

BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL SETTING:  
VIDEO ILLUSTRATIONS OF RELATED STRATEGIES

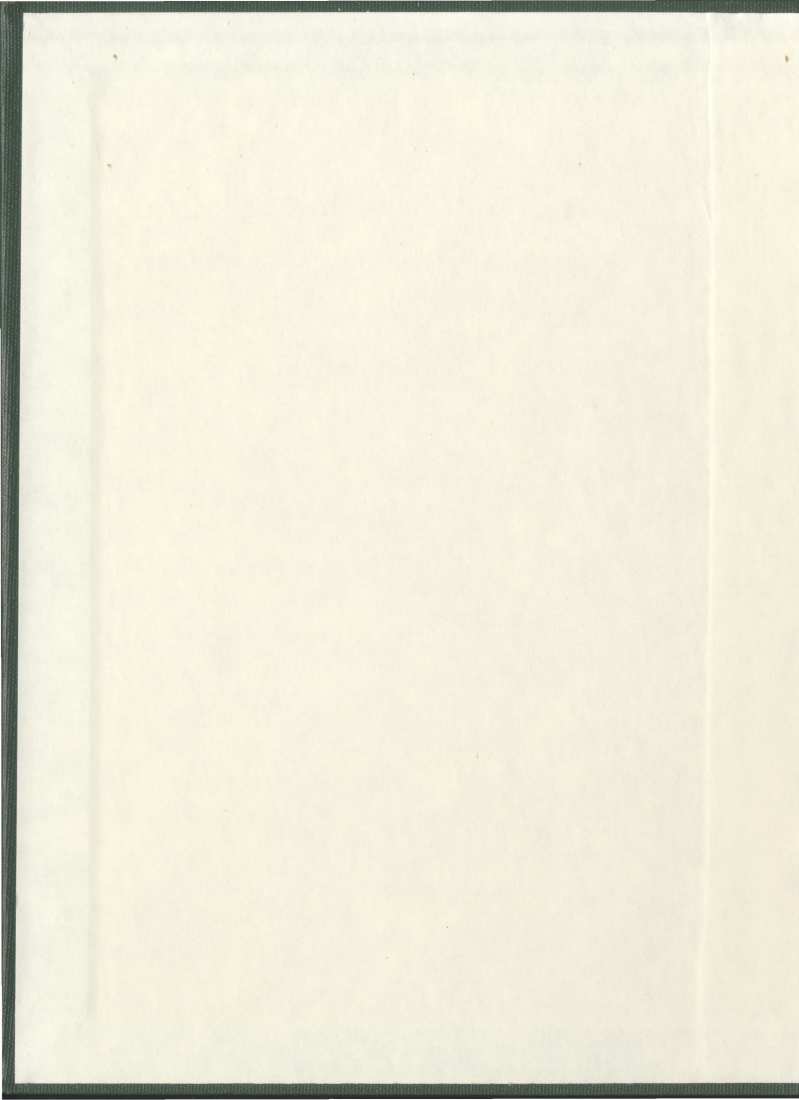
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BRYAN K. BRAMWELL





BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL SETTING: VIDEO ILLUSTRATIONS  
OF RELATED STRATEGIES.

by

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## 1.0 Introduction

Schooling is a necessity of life. In order to gain a simple entry-level job in today's world, employers require at least a high school diploma. For this reason, children need to go to school. It is in these buildings that students learn the prescribed curriculum as mandated by the provincial government. They also learn how to socialize with others. Therefore education is a two-fold event – learning the curriculum as well as learning how to become a good citizen. The school is also a place where students learn other things as well. It is in these buildings that they are introduced to bullying. For some, this is the first time that they have experienced such a thing. These experiences can result in scars that can stay with a student throughout their formal schooling years and beyond. Even today, some students develop anxiety disorders through these negative experiences. Bullying can take many forms, with each inflicting its own type of pain. This project, which includes the video entitled "Bullying", as well as this accompanying paper, will provide educators with further research into this school-wide problem. It is through the assistance of many volunteers at Brother Rice Junior High and my faculty advisor, Dr. Nesbit, that this work has been completed. My utmost thanks to those involved for making this project come to fruition.

## 2.0 Background and History of the Project

I am a teacher at Brother Rice Junior High in St. John's. Our school has many different committees on which teachers work during the school year. Some deal with curriculum while others focus on school climate. During the 2002-2003 school year, we developed a Safe and Peaceful Schools Committee. The goal of this committee was to foster and encourage a safe and caring school environment. Our goal was to also become a member of *The League of Peaceful Schools*. We were successful in this venture and received our Peaceful Schools flag from Heddy Van Gorp, the founder of the League of Peaceful Schools, in March of 2003.

For the 2003-2004 school year, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association (NLTA) received federal funding to promote safe and caring schools within the province. The NLTA sent out information to all schools about the funding and began taking requests from schools to fund innovative safe and caring school projects. After reading this information, I decided that our group should apply for funding and do a project on bullying. I decided on the topic of bullying because during the previous year, teachers were hearing a lot of complaints from students and parents that bullying was rampant in our school.

During discussions with some students, I realized that although they were being bullied, they did not seem to recognize the different types of



bullying. Another problem was that they were not familiar with the different strategies that they could use to deal with the bully. As a committee, we decided that we would look at the four main types of bullying and identify some associated strategies that students could use to deal with the bully. Having a focus, we then decided upon the best way to address our topic. There were many different ideas that were presented and discussed, including developing a play or even writing short stories. Personally, I have always had an interest in video production, but have never had the resources available within a school to pursue the interest. Realizing it would be a lot of work, I made the proposal to the committee that the mode of communication that we should use to explore this topic should be a video presentation. All agreed that it would be a worthwhile way to address the issue.

I volunteered my time to the committee to spearhead this project. First, I applied to the NLTA for the funding of the project. What we requested was enough money to cover the cost of the computer program needed for video-editing, funding for computer set-up and installation of the software, an allocation for in-service on the software, and guidelines concerning the "do's" and "don'ts" of video production. As for a video camera, I decided to use my own personal camera, as I was quite familiar with its use. After submitting my request, we were successful in attaining funds to cover these costs.

Once funding was approved, a teaching colleague of mine approached Mr. Tom Donovan, a retired schoolteacher with the Avalon East School Board

and asked him to meet with us and discuss how we should approach the topic. We selected Mr. Donovan due to his personal experience with media production. He had spearheaded the Media Production Centre at Gonzaga High School in St. John's. We believed that his expertise would be invaluable in facilitating production of our video.

Two meetings with him gave us an idea concerning how to approach this project. The first thing that we needed was a focused topic. We decided to focus on the four major types of bullying and present different strategies that can be used to deal with each type. We then decided to create the video by using four vignettes, one for each of the types of bullying that occur within school. Each member of the committee selected one type of bullying and created a script. I selected *reactive bullying*, Ms. Joan Sharpe chose *relational bullying*, Ms. Rosanne Sweeney wrote on *verbal bullying* and Mr. Mike Mulrooney picked *physical bullying*. Each vignette is unique, and each utilized a different format, but this will be addressed in the section on the production of the video.

With the four scenarios in hand, I left our small committee to find students who might be willing to act for us. It is interesting to note, that I believed that this would be the most difficult part of the project, but it actually turned out to be the least difficult. I teach both English and French-immersion stream students, and I put out the request for possible students to act as players in the various scenarios. Before long, I had a core of about 45

students volunteering their time for the project. It is important to note that the students that acted in the video did need to gain parental permission. This was one of the requirements that the Avalon East School District required.

We had our scripts, our students (with parental permission), and our camera, so during the first week of February we started the production of our "first ever" school video entitled "Bullying."

Before describing our video production and possible uses of the resulting product, it might be best to look at the concept of bullying as reflected in current literature.

### **3.0 Bullying in Today's Schools**

#### **3.1 What is a Bully?**

There are many images of bullies. Each person has his/her own personal image either through something they saw, read, or experienced in their own lifetime. For boys, it may be the "big boy" that picked on everyone in school; for girls, it may be a closed clique that whispered something whenever someone passed by. When looking at our own definitions of a bully, most of us are taken back in time to an uncomfortable place where such experiences may have happened. It conjures up past feelings of fear and distress. Recently I was talking to someone about my work this past year on the issue of bullying. I asked her if she could remember being bullied in

school. Through our conversation, she meticulously described the bully, the places where she was bullied, and the times when it happened. As the conversation progressed, she became very emotional and began to “well-up” with tears. Years after the incidences, she still seemed to be affected by these events. The experience of being bullied is something that can stay with a person well into the adult years.

Authors seem to agree that there are some basic tenets about bullying. Firstly, it is something that seems to happen without any specific pattern, and occurs at all levels of schooling (Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan 2004). It is not limited to specific races, genders, or social classes. Its effects can have lifelong consequences (Sullivan et al., 2004). Simply defined, a bully is one who has an imbalance of power over another person and is able to inflict abuse on that person (Platt & Fairholm, 2002). Two factors that do distinguish bullying behaviour are an *imbalance of power* and *some sort of abuse*.

One of the world's leading experts on bullying, Dan Olweus, a psychology professor at Norway's University of Bergen, defines bullying in this way:

Bullying is an accumulation of negative reactions – occurring repeatedly and over a period of time – directed toward one student by another student or students. Those negative actions, which can include threats, physical attacks, word gestures, or social exclusion, occur in a context always characterized by an imbalance between

the bully and the victim. (as cited in Garrett, 2003, p.9)

Another definition of bullying can be found in the recently published book, *Bullying in secondary schools: What it looks like and how to manage It.*, by Sullivan et al., (2004). Here the authors define bullying as:

...negative and often aggressive or manipulative act or series of acts by one or more people against another person or people usually over a period of time. It is abusive and is based on an imbalance of power. Bullying contains the following elements: (1) the person doing the bullying has more power than the one being victimized, (2) bullying is often organized, systematic, and hidden, (3) bullying is sometimes opportunistic, but once it starts it is likely to continue, (4) it usually occurs over a period of time, although those who regularly bully may also carry out one-off incidents. (5) a victim of bullying can be hurt physically, emotionally, or psychologically. (6) all acts of bullying have an emotional or psychological dimension. (p.5)

Another definition of bullying is given by Coloroso (2002). She describes the four markers of bullying as: (1) imbalance of power, (2) intent to harm, (3) threat of further aggression, and (4) terror.

The imbalance of power that is usually associated with bullying can take many forms. The bully may be older, stronger, bigger, of a different sex, from a different ethnic background, or from any economic stratum of society. What is noticeable, and common to all instances of bullying, is that one child is able to dominate another child (Coloroso, 2002). Bullying does not happen

when two children, who are equally matched with regard to power, have a conflict.

When examining the intent to harm, one is able to see that with bullying, the bully **does** mean to induce physical or emotional harm (Coloroso, 2002). Bullies quite often enjoy watching the hurt take place, and take pleasure in the fact that they are the source of the victim's anguish. Bullies do not do such things by mistake; there is a desire or intent to harm. Intent is what differentiates a bully's action from a mistake by another (e.g. accidentally stepping on someone's toes.)

The threat of aggression is a main element in defining bullying. Being bullied is an action that quite often continues for the one who is being harassed. He/she knows that such actions will happen again in the future. Even if physical action is not taking place on a predictable basis, the psychological aspects of bullying start to enter. The bullied person starts to live in fear and attempts to by-pass places where he/she knows the bully might strike (e.g. school, schoolyard, school bus).

The last aspect of bullying that builds from the fear of aggression is terror. When terror sets in the bully has accomplished two things: namely, that every new instance of bullying will increase the victim's level of fear, and that fear will stay with that person even after the act has stopped. The person will go away from the incident living in fear of the bully, and will try to avoid situations where the action may happen again. It is at this stage that the

bullied child becomes so powerless, that he/she is not likely to retaliate or tell someone about the bullying (Coloroso, 2002). When this sense of fear and desperation sets in, the bullied child may deal with the situation in many ways. He/she may just accept the situation, try to seek help from others, or do something more drastic, as has been reported in the media in past years (e.g. school shootings, suicide).

### **3.2 Statistics on bullying**

While researching this topic, I found many recent statistics on bullying within the school setting. I was surprised by some of the results and felt compelled to include them within the body of this paper:

- A study by Peterson and Rigby (1999) of more than 38,000 children found that approximately one child in six is bullied at least once a week.
- In a 2002 school-based sample of Canadian children aged 11 to 15 years, about one-third of the boys and one-quarter of the girls reported that they had been bullied in the last six weeks. (Lipman, 2003)
- Adair, Dixon, Moore & Sutherland (2000) carried out a survey of 2,066 New Zealand Secondary school students. When the researchers provided a list of behaviours that counted as bullying, 75% reported having been victims of bullying during the current school year and 44% said that they had bullied others at some time during their schooling.
- Garrett (2003) provides the following statistics: 10% of all high school dropouts do so because of repeated bullying; 20% of all high school students surveyed reported they avoid the restroom out of fear of being bullied.

- Garrett (2003) states that by age 23, children who were bullied in middle-school were more depressed and had lower self-esteem than their peers who had not been bullied; by age 24, about 60% of the boys identified as bullies in middle-school had at least one conviction of a crime and 35-40% had three or more convictions.

With statistics such as these, one can see that the issue of bullying needs to be addressed at many levels: at home, at school, at the school district level, and as well, at the provincial government level. With increased attention on bullying in schools, some authors have examined the issue and provided information concerning how bullying affects a student's development. This will be examined in the next section of this paper.

### **3.3 Bullying – Its Effects**

Our experiences in life mould us into the person that we become. This is often seen in the family context. For instance, there are many times that I have heard the following statements, "Oh you are just like your father!" or "You sound just like your mother!" These are common statements that those who are close to us often use, either to prove a point, or to note some common characteristic. Experiences that we have had (and continue to have) often affect us unwittingly.

This is especially true about negative experiences like bullying. Recently, there has been increased interest concerning how bullying affects people at different stages in their lives. While researching this topic, I came



across the October 2003 edition of *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. On its front cover, the main topic that was being discussed was bullying. There were four main articles presented in this edition, all dealing with different aspects of bullying. One article in particular entitled, "Consequences of Bullying in Schools" by Ken Rigby examined how bullying affects people throughout their lifetime. He divided the findings into four categories: (1) low psychological well-being, (2) poor social adjustment, (3) psychological distress, and (4) physical illness – health symptoms. Here are some of the findings regarding each area of bullying:

#### Low psychological well-being

- numerous studies have shown that being victimized at school has been related to self-esteem measures. These studies generally indicate that low self-esteem or low global self-worth is associated with repeat victimization. (Olweus, 1993)
- a study, related to self-esteem, was given to Australian students to see if they had been bullied at school, and if so, how they felt about it after it happened. Some 25,273 students reported that they had been bullied during the school year. Of these, approximately 40% reported that they had felt worse about themselves afterwards; 53% said that they had not felt any different; and surprisingly, 7% reported that they had felt better! (Rigby, 1997)

#### Poor Social Adjustment

- studies have shown that children who are repeatedly victimized at school have an aversion to the school environment. (Kochenderfer, 1996)
- studies conducted in Australia have observed that victimized students are likely to report more absenteeism from

school than other children. (Rigby & Slee, 1993)

- data from a U.S. survey suggested that the interpersonal difficulties of men subjected to victimization at school may take the form of disabling shyness and fear of intimacy that make relationships with the opposite sex difficult or impossible. (Gilmartin, 1987)

### Psychological Distress

- numerous correlation studies have reported that symptoms of chronic anxiety and fear are often associated with experiencing peer-victimisation. An early Swedish study of so-called "whipping boys" reported that such children were significantly more anxious and insecure than others. (Olweus, 1987)
- Depressive reactions on the part of victimized children have also been repeatedly reported. In an Australian study, primary school students identified by peers as frequent victims were more likely than others to manifest symptoms of clinical depression. (Slee, 1995)
- Frequently victimized students may have mixed emotions and show various symptoms of distress. For example, in a nation-wide survey of English primary and secondary school students (n=6282), self-declared victims were frequently found to experience emotions of anger, vengefulness, and self-pity, with the latter more common among girls. (Borg, 1988)

### Physical Ills – Health Symptoms

- A study of peer victimization among primary school children in England (n=2692) included several questions designed to discover whether the children had frequently (that is, more than once weekly) experienced headaches and "tummy aches." Based on interviews with children, the authors reported that peer-victimized children (that is, those who reported having been bullied at school) were more than twice as likely to say they had such ailments, compared with

non-victimized children. (Williams, Logan and Robinson, 1996)

It is easy to derive from the previous findings that there are some direct links between the effects of bullying on an individual's overall development. A student might receive a broken arm as a result of bullying, but long after that arm has healed, the effects of bullying remain. Bullying may affect the social, psychological and physical development of the victim.

### **3.4 Bullying Places**

Through the literature review, I as a teacher, was made aware of many interesting aspects concerning bullying. One thing in particular concerns the places where students tend to be bullied. I read this with interest as I have had personal experience with this issue during the past school year while producing the video, the focus of this project.

Besides the video project, two students and I decided to enter a school district contest on the topic of bullying. It called for video submissions on bullying within a school and strategies that students could use to alleviate it. The video could be no longer than five minutes.

After meeting with the students we decided to do a thirty-second video (like a commercial), on places where bullying occurs within the school and strategies that students might employ to avoid these places. This project was student-lead as I had no idea where bullying takes place in our school. I gave them the camera and followed with interest.

The first place they went was to the washroom. This was a logical place for bullying to occur, as there is no teacher supervision in this area. The second place they selected surprised me greatly – the cafeteria. Now this is a place where teachers are constantly supervising and dealing with altercations. In praise of my teaching colleagues, I have always found them to be vigilant during their lunch duties. I asked the students why they selected the cafeteria as a site for bullying. They declared that a lot of bullying does go on there. I asked for examples and they gave the following: butting in lunch line, threatening other students, or making some students feel as though they are not welcome at certain tables. Upon reflection, I saw what the students were talking about and realized that these examples of bullying are not as visible as one student shoving another, or a student yelling at a fellow student, or as extreme as a fight between two students. There are types of bullying that teachers can easily observe and other types that are not as visible. Having this discussion with the students provided motivation for producing a school video on bullying - it would not only be a great resource for students, but also for teachers, illustrating the different types of bullying - especially those that are not truly visible.

A study by Astor, Meyer and Pitner (2001) looked at many questions relating to bullying. One of the questions that they included in their survey looked at places where students are bullied. Their results reflected my own findings derived from discussions that I had with my students. The primary

place where bullying is common is "undefined public spaces" (locations that are dangerous or violence prone because no one takes responsibility for monitoring and/or maintaining them) (Astor et al., 2001).

Teachers are called upon to take ownership of these places so that they become a part of the school's responsibility. If teachers were seen "checking" these places, bullies most likely would be less inclined to conduct their activities there. Once again, I believe this to be an area where education is important for teachers. It was only through talking to the students that I found out where these places were located in the school.

## **4.0 The Video**

### **4.1 Objectives for the Video Production**

After our initial meetings with Mr. Donovan, I made it a point to sit down and decide what the objectives of this video production should be. As a teacher, I have often watched "educational videos" and had difficulty figuring out the point of the video. I wanted to make sure that in this video production there were clear-cut goals and objectives. I wanted to be certain that once someone watched this video they would clearly know its intention.

I knew that our topic in itself was very broad. I narrowed it down to the four types of bullying and different strategies that could be used. Quite often when interacting with students who are victims of bullying, they talk about

bullying in general, and are not able to clearly identify the type of bullying that is happening. I decided that a main objective of this video would be to show the four types of bullying so that the students could relate their own experiences to those being illustrated in the video. The vignettes, acted by the students, might reflect what some students might be experiencing at that point in their life. After watching the video they might be able to say, "Yeah, I am experiencing relational bullying right now in my life."

The second objective deals with the strategies that students might use to deal with bullying. Quite often I have seen videos on this topic, which show the dramatic consequences of someone being bullied at school. Some endings include a student committing suicide, bringing a weapon to school to "deal" with the bully, or just staying away from school altogether. I wanted our video not to focus so much on such negative consequences of bullying, but rather to show students some ways in which they might deal with bullies. I felt it important to show students that bullies do not have all the control!

The last objective that I wished to achieve in this video had to do with promoting the video and its information to other students in addition to our own at Brother Rice. Where bullying is an issue with most schools across Canada, I wanted to produce a video that would have relevance in any school setting. The challenge was how to distribute the video to those that may find it interesting to use as an educational tool. This is where the NLTA and the Red Cross have been of assistance. As part of the NLTA Safe and Caring

Schools initiative, they have placed a description of our video on their Teachers' Website. It is here that other teachers across Newfoundland and Labrador can access the video.

The Red Cross has also been of assistance in attaining this outcome. In the fall of 2004, I had the opportunity to avail of an in-service program dealing with the issue of bullying called "Beyond the Hurt." This program is described in the following way,

Beyond The Hurt looks at all aspects of harassment and bullying. Developed and delivered in concert with youth, this program examines interpersonal power issues, the rights and responsibilities of individuals, and intervention and prevention issues, including the law and policies. (Platt & Fairholm, 2002, p. 8)

At this in-service I made some close contacts with the facilitators. Once we finished the training, there were a couple of more meetings in order to determine what we were doing at our school in order to educate students on the issue of bullying. We told them about our video and they were keen to receive a copy in order to use it at further in-services across Canada. During the second week of June, one of the facilitators went to British Columbia to train over one hundred trainees in the Beyond The Hurt program. At this in-service our video was showcased. Upon her return, I made contact to receive feedback. She said that she had received a lot of positive comments and that the material is quite current, and relevant to bullying issues that schools are

experiencing in British Columbia. Through the NLTA and our contact with the Red Cross, we believe that our last desired outcome is, to a good measure, being achieved.

#### **4.2 Production of the Video**

The production aspect of the video was the most time consuming part of the project. I did all the videotaping and the majority of the video-editing. The students and I videotaped the different vignettes during class-time as well as after school. Given that most of the vignettes were short, the students usually only missed part of a specific class. It is important to note that the first thing that I did was to seek teacher approval so that these students would only miss small segments of class-time. I asked permission from the administration as well as the specific classroom teachers. While these students did miss some class-time, they always completed missed work at home. This was the case in every instance.

The majority of the video-editing was done outside school hours, either early in the morning, late in the afternoon or in the evening. I feel it important to address these points in order to answer questions concerning how I was given "time-off" to complete this project, or why students were missing class.

The tools used for producing the video included a single camera with a built-in microphone, a tripod, and a computer to complete the editing. With our NLTA funding, we purchased the software package, Pinnacle 8.0. This



software was easy to understand and use. The camera, as previously mentioned, was my own personal JVC Mini-Digital camcorder.

All four vignettes were developed at our school. For the first vignette on reactive bullying, the setting was the boys' bathroom and the classroom. I decided on the boys' bathroom to introduce the "reactive bully" as many students have communicated that bathrooms are one of the main areas where students are bullied. In dealing with the bullying situation, I decided to move to the home classroom, as this is a neutral place for both students. In this setting each could explain what happened in the bathroom. The most difficult aspect of filming this scene was the constant traffic into the bathroom. Eventually we had to post a student in the hallway to "encourage" students to use another bathroom. This vignette required the most number of takes to complete. With the constant interruptions, there were many times when the students were distracted while acting out this scenario. However, looking back on it now, it seems that they really enjoyed filming this scene.

For the second scenario on relational bullying, Ms. Joan Sharpe decided that filming should be completed in two different areas, with each person telling their side of the story simultaneously. An interesting point to be made here concerns the selection of the students that we used for this scene. Throughout my research, each time the topic of relational bullying came up, it was most often associated with females. In contrast, physical bullying was usually associated with males. Research shows that boys more often are

prone to physical bullying. For this reason, we decided to select two girls for the relational bullying scene and two boys for the physical bullying vignette. Gender differences in bullying will be addressed later in this paper.

This second vignette opens with the "relational bully" walking down a long corridor telling "her side" of the story, while the "victim" is seen in a quiet room, covered in her favourite blanket telling her side of the event. Out of the four different vignettes, this one was the most difficult to shoot and edit. For the student that was walking down the hall, the goal was to have her face in the camera at all times, which was quite difficult to achieve while walking backwards. The editing of this scene was also challenging because I had to edit the tape in such a way as to move from "the bully" back to the "victim" continuously to give the effect that the two conversations were going on at the same time.

The third vignette on verbal bullying brought production concerns of its own. Firstly, this one was the longest scenario to tape. It required almost two hours of footage, but after editing it down, only four minutes were used. Also it would have been ideal to have a second camera to shoot the scene at different angles. For instance, this scene required many reaction shots from each student, especially when they were making comments about each other. What I had to do was stop and start the camera several times, from different angles, in order to get the many action shots required. This was a time

consuming and cumbersome process, especially due to the small room that we were using for the peer mediation exercise.

The last vignette looked at the issue of physical bullying. As was mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, boys often tend to engage in physical bullying, so we selected two boys to play the roles in this part of the video. This vignette went through many different stages of production. Originally, this scene was to start off with a re-enactment of a fight on the outside of the school. This would be shot by using the school video equipment. We eventually had to cut this scene, as the camera on the outside of the school was capturing such a grainy picture that nobody could tell what was going on.

The scene was changed so that the vignette starts with the students coming into the school, quite dishevelled after engaging in a fight. The rest of the segment takes place in the principal's office, with each student engaging with the principal concerning the altercation that has taken place. It was here that I encountered my first glitch in producing the video. There is a part of the scene where the principal is telephoning the parents of the bully. Somehow, this brief five-second section of video did not make it to tape. This was noticed a month after shooting the scene. We had two choices, either shoot the whole scene again, or just shoot the scene of the principal talking on the telephone. We decided to attempt to just shoot the scene with the principal on the telephone. What we had to do was to make sure that what the principal was wearing in the original footage, would be the same as that which

she was wearing in the new footage. After much careful videotaping and editing, the short five-second segment of film made its way into the final production.

The last part of the video examined different strategies that the victim, the bully and school administrators might use to deal with bullying in the school setting. In this part, students and staff at our school offer strategies to deal with problems associated with bullying. On a personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed doing this section of the video, as it seemed an appropriate way to end the production. It was a difficult section to edit, but the information presented is quite appropriate for one who is being bullied, one who is carrying out the bullying, and one who is an administrator in a school where bullying is prevalent.

As a final production note, I feel it important to advise anyone who is about to undertake a video production, that after all the taping is completed, the real work begins. Where this was my personal project, only one person could effectively do editing. There has to be someone who says, "This is it, the final production!" As this was my role, there were many hours engaged in editing the final production. I shot over four hours of video footage, and the final video was twenty minutes in length. It is hard to estimate the number of hours that went into the final editing, but videotaping was finished toward the end of April, and the video was completed the first week of June. During this time, every spare moment went into the editing. It was a lot of work, but

having seen the final production and the joy on the faces of students who acted in it, it was worth every moment.

## **5.0 Four Different Types of Bullying as Shown in the Video**

Bullying can come in many different forms. This next section of this project paper will examine the four main types of bullying that occur within the school setting. These are the four types of bullying that are portrayed in the video.

### **5.1 How Does a Bully, Bully?**

In our video, we look at the four types of bullying as described by the Red Cross in the Beyond The Hurt training manual. These include: verbal, physical, reactive, and relational. (Platt & Fairholm, 2002) This part of the paper will examine these types of bullying and how they are play out in schools.

#### **5.1.1 Verbal bullying**

I always made good grades and that caused a problem for me. Other students would call me names and make fun of me. They called me "teacher's pet" so I stopped raising my hand when the teacher asked a question. (Fried & Fried, 2003, p. 54)

Verbal bullying is quite often the precursor to other forms of bullying. It is a subtle form of bullying that often goes undetected by adults because it can be words or phrases said in a whisper to another student without anyone else hearing. According to Fried et al. (2003), verbal bullying can be

... name calling, put-downs, threatening, cursing, swearing, yelling, making up stories, gossiping, spreading rumours, making fun of someone's physical characteristics, imitating a lisp or stutter, screaming, being sarcastic, ridiculing, making a derogatory song, daring someone, or whispering about someone as they approach. (p. 53)

Another author defines verbal bullying this way:

Verbal bullying includes abusive phone calls, extorting money or material possessions, general intimidation or threats of violence, name calling, racist comments of teasing, sexually suggestive or abusive language, spiteful teasing or making cruel remarks, and spreading false or malicious rumours. (Sullivan et al., 2004, p. 5)

In these definitions, verbal comments can range from simple put-downs to threats of violence or sexually abusive comments. Such words and phrases can be very cutting, especially to someone who has low self-esteem. Quite often, adults who hear verbal assaults on other students believe that this is how young people communicate and therefore fail to address the problem. They fail to realize that words **can** and **do** hurt! As a junior high school teacher, I hear verbal bullying daily within the halls, the classroom, and the cafeteria. Boys often call each other "fag" or "queer", or make comments concerning how a person is dressed. With girls, they often call each other

demeaning names such as "bitch", and make comments on how poorly someone is dressed. If adults fail to address verbal bullying, it gives the bully the power to continue to act that way. The bullied child becomes reduced by the words that the bully uses, and he/she may start to lose a sense of worth. When this loss of worth sets in, the bully may continue his/her campaign by committing other forms of bullying (e.g. physical bullying).

### **5.1.2 Physical bullying**

I don't know what kind of bullying you call this, but there was this kid, and these other guys would pour Coke over his clothes all the time. It became a game to see who could be the first one to pour Coke on his head. Everyone stayed away from him because they did not want to get "Coked." It was really sad. He committed suicide. (Fried et al. 2003, p. 51)

Physical bullying is the most visible form of bullying, but it accounts for less than one-third of the bullying incidents reported by children (Coloroso, 2002). This form of bullying is best identified as a person hurting another through any physical means. It can take many forms such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking or biting another person. Through interviews, Fried et al. (2003) discovered that students define physical bullying as:

...punching, shoving, choking, tripping, poking, stabbing, spitting, beating up someone, pushing someone into a locker, taking someone's lunch money or someone's lunch, giving someone a black eye, tearing someone's clothes, head butting, shooting, swirls, Indian rubs, noogies, nipple twisting, jabbing, throwing someone in a trash can, stepping

on someone's toes, urinating on someone, and imitating wrestling holds. (p. 49)

When looking at physical bullying, girls are more likely to slap, pull hair, scratch, pinch, dig their finger nails into someone, or bite while boys are more prone to punch, choke, kick or throw objects and use weapons. (Fried et al., 2003) Physical bullying can be the most dangerous and harmful in a physical sense, especially if the bully is bigger than the one being bullied. Physical bullying can often result in external signs of assault through cuts, bruises, or broken bones. As well, many internal scars remain.

### **5.1.3 Reactive bullying**

Reactive bullies straddle a fence of being a bully and a victim (Bully Beware, 2003). They are often the most difficult to identify because at first glance they seem to be targets for other bullies. However, reactive bullies often taunt bullies, and bully other people themselves. Most of the incidents are physical in nature. These bullies are impulsive and react quickly to intentional and unintentional physical encounters. In some cases, reactive bullies begin as victims and become bullies as they try to retaliate (Bully Beware, 2003). Stephenson and Smith (1989) defined these types of bullies as *anxious bullies*. This type of bully is not as common as the physical bully. Often the reactive bully is dealing with low self-esteem, has few likable qualities, and comes from unhappy home situations. A reactive (or anxious)



bully will approach the person who has been bullying him and say something like, "You better not bug me today, otherwise I'll tell the teacher, and boy, will you be in trouble!" Statements such as this are like waving a red flag in front of a raging bull, and may provoke further bullying. Reactive bullies then fight back and claim self-defence.

#### **5.1.4 Relational bullying**

This girl in my class passed out invitations at school to come to her roller-skating party. There was just one other girl besides me who didn't get an invitation. At recess and lunch everybody talked about going roller-skating, and I just wanted to die but I had to pretend like it wasn't bothering me. (Fried et al., 2003, p. 60)

The last form of bullying hardest to detect is relational bullying. It is quite often the most cutting, prompting the victim to lose their sense of worth. It is done through the intentional shunning of a person from a group. Sullivan et al. (2004) sees relational bullying as, "purposely and often systematically ignoring, excluding, and isolating someone." (p. 5) It could also include "sending poisonous notes and making other students dislike someone." (p. 5) Fried et al. (2003) describes this type of bullying as psychological bullying and describes it as, "exclusion, isolating, rejection, turning your back on someone when they try to talk to you, shunning, ostracizing, and ignoring. It may be subtle or overt." (p. 58). Such actions are quite effective in carrying out the bully's intentions. They can alienate a person from a group or be used to

break-up friendships. There is no physical contact with the person, but the bully may use stares, sighs, frowns, snickers and hostile body language to heighten the exclusion. (Coloroso, 2002). Even though there are no visible physical effects, this form of bullying can hurt even more than pain inflicted through physical bullying.

Everyone needs to feel as though they belong somewhere, and intentional exclusion can cause tremendous hurt. It is interesting to note that in the research, when it comes to defining relational bullying, this type of bullying is often attributed to females. This point has lead me to the question, "Are there gender differences in bullying?" I address this question in the next section of the paper.

## **6.0 Gender Difference in Bullying**

Throughout the research, many interesting facts have emerged on the topic of bullying. It was important to incorporate into this review what the literature has to say about gender differences in bullying. It is also interesting to note the reasons behind the gender differences.

There are many ways that each gender bullies. Quite often, what one thinks is just "kids being kids" is far from the truth! Bullying needs to be understood so that educators can provide a safe environment and deal with bullying effectively.

## **6.1 The Male Bully**

Boys tend to use more verbal and physical bullying when participating in bullying activity. I see this at my school daily. Aligning with Rigby's observations (2001), I see boys calling each other names that are quite often related to their person. Comments are made on the victim's sexuality and/or physical structure. When comments are made about a person's physical structure, the victim is often referred to as "weak" or a "wussie." What is implied is that they are considered to fall short of how society defines a male.

The male bully does not necessarily always pick on other males. There are many times when males bully females verbally as well as physically. Males tend to zone in on something that is very important to young females - their reputation. From an early age, most girls are taught to be "good girls" and are told that only "good girls" will have lots of friends and be popular (Simmons, 2002). When males bully females verbally, they imply that certain girls are not "good girls," often stating that the girl is "easy" or that she is a "bitch." Such comments cast doubt, making the victim feel hurt and powerless.

As for the physical bullying, there are times when boys will suggestively touch a female while walking down the hall or while they are standing around their lockers. While this is a form of physical bullying, it can also be classified as sexual harassment. At our school, I find that episodes like this seem to be increasing. Having had success with our first video on

bullying, I have been approached to create another video on sexual harassment during the upcoming school year. Our guidance counsellor would like to have such a resource so that she could show it to the school to alert others that such actions are illegal and can cause much pain for girls.

The physical bully usually exerts his aggression on other males. This is the most visible form of male bullying. As was mentioned previously, physical bullying involves any unwanted form of physical aggression towards another. As suggested earlier, physical bullying may partially be reinforced by a society that looks up to the strong aggressive male. With this framework, weakness is to be exploited and strength is to be rewarded.

## **6.2 The Female Bully**

It is interesting to note that in the literature concerning bullying there seemed to be more written as of late on female bullies. It was only a couple of months ago that I was having a conversation with a teacher who is about to retire from the teaching profession and got on the topic of bullying. During the conversation, she made the observation that bullying among the girls has increased over the years. She noted that boys primarily display verbal and physical aggression towards each other, but girls are now inventing crueller ways of bullying other girls.

While reading the book *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* (2002) by Rachel Simmons, I started to wonder if my

seasoned colleague was correct in her observations. Through reading different sections of this book I became aware of the different ways in which girls bully each other. Like boys, girls do use verbal bullying to exert power, but they also use relational bullying which seems to inflict more pain on their victim.

According to Simmons, girls' non-physical aggression has been viewed throughout history as "catty", "crafty", "evil", and "cunning"(p.16). Because it is not "lady-like" to fight in a physical sense, relational bullying is considered by some to be a natural phase in female social development (Simmons, 2002). Girls seem to be in a conflict, trying to portray a lady-like image while at the same time trying to find ways to dealing with anger or dislike toward someone else. According to Simmons, girls often combine the two. To avoid social disapproval, girls often go "beneath the radar" in order to bully someone without others knowing. Over time, girls have found that the most effective ways to bully are through verbal and relational bullying. There is no overt action that one can readily pick up on as with physical bullying, but verbal and relational bullying can be just as hurtful as a physical attack.

Verbal bullying is observed more among girls. Terms such as "bitch", "slut", and "fat" are used by girl bullies to address or describe their victims. These terms go against the traditional "sugar and spice" image that girls are seen as having. Another form of common female verbal bullying is accomplished through note passing. These notes are descriptive and use

similar language as is used in direct verbal bullying. There are times that the person being bullied does not see the note, but they hear about it from other students. Other forms of verbal bullying include gossip, rumours, and abusive phone calls. These forms of verbal abuse are not as blatant or observable as male forms of bullying.

The most powerful form of bullying that girls use is relational bullying. As mentioned earlier, this form of bullying is the hardest to detect. Being a part of a group, for most people, is important, whether it is with family or with friends. Nobody, male or female, likes to feel shunned. Being shunned brings feelings of alienation, making a person feel like a "loser."

On a personal note I see a lot of relational bullying at the junior high level. It is most prevalent when students form groups within the classroom or in the school lunchroom. There are always one or two left with whom nobody wants to partner or sit next to in the cafeteria. This form of relational bullying may not seem to be as damaging as a physical punch, but its effects often go further. In the September/October 2003 edition of "The Bulletin" (NLTA publication), Dr. Wayne Nesbit made an observation regarding the difference between male and female bullies. He states:

Many females inflict great stress and pain into the lives of their peers even though the nature of the damage is often unique and gender specific. Frequently, in a more covert and insidious manner, female bullies employ an "exclusion scenario" characterized by rejection and psychological injury. The effects of emotional bullying are every bit as devastating as that

of a physical attack – just as destructive, leaving indelible scars. (Nesbit, 2003, p. 24)

So why is the female bully harder to detect? It is stated simply by one of the sixth graders interviewed in Simmons (2002): "The teachers think that girls behave better. Walk down the hallway and slam into a girl – the teacher thinks you're distracted! Knock a girl's book off a desk – the teacher thinks it fell!" (p. 23). I can only speak for myself, but I feel that there is a certain amount of naivety when it comes to dealing with the female bully. I guess I have fallen into the socialization trap, as described by Rigby (2001), in that I expect more "proper" behaviour from girls than I do boys. Researching this paper has prompted certain enlightenment when viewing the actions of the female bully.

### **7.0 Curriculum use for the video**

Having completed the research component of this project, I am brought back to the point of why this video was created – to inform students and educators concerning the different types of bullying that exist within the school setting and to consider strategies that students might use to deal with the bully. The strategies are straightforward, therefore I compiled them as an appendix so that teachers could photocopy and use them as a resource.

As for teachers using this video, there were several times when I thought about where such a video could be used within the curriculum. Having now taught in the junior high setting for four years, I will use the junior high curriculum to provide an example of where this video might be used. One of the subject areas in which I have taught over the past few years is Health in both Grades 7 and 8. In both grade levels, there are sections of the curriculum that focus on the development of self, as well as the development of interpersonal communication. As the issue of bullying is relevant to both these curriculum strands, I believe that the video would serve as a worthwhile supplement when developing lesson plans. In order to illustrate how the video could be linked within the Health curriculum, I will make reference to the Health curriculum outcomes provided by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education.

The Grade 7 and 8 Health program is divided into different areas. The first section, at each grade level, deals with "Emotional and Social Well-Being." The first outcome in the Grade 7 program is stated as follows: "To understand the meaning of self-concept and the factors that influence its formation.", and the first outcome in the Grade 8 program reads: "To appreciate how experiences affect self-concept." (Objectives and Outcomes of the Newfoundland and Labrador Intermediate Health Program, 1988.) In the literature review it was stated that one of the affects on a person being bullied is the development of low self-esteem. When the teacher approaches



the topic of self-esteem, and how it develops, he/she could present bullying as one contributor to negative self-evaluation. The associated strategies might prove helpful particularly if one or more of the students are being bullied. Teaching this outcome can also help to educate the bully concerning the effects that he/she is having on the victim.

The video could be used to help achieve this outcome as students view the effects of bullying on the student depicted in the video. For example, in the vignette dealing with relational bullying, we see the student "Sammi" talking about how bad she feels. She is hurt, upset and has difficulty understanding how she lost her best friend over this situation in which she finds herself. She starts to develop a low sense of worth as people begin to reject her. The teacher might use this scene to help address the first outcome of the Health program.

The next set of outcomes that this video addresses focuses on the way a person handles his/her emotions and feelings. The Grade 7 outcome states: "To be aware of appropriate ways of expressing feelings"; and the Grade 8 outcome states: "To differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate ways of handling moods and feelings." (Objectives and Outcomes of the Newfoundland and Labrador Intermediate Health Program, 1988.)

The video could to some degree address these outcomes by speaking directly to the bully. As has been described in the research, one of the

reasons that a person bullies is that he/she is trying to express emotions. The bully, through watching the video, would be exposed to strategies that he/she might use to help stop bullying and substitute appropriate means of expressing emotions. For example, in the second to last scene in the video, there is a section that deals with "Advice to Bullies." In this segment the students advise the bully to "cool down", "be a real leader", and "get some advice". They ask, "Is it really worth the trouble?" Through using this video, a bully might learn to express emotions in a more constructive way.

The last curriculum link that will be examined is from the section dealing with "Relationships" in the Grade 7 Health course. The outcome states: "To recognize the influence of peer groups." Peer groups can play both a positive and negative role within the life of an adolescent. A student might be involved in a peer group where he/she spend free time at a local Boys/Girls Club engaging in activities that promote good citizenship. On the contrary, a student might be involved in a peer group where free time is spent harassing others, stealing, or vandalizing property. Either way, peer groups have power to influence adolescents. One point that has been made in the research is that a bully can be a part of a larger bullying group. Physical bullies can have peers that are physical bullies as well, and relational bullies are often part of a group that intentionally exclude and victimize others. The challenge for these students is to break away from these groups so as not to inflict pain on others.

In the video, the audience is introduced to "Brad", the physical bully. Through watching this vignette, it is easy to see that "Brad" is involved with other students who bully. "Brad" is seen entering school with a "buddy" after getting into an altercation. There is school surveillance tape showing "Brad" and his buddies getting into a fight in a school hall. The peer group that "Brad" has aligned himself with is quite aggressive. On watching this video students are able to see that such groups are very influential on how group members act. The challenge to the teacher of the class watching this video is to demonstrate how being involved with a negative peer group can define behaviour.

Also in the vignette on relational bullying, we see "Sammi" overcoming her pain by joining another group, one which is not as exclusive as the one she belonged to before the incident. In the part of the video dealing with strategies, one of the teachers states, "Join a group!" In joining a group, a student is less likely to be isolated and fall victim to bullying. Being in a safe and positive peer group can elevate a person's self esteem and worth. Through using the video, the teacher would be able to draw out these messages, and in the process, achieve some of the outcomes defined by the Department of Education curriculum.

## 8.0 Personal Reflections

After the completion of a major project such as this, time needs to be taken for personal reflection. Such reflection will assist in future productions, and may be a help to others that pursue video production within the school setting. Through reflection one can see what worked, and what could have been improved.

First, I believe that what made this project work so well was the support that was given by the school administrators, staff members, and the students. Also, it is important to acknowledge the financial support that was provided by the NLTA. This project was the result of many hours of work both within the regular school day, as well as outside school hours. My principal was willing to offer support in allowing me to film during the regular school day. As long as the students were willing and able to catch up on missed work, she encouraged our taping during school hours.

The other teachers that assisted in making this video are to be commended. Not only did some give up segments of preparation times, but they were willing to offer their personal time as well, at a moments notice. Whether it was to supervise students while taping a scene, or to offer their artistic background on a particular scene, the support of fellow staff members made this project a whole lot easier.

Another thing that made this project successful was the students' commitment. From its beginnings, the students were committed to the

project. They arrived on time, tried their best, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It was their enthusiasm and dedication that brought life to the video.

On the production side of things, if one were to begin such a project, I would strongly recommend a software package for video-editing that was user-friendly. Once the last scene was shot, the arduous task of editing began. The Pinnacle 8.0 package that we purchased was easy to understand and follow. Within a couple of hours of using the software package, I was familiar with its many different features. The package came with a tutorial guide that explained each aspect of video production, as well as how each feature of the software worked. I would recommend that before one purchases a video-editing package that they search for one that is user-friendly, because this is where the majority of production time will be spent.

Another thing that I would recommend to anyone wishing to start such a project would be to make sure that the video camera which is selected has all the necessary features that will be needed to make your video more complete. For example, our video, at times, does not sound the clearest. This is because we used the built-in microphone on the camcorder as the only sound recorder. Some of our audio could have been better quality had we utilized an external microphone for some of the scenes. Since my personal camera did not have that option, the audio is not as clear as it could have been. This year our school has purchased a new camera due to the

overwhelming interest we have had in starting a video production club at our school. The first thing that I made sure of when we purchased the new camera was that it had an external microphone port.

In keeping with the audio production theme, one recommendation that I would offer to others is to make sure that the acoustics are clear, regardless of what you are video-taping. We had to change rooms and alter scenes because of poor acoustics. Some rooms had a strong echo that was magnified on the videotape. One technique that Mr. Tom Donovan offered to our group to help in selecting an ideal place to tape was to clap in the area. If there was any echo at all, it would not be considered a good place to shoot a scene. Acoustics are an important part of producing a good video.

Another area that I feel we could improve on in future videos would be with regard to the various camera angles that one could shoot in order to get authentic reaction shots. All of the reaction shots in this video were taped "after the fact." The need for a variety of angles is illustrated in the vignette dealing with verbal bullying where the girls are in the library arguing. The scene continues with the teacher arriving and talking to the girls, asking them what is going on. I felt it important to record the girls' reactions as the teacher was talking to them. In order to do this effectively, one would need three cameras - one on the teacher and an individual camera on each of the two female students to capture their "primary" reactions to what the teacher is saying to them.

For this segment, it was necessary to shoot the same scene three times – the first time I videoed the teacher talking to the girls, and during the other two times I focused on the two girls in order to get their reactions. These shots were then edited into one scene to give the effect of having three cameras. Looking at it now, having three camera angles taping at the same time would better reflect the original scene.

The last thing that I would like to mention concerning this project would be the support that I received from my family. As mentioned earlier, the vast percentage of time is spent editing, in order to bring about a completed project. There were many hours spent editing this tape into a final twenty-minute video. Had it not been for the support of my wife, Anna, I would not have had the time to put into it. At the time of this project, we had two children, Anna-Catherine (17 months) and Sophia (2 months). In order to make such a project successful, support and understanding must come from the home!

## **9.0 Conclusion**

I have learned much from completing this project on bullying. There were skills that I acquired along the way (e.g. video-editing), but the greatest benefit was the knowledge gained through my interactions with the students. I learned to appreciate bullying through their experiences. The bullying issue still exists in schools today, but it seems to be expressing itself differently.

For example, when I was a student, the internet was not in schools, but today, any student can surf the web. Through my conversations with students, I have learned that bullying has made its way into this medium. As a form of verbal and relational bullying, students are developing web pages which focus on others whom they wish to anonymously victimize. These Uniform Resource Locators (or URLs) are then sent to other students using e-mail so that they can make a posting on the website. Some students are using text messaging on cell phones to send anonymous notes to the victims. What seems to be developing is that school bullying is moving out of the school and into people's homes. No longer is it only notes written in class or something written on a wall; it is a website where anyone can view what is being said about the victimized student.

Another thing that I have learned from this research is the reason why students do not let adults know when they are bullied. Students have stated on questionnaires that if they tell on the bully they fear that more harm may come to them in the future. The last thing they want is to give the bully another reason to pick on them. Some students believe that if they just "take it" the bully may eventually get tired with them and move on to someone else.

The thing that disturbed me the most was the second reason that students gave for not telling a teacher that they were bullied. They believe that teachers cannot or will not do anything to make the bullying stop. I believe that such perceptions are a wake-up call for teachers and school



administrators. Garrett (2003) states that, "students in schools where bullying problems are ignored and aggressive behaviour is not addressed are likely to become more aggressive and less tolerant as well. Bullying affects the school climate and the learning environment of every classroom" (p. 9).

Bullying affects adolescents both internally and externally. The emotional scars quite often stay with an individual for a lifetime. On a personal level, there were times when I was bullied during adolescence. Eventually, after a couple of years, it stopped. High school graduation came and everyone went their separate ways. Recently, I bumped into the individual who had bullied me in school. He was friendly and talkative, wanting to know what has gone on in my life since graduation. It is interesting that throughout the whole conversation, I could not stop thinking about all the pain he had caused me during those years. What I really wanted to do was to inflict on him some of the pain and anguish that he caused me all those years ago. But I was cordial to him, shook his hand and left. It is amazing that an incident so many years ago can still bring back feelings that I thought were no longer there!

Adults sometimes fail to realize how deeply bullying can affect their son, daughter, or student. A couple of months ago, the Kids' Help Phone ran a campaign in which they tried to illustrate that many adults would not be able to withstand what a bullied child goes through on a daily basis. The advertisement depicted an overweight man at work who was constantly being

bullied (verbally, physically and relationally) by his fellow co-workers. He looked very desperate with nowhere to turn for help. Some of our young people go through this everyday!

In conclusion, the key thing that is needed to combat bullying within a school setting is prevention (Nesbit, 2003, p. 24). Strategies for students are important but the school needs to provide an atmosphere where bullying is not permitted or tolerated. This can be done through the development of school-wide policies defining bullying, so that all students know what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable. Teachers, administrators, guidance counsellors, and other support staff need to be vigilant in rooting out the bully and his/her activity, so that the school will be considered a safe place for all to attend.

## Appendix

### *Different Strategies to Use to Deal With Bullying.*

1. Stay away from the bully.
2. Ignore the bully.
3. Walk away.
4. Tell someone what is happening.
5. Get help from a friend or classmate.
6. See your doctor or school nurse.
7. Keep a journal.
8. Avoid places where bullies hang out.
9. Stay within sight of teachers.
10. Sit near the bus driver.
11. Walk to school with someone.
12. Take a different route to school.
13. Walk to school later or earlier.
14. Never bring expensive stuff or lots of money to school.
15. Be careful who knows your phone number and email address.
16. Hang with friends.
17. Join a group.
18. Believe in yourself.
19. Try to talk to the bully and express how you feel.

20. Try to make the bullying situation something funny instead of getting mad or upset.
21. Practice comeback lines.
22. Don't fight back or get mad....stay calm.
23. Look assertive.
24. Stand up straight, look the bully in the eye, and say in a firm and confident voice, "Leave me alone!"
25. Don't give up, your happiness is more important.

*\* These strategies were provided by*  
[http://www.no-bully.com/middle\\_school.html](http://www.no-bully.com/middle_school.html)

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