
NSW ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY 2018 CONFERENCE

Sydney, Australia
29th to 30th October 2018
Donna Cross

Why student bullying behaviour shouldn’t be treated as only a discipline problem
Mental Health and Risk Behaviours by Bullying Role

2 Kelly, Newton, Stapinski et al (2015). Prev Medicine, 73, 100-5; fortnight or more
Bullying interventions stop working (on average) as kids get older.

Year 9ish..

Modes of Bullying Shift with Development

(Yeager, Fong, Lee & Espelage, 2015).

Type of bullying (among those reporting any bullying)
The Pygmalian Effect: A Note on Language

“When we expect certain behaviours of others, we are likely to act in ways that make the expected behaviour more likely to occur.”

– Bob Rosenthal
Being “a Bully”; Being “a Victim”; Being Both

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>How Common?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Pure bully”</td>
<td>Bullies others, but not a target of bullying</td>
<td>3% (Aus)(^1) 13% (US)(^2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Bully/victim”</td>
<td>Bullies others but also recipient of aggression by (more powerful) others</td>
<td>5% (Aus) 6% (US)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Kelly, Newton, Stapinski et al (2015). *Prev Mecicine*, 73, 100-5; (every fortnight or more)
How Does Bullying Arise?
Self Control and Provocation in Aggression: the 4 Rs

Impulsive

Recreation

Rage

Controlled

Reward

Revenge

In Pursuit of Good Feelings vs. In Response to Bad Feelings

Motivational Valence

From Rick Howard (2011j; Runions, 2014; Runions, Bak & Shaw, 2016)
Bully/Victims and the 4Rs

- **Reward motives** may get attention b/c as common in the ‘pure bullies’ as the troubled bully/victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggression Motive</th>
<th>Bully/Victim &gt; Pure Bully?</th>
<th>Bully/Victim &gt; Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rage</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on 2015 ‘baseline’ Beyond Bullying surveys to schools*
Bandura’s Model of Moral Disengagement

“Bullying” is widely understood now to be a “bad behaviour”.

Bullies do not have poorer overall moral standards – they understand ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ with regard to bullying.

So how do they manage to ‘do wrong’ anyway?

1 Gini, Pozzoli & Hauser, 2011
Bandura’s Model of Moral Disengagement

• All of us develop an identity including a sense of morals within our cultural context
• But we can selectively switch off this moral compass to avoid shame & guilt
• Bandura identified a set of mechanisms that humans use to enable moral disengagement
Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement

Reconstruct the Behaviour
• Provide a Moral Justification
• Give a Euphemistic Label
• Make an Advantageous Comparison

Reduce Personal Agency
• Displace responsibility
• Diffuse responsibility

Reframe the Victim
• Dehumanise
• Blame

Reframe the Consequences
• Disregard
• Distort
Mechanisms of MD in Bullying

- Blame the Victim
  - A. Nobody is harmed by being bullied a bit sometimes

- Euphemistic Label
  - B. If people are weird, it is their own fault if they get bullied

- Diffuse responsibility
  - C. It’s okay to harm another person a couple of times a week if you do that to protect your friends

- Provide a Moral Justification
  - D. A student can’t help that he/she is bullying another student if all his/her friends are doing it

- Distort the Consequences
  - E. Teasing a person a couple times a week is no big deal because you don’t really hurt the person
Moral Disengagement Mechanisms by Bullying Involvement

2015 ‘baseline’ Beyond Bullying surveys to schools
Moral Disengagement: Bully only vs Bully Victims

Bully only report more MD than B-V on
- Euphemistic Language
- Diffusion of Responsibility
- Distortion of Consequences

Bully-Victims and Bully only both show equally elevated
- Moral Justification
- Victim Blame

- Downplaying the impact or their role
- Exoneration of Aggression
Motivations to bully

Understanding these motivations to bully help to plan how to work constructively with young people engaging in bullying

We wanted to see if Friendly Schools was effective in shifting these underlying motive forces
Friendly Schools reduced bullying

• Across Years 8 and 9, implementation of FS corresponded with reductions in bullying perpetration and victimization

• Schools also showed reductions in key aspects of moral disengagement and in aggression motivations - drivers of bullying behaviour
But how should schools respond to bullying after it has happened?

Is a person who bullies to be blamed and punished?

Sanctions (detention; suspension) are the most common response to bullies.

Or to be supported and taught?

“No-blame” approaches (e.g. Method of restorative justice, Method of shared concern) that work to educate the bully about the harms done.
Punishment: Critics say …

• Punishment may only suppress problem behaviour
• Punishment may not be aversive to students
• Sanctions may buy students’ respect amongst some peers
• Sanctions may increase resentment and resistance in student

"You’d think if they really wanted to punish me they’d send me to their room!"
Restorative approaches: Critics say....

- Students may tell teachers what they want to hear / pay lip service
- May be impossible to mesh with policies that ‘bad behaviour’ is not accepted
- Can be hard to defend to parents of targeted children
- May be ineffective in general with adolescents¹ who know already… .

¹ Garandseau et al (2014)
Beyond Bullying: Working with youth who bully

...start with the idea that bullying behaviour may be meeting some of the social goals and emotional needs of young people.

But they may know it is a problem, or it may cause problems in their lives (e.g., when they are in trouble because of it).
Helping kids to want to change...

MI has been shown to be successful to help young people change and resolve problems with alcohol and substance use, eating disorders, and gambling problems.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) works for situations where the person either wants to keep doing what they’re doing or just doesn’t see enough reason to do things differently.

http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2003160,00.html
Motivational interviewing and bullying

A brief MI intervention delivered to hospitalised teens from alcohol-fuelled violence led to significant lower likelihoods of peer aggression and victimization at 6 and 12 months post-intervention\(^1\).

*Bullying is the sort of problem where there is likely ambivalence toward change*

The Positive Spirit of Motivational Interviewing

MI only works if its delivered in the right spirit

P - Partnership
A - Acceptance
C - Compassion
E - Evocation
Partnership

... with the student, by trying to work with them, not work on them
Acceptance

... of the other’s perspective and maintaining **empathy** for their life
Compassion

… recognising how hard change can be and supporting self-efficacy
Evocation

… by *highlighting the gap* between current behaviours and important personal goals and values
Motivational Interviewing

Exploring
- Engage
  - Goal: Break the Walls

Guiding
- Focus
  - Goal: Get on the Same Page
- Evoke
  - Goal: Unearth Personal Reasons for Change

Choosing
- Plan
  - Goal: Develop an Plan Doing Things Differently

Student ready to talk to you?
Student ready to talk about the issue?
Student showing signs of readiness for change?
Addressing Barriers: MI as Rehab, not First Aid

MI was not intended to “replace” the school’s disciplinary response.

As with adult settings, punitive measures can take place, and MI be a part of a larger process of debriefing.

We did not provide a clear enough model of implementation that clarified that MI was not a ‘first aid’ solution to bullying.

*MI is a ‘rehab’ therapy, not a first-aid intervention.*
Addressing Barriers: MI as an Occ Health Issue

But most schools will not have the luxury of engaging in ‘rehab’ to address bully perpetration, given the need to use school psychs for ‘first aid’ …

*If you had broken playground equipment that kept causing kids to be harmed, would you not prioritise fixing the equipment?*
Motivational interviewing ... as a middle way

Allows schools to demonstrate that bullying will not be tolerated, while actively trying to support the student doing the bullying to improve their behaviour...
Conclusions - PMI

• What do you like about this approach?
• What are the limitations of this approach?
• What is interesting about this approach?
Thanks

Kevin Runions, Tommy Cordin, Therese Shaw, Mel Epstein, Rena Vithiatharan, Caitlin Gray and the Health Promotion and Education Research Team at Telethon Kids Institute, NHMRC & UWA