation.

Establishing a school culture that is focused on positive development, and where all members of the school community receive and communicate clear, coherent messages that this is a place of learning where bullying, violence, abuse,



# National Safe Schools Week

25 May - 1 June 2007

## So what can schools and staff do?

### 1. Be proactive-

Cultures of co-operation do not occur by chance. They need to be planned for and created. Decide on the key values of the school and live them, decide on coherent messages and deliver them, review the structures of the school and look for opportunities to enhance positive relationships between staff and students

### 2. Reduce the amount of anonymous space

Bullying thrives where adult eyes are not. Schools where violence has been a problem have had considerable success by reducing the amount of un-owned, anonymous space. Secondary schools have had success in reverting to a primary school model of classrooms that belong to specific teachers. Increasing supervision of public areas like the playground during lunch or morning tea breaks can help too.

### 3. Determine the extent of bullying

Conduct surveys, make school maps, conduct random bullying audits and consider facilitating student reporting of bullying through bully boxes or secure on-line reporting methods.

### 4. Develop an Anti- bullying policy

Generally these should be developed in consultation with students, parents, staff members, and should be regularly reviewed. Policies should include: a general statement of intention, a definition of bullying as well as different types of bullying- physical, verbal, sexual, racial, telephonic, cyber and exclusion, details of how to notify a bullying incident as well as people to contact.

### 5. Sensitise and Involve the Peer Group

Most students don't want bullying to happen but don't think they can stop it and doubt if their teachers can control it. Schools need to take steps to help students become aware of bullying as an issue and usually involvement in policy development is a good way of achieving this.

### 6. Have a good transition program

Schools that have an effective transition program for students joining them often experience less bullying associated with this change.



# National Safe Schools Week

25 May - 1 June 2007

## 7. Develop peer connectedness and resilience among students.

Programs that highlight social skills, language expression, non-violent problem solving and give students skills in emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and aggression management are valuable in preventing bullying and should be developed as class-wide programs for all students.

## 8. “No Blame” or “Method of Shared Concern”

When an incident of bullying does occur, two evidence based methods of intervention are the

“No Blame” approach and “the Method of Shared Concern”. The No Blame approach is often suitable in the first instance, as it can be used quickly with whole groups of students. With more extreme cases of bullying, the Method of Shared Concern can be helpful. This involves:

- \* Individual meetings with each student involved

- a) find out some details of the incident from independent observers

- b) prepare the classroom teacher for the approach you are about to take

- c) enter the classroom of the students involved and ask to see the ringleader. It is essential to see all of the students involved during one session so they don't have an opportunity to confer. If there are many students involved wait till there is a double period before starting. Each student should be interviewed in turn and accompanied back to their classroom.

Interview students using the following script:

- \* I hear you've been nasty to X, tell me about it

- \* Sounds like X is having a bad time at school

- \* I was wondering what you could do to help X

- \* Excellent try that out (for a set period) and we'll see how you've got on.

- \* Follow-up with individual sessions

Consider the advisability of a group session.

Prepared by Andrew Fuller