



THE BULLY, THE BULLIED AND THE BYSTANDER

Based on the work of Barbara Coloroso

Teachers develop for their children a network of support through six critical life messages given every day:

- I believe in you.
- I trust you.
- I know you can handle life situations.
- You are listened to.
- You are cared for.
- You are very important to me.

Bystander

The four reasons most often given for not intervening:

1. The bystander is afraid of getting hurt himself. The bully is bigger and stronger and has a reputation that justifies the fear; so jumping into the melee doesn't appear to be a smart thing to do.
2. The bystander is afraid of becoming a new target of the bully. Even if the bystander is able to intervene successfully, there is a chance she will be singled out at a later date for retribution. Bullies are quick to disparage and malign anyone who tries to intervene.
3. The bystander is afraid of doing something that will only make the situation worse. In Santee, California, the friends of Andy Williams were afraid that if they told administrators about Andy's threats to harm the kids who bullied him, Andy would be expelled from school. In hindsight, expulsion would have been much better than a life sentence for murder.
4. The bystander does not know what to do. He hasn't been taught ways to intervene, to report the bullying, or to help the target. Just as bullying is a learned behavior, so must children be taught ways to stop it.

Profile of a Bully

- Has a history of tantrums and uncontrolled outbursts
- Characteristically resorts to name-calling, cursing, or abusive language
- Habitually makes violent threats when angry
- Has brought a weapon to school
- Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community
- Has a background of drug, alcohol, or other substance abuse or dependency
- Is on the fringe of his peer group with few or no close friends
- Is preoccupied with weapons, explosives, or other incendiary devices
- Has previously been truant, suspended, or expelled from school
- Displays cruelty to animals
- Has little or no supervision and support from parents or a caring adult

- Has witnessed or suffered abuse or neglect in the home
- Bullies or intimidates peers or younger children

The following can also be added to this list:

- Has been bullied by peers or by older children
- Tends to blame others for difficulties and problems he causes himself/herself
- Consistently prefers TV shows, movies, or music expressing violent themes and acts
- Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals, and abuse
- Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects
- Is involved with a gang or an antisocial group on the fringe of peer acceptance
- Is often depressed and/or has significant mood swings
- Has threatened or attempted suicide

Kids speak in five ways: With body, face, eyes, tone of voice and words. Sometimes their words are an excuse or cover for what they are really trying to say. Don't dismiss changes in behavior as merely a phase, something that will pass. Be alert to the frequency, duration and intensity of any changes.

Warning Signs:

1. Shows an abrupt lack of interest in school or a refusal to go to school
2. Takes an unusual route to school
3. Suffers a drop in grades. It is hard to concentrate on school work when you are trying to figure out how to avoid the bullies
4. Withdraws from family and school activities, wanting to be left alone
5. Is hungry after school, saying he lost his lunch money or wasn't hungry at school
6. Is taking parents' money and making lame excuses for where it went
7. Makes a beeline to the bathroom when he/she gets home
8. Is sad, sullen, angry, or scared after receiving a phone call or an e-mail
9. Does something out of character
10. Uses derogatory or demeaning language when talking about peers
11. Stops talking about peers and everyday activities
12. Has disheveled, torn, or missing clothing
13. Has physical injuries not consistent with explanation
14. Has stomachaches, headaches, panic attacks, is unable to sleep, sleeps too much, is exhausted