



Establishing Relationships to Reduce Bullying

by Joe and Judith Ann Pauley

Bullying is a major problem in most schools today, and students, parents, educators and the government are concerned. Many people and organizations, including the U.S. government, are determined to do something about it. The courts have held schools and school systems liable, and several departments of the U.S. government are cooperating in a concerted effort to stop bullying entirely.

Those departments have a website called www.bullyinginfo.com and have launched the Stop Bullying Now campaign. They held a national anti-bullying conference in September 2010. They also held a webinar in October 2010 to publicize the results of the research being done and to acquaint people with the various programs available. In addition, they have dedicated a considerable amount of money to help schools finance research-based anti-bullying programs that have proven effective.¹

Definition of bullying

According to the research, there are four types of bullying: verbal bullying, spreading rumors, physical bullying and cyber bullying. Texting bullying is becoming especially prevalent in many schools. While researchers have found that bullying happens at every grade level, most bullying occurs in upper elementary classes and in middle school. Researchers also found that bullying happens more frequently in private schools than in public schools.²

Additionally, researchers found that the most commonly imposed solutions to bullying—such as automatic suspension (a no-tolerance policy), conflict resolution, group treatment of bullies and simple short-term solutions (such as school assemblies)—doesn't much deter bullying.³ Several things, however, are effective:

- Focusing on the social environment of the school, such as establishing a friendly environment in which every student feels welcome and safe.
- Establishing positive relations with every student.
- Collecting local data on the prevalence of bullying.
- Increasing adult supervision in hot spots.
- Involving staff and parents in prevention.
- Training staff.

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- Involving students. Student leadership is particularly important.
- Enforcing schoolwide policies.
- Having intensive multi-component programs and implementing them faithfully.
- Establishing the classroom.⁴

Everyone tells teachers and principals they must establish positive relationships with students and find ways to make their classes more welcoming places if they want all students to improve their academic achievement, reduce the dropout rate, close the achievement gap and reduce bullying.⁵ But, no one tells them how.

All educators would like to have better relationships with their students—many, in fact, do establish positive relationships with some students. Most educators, however, do not know how to establish relationships with all of their students, especially with those students who are not motivated the same way they are.

This article explains how teachers and administrators can reduce bullying by establishing positive relationships with every student.

Six personality types

Taibi Kahler, M.D., is an internationally acclaimed psychologist who has shown that the key to forming positive relationships with students in the classroom is to help them get their motivational needs met positively and to speak their language.⁶ Kahler's process communication model describes the characteristics of six distinct personality types, including the way they perceive the world and their learning style, preferred mode of communicating and motivational needs. The model also describes what each of the types will do when in distress and provides both proactive and reactive antidotes for dealing with them.

The six personality types are described as follows:

1. Reactors are compassionate, sensitive and warm, and they filter the world through their emotions. Their motivational need is for other people to show they appreciate them—not for anything they have done, but because they are nice people. They also need a cozy, nest-like, comfortable environment. When in distress, they make mistakes, and they are often victims of bullies.

2. Workaholics think first and want people to think with them. They are responsible, logical and organized, and they learn best in a classroom that is structured,



has clear rules and adheres to schedules. Teachers can motivate them by recognizing their hard work, good ideas and accomplishments. In distress, they over-control and may criticize others for not thinking clearly. When in distress, they may bully others or they may be bullied for being too serious.

3. Persisters are conscientious, dedicated and observant. They form opinions quickly and have a well-developed value system they use to steer their course through life. They need to be respected for their beliefs and values. They also need to be recognized for their accomplishments and dedication. When in distress, persisters may attack others for their lack of commitment and may engage in oral bullying.

4. Dreamers are reflective, imaginative and calm. They need their own private time and their own space. They see connections between things the other types do not see, and for this reason, other people may consider them weird. They are so different that they frequently are the victims of bullying. When they are in distress, dreamers shut down.

5. Rebels are creative, spontaneous and playful. They react immediately to their environment and to people with strong likes and dislikes. Humor is their currency, and they will work hard for teachers who encourage their creativity and include fun activities in each lesson. In distress, rebels blame others for everything that happens, and they may act out. They frequently are in trouble at school and, as a result, may feel that no one cares about them. When this happens, they may bully others, or they may be the victims of bullies. When they are bullied, they frequently strike back.

6. Promoters act first without thinking and are motivated by challenges, action and excitement. They are persuasive, adaptable and charming, and they may be Mr. or Ms. Popularity in class. They thrive in leadership positions and in the spotlight, and they like to make deals that make them look good to their peers. In distress, they manipulate, con, ignore the rules and frequently get others in trouble. When in distress, they may bully others.⁷

Because people bully when they are in distress, the key to reducing bullying and establishing relationships is to help each of the six types stay out of distress. This can be done by helping them get their motivational needs met positively, which is also the key to maintaining a schoolwide culture in which everyone feels welcome. Administrators can



help their teachers and staff members get their needs met, and every teacher can help every student and staff member get their needs met every day.⁸

Each group has its individual needs:

- **Reactors** need to be reassured they are nice people. This can be done by spending time talking to them about the things they want to talk about. Also, educators can pay them sincere compliments about their appearance or their concern for others.
- **Workaholics** need to be complimented on their hard work and good work. They also need teachers to follow a schedule and to be told when things are due.
- **Persisters** need to be respected for their commitment and values.
- **Dreamers** need direction and some alone time to reflect on what they are doing.
- **Rebels** need to have fun, and they also need an environment that encourages their creativity.
- **Promoters** need action and excitement.

If educators help everyone get their needs met every day, they will stay out of distress, and bullying will stop or be greatly reduced. Also, the school environment will be welcoming and safe.⁹

Teachers can greet every student by name as they enter their classroom. They can give their rebel students high-fives, and they can compliment the workaholic and persister students on their work. They can provide reflection time for the dreamer students, and they can include competitive games and movement activities for their promoter students.

In preparing for each class, teachers can ask themselves the following questions:

- How can I provide personal recognition for the reactor?
- How can I give recognition for work and provide time structure for the workaholic?
- How can I ensure the task is meaningful for the persister?
- How can I provide reflection time, space and structure for the dreamer?
- How can I make this fun for the rebel?
- How can I incorporate action and excitement for the promoter?¹⁰



It also is essential that teachers enlist parents to persuade their children that bullying is not cool. If parents do not get their needs met, they may exhibit negative bullying behavior to their children. Therefore, it is essential that parents stop bullying their children. Including parents in the anti-bullying programs and helping them get their needs met can help them reduce their bullying.

If every educator helps everyone get their needs met positively, everyone will be happier and healthier, and they will stay out of distress. This, plus the education programs listed above, will significantly reduce bullying.¹¹

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