

## **School Bully Strategies**

Bullied at high school, it took Janice Davies, the Attitude Specialist twenty years to realise and get back on track in life. She takes this matter very seriously with both daughters bullied at high school as well. One was receiving text death threats and this was solved with taking the telephone to the police and the other physical abuse from a group of girls and this was solved with changing schools. As a parent, I listened and took action, she said and it worked, with both daughters now qualified and working in their dream careers.

So when a recent report stated that New Zealand has some of the highest rates of workplace bullying in the world with health, education, travel and hospitality sectors found 18 percent had been bullied, she agreed. She has worked in three of these sectors and when bullied whilst working in as a travel tutor, had wised up and remained empowered rather than falling to victim status again.

The report stated ineffective leadership was one of the main causes however Janice believes personal development is a vital key and thus solution.

As a human nature we want to be part of tribe, however from birth when our thoughts and beliefs about relationships, communication and self esteem are formed, people get lost. Thus from home, television, society and the media the power of 'feel good' is promoted. Unfortunately, what is missed is 'do unto others what you would have done unto you' message as well.

At schools, reinforcing this message is one key to succeeding with bullying behaviour in schools. Whilst schools are responsible for behaviour in their grounds, the outside influences are huge. Unable to rebuke them, a key is to create a 'bullying free zone' on the school grounds with education and activities which empower students to feel good with positive behaviour. Although society is deemed to reward for unsatisfactory behaviour and it is crucial to a person's self esteem and ongoing endorphin fix in their bodies, to promote praise appropriately.

One Manurewa East primary school principal, who completed his masters in the UK focussing on bullying, used his research to solve the schools problem. With Fun, Friends, Family and Future, the school motto, he introduced compulsory sport in the last half hour of lunch breaks, which research proved was the time most bullying occurred. Not every student likes maths, or reading he said on his television interview but it was still part of the curriculum thus lunchtime sport was introduced. Students are kept busy and have no energy to bully others. Options are available so students can choose their sport and both teachers and children get fit with the additional benefit a student can be praised for kicking the ball for the first time, the principal said.

Janice also appeared on television with tips for children returning to school provided a one page Success Journal for use at home. She suggests it is used on Friday afternoons in

the classroom to re-enforce self-esteem, achievements, goals and steps for present and future successes. It includes these phrases

- I am great because ...
- Today I achieved ...
- I felt good because ...
- Next week I will try ...
- I wish that ...

Working as a travel tutor with international students at tertiary level, Janice provided 'ground rules' from her training days as a Playcenter supervisor. Ranging from 17 to 45 years of age and catering to nine different cultures at once, her classroom rules eliminated culture cliques and created a bonded team who supported one another. Many of the students came from education systems where they were told what to learn and not taught to think or make decisions. This is not conducive to learning and her rules included:

- Only speak English (this was the only common language)
- Daily sit next to a different person in a different place (this rule created the team)
- One person speak at a time (created respect)
- LOTS of encouragement with new travel related words (they would help and support each others spelling and pronunciation)
- LOTS of front of room, group activities and writing on board (this built self esteem, confidence and teams)
- Lots of asking for volunteers and jovially 'telling' people they were volunteering (this built fun into learning)
- Using accelerated learning techniques, personality traits teaching modes, changing class dynamics and moving people out of comfort zones

Other classroom activities to help reduce bullying are:

- Creating anti bullying zone in class and school
- Art class – making 'anti-bullying posters
- Education about good, bad, happy, angry, scared, fearful, exciting, sad feelings and their appropriate actions
- Educating about feeling good by positive actions
- Boosting self esteem with genuine compliments
- Including books, DVD's and posters for further education.

To create a new dynamic with a classroom needs physical as well as verbal communication. A much loved phrase 'I have changed my thinking' as a teacher introduces new classroom ground rules provides an opportunity for change. Including the students in the decision making process is vital to get ownership as well as having them discuss and create their posters.

Assertive communication, respect, trust and teams are not built overnight. Within the school environments it is not only with teacher student relationships but bullying behaviour occurs with colleagues and staff members as well.

If a school zone is bully free with students it must be re-enforced with adults as well. Often not as easy to detect it can be hierarchical or peer relationships.

- Schools need to have a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying which, for most places of work will require a cultural change and a realisation that bullying is not acceptable. This needs to be educated to the students so they are aware it is a safe place as often bullying at school stems from bullying and anti-social behaviour in their home life. Teaching them the vital skills of positive relationships will be their key to future successes.
- Schools will also need to have clearly defined procedures in place to educate on effective strategies for dealing with bullies
- Schools also need to provide education for empowering employees to be confident and how to engage in positive workplace relationships
- Schools who hire for skills rather than attitudes may discover that qualified staff have not developed their people skills, therefore qualified employees still need further education about creating positive workplace relationships,

One page Success Journal

Resources available are:

<http://www.attitudespecialist.co.nz/school-coaching.htm>