

Keeping our Children Safe: the 'Whole Village' Approach



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Peaceful Schools
International

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Keeping our Children Safe: the 'Whole Village' Approach accompanies the following three books:

Sam and the 'Goodwill Sandwich'

Sam Takes a Stand

Sam Speaks Up

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CONTENTS

The Problem.....	1
The Solution.....	4
Home & School: Partners.....	5
Where Do We Start?.....	6
Warning Signs.....	8
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH	
Goodwill Sandwich.....	9
Taking a Stand.....	12
Intervention Skills.....	13
Speaking Respectfully to Adults.....	15
FOR ADULTS	
Persuasion Power.....	19
Short Interventions.....	23
Gentle Corrections.....	24
Emotional Bank Account.....	26
How a Child Learns.....	27
Whole School Approach.....	28



It takes a village to raise a child.
African Proverb

THE PROBLEM

"I couldn't sleep again because of the worries that fly through my head, and again I am on the Internet looking for answers; some miracle to help my daughter in school."

"I am really desperate and want my son to enjoy his first year of junior high school and not have to be looking over his shoulder all the time."

"The principal doesn't want to acknowledge that bullying occurs at our school and considers the situations dealt with once he forces the bully to make a weak apology to my child. I'm feeling furious and frustrated. Please help!"



These are excerpts from letters sent to Peaceful Schools International (PSI) on a daily basis from worried parents. Victimization of children and youth by their peers is a chronic and serious problem and parents and educators are eager for solutions.

Dr. Wendy Craig, one of Canada's leading researchers in the field of bullying states that, "One in four children is being victimized while in school."

In families in which a child is being victimized at school, the health of the family suffers. Parents are anxiety-ridden and the child can develop serious health issues. Parents are eager for strategies to help them help their children learn how to respond when peers harass them. There is much discussion about the problem of bullying, but very few solutions are available to families. It is not enough to say, "You have to learn to handle it."



According to Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre, the effects of bullying do not disappear with time. Many of us have met adults who can still recall incidents of mistreatment by peers even though they may have occurred decades ago.



Even though there are rules in schools against bullying, it still happens. Even though teachers and other adults are 'on duty' to watch, in the halls and at lunch time, it still happens. This is a community problem which calls for a community solution. Although most schools are currently engaged in many and varied activities to prevent bullying, there is still more to be done to ensure that children feel safe while they are in school.

Bullying and other forms of mistreatment that occur in our schools, school buses and playgrounds thrive on silence. According to Dr. Craig, and her associate Dr. Pepler, over half of frequently victimized children are under the radar of teachers.*

* The Importance of Teacher Response to Bullying fact sheet - 2007
www.prevnet.ca

THE SOLUTION

Children have a right to feel emotionally and physically safe in school. We need to work together as a 'whole village' to find solutions to the problem of bullying.

As a parent, you can teach your child to deal with feelings of anger and how to be assertive without being aggressive. Children also need to understand that it is very important to report bullying to an adult.

The *Keeping Our Children Safe: 'the Whole Village' Approach* project has two main goals.

Home and School: Partners in Problem Solving

Provide parents with realistic strategies for working in collaboration with their child's school to address the problem of victimization.

Practical Problem Solving Skills

Offer parents practical strategies and tools to help them talk with their children about ways of dealing with unwanted aggressive behaviour from their peers.

In this booklet, we will address both goals with practical suggestions and ideas.

HOME AND SCHOOL: PARTNERS IN PROBLEM SOLVING

When children are victimized by peers, they are often reluctant to report the problem. There are many explanations for this, including a fear of retaliation, not wanting to be labeled as a tattler, the belief that nothing will change anyway and the belief that they have to handle the problem themselves.

It is our responsibility to reassure our children that we will listen and help. Once your child has shared with you what is happening, you will have to decide what level of intervention is needed.

The 'Sam' books offer parents ideas for coaching their children in ways of dealing with problems and conflicts that they are able to handle themselves. There are, of course, other times when the victimization is more serious and you will need to be part of the solution.

Your child's safety is a shared responsibility between the family and the school. This guide will offer ideas to help make this partnership a positive experience for both parties.

*Live so that when your children think of
fairness and integrity, they think of you.*

H. Jackson Brown

WHERE DO WE START?

Sometimes our children have a conflict with a peer or a friend. These problems can usually be solved with a strategy such as a 'Goodwill Sandwich' message or an assertiveness statement.

There are situations that are far more serious. Once parents learn that their child has been victimized over a period of time, it is vital to intervene. Make an appointment to meet with the appropriate staff members who are responsible for your child. If the problem occurs in an area supervised by the teacher, contact her/him. If the problem occurs outside the classroom, contact the principal.

Bullying often occurs in unsupervised places away from the watchful eye of a teacher. For this reason, it is not surprising that teachers are often unaware of the abuse children suffer at the hands of their peers. It is understandable that if the school staff member with whom you meet claims to be unaware of the problem you describe, you may feel frustrated and even angry.

This can set up an unfriendly situation and may make further dialogue and cooperation difficult. Such a barrier between home and school becomes counter-productive to finding a solution for the problem at hand.

Intervention is vital and how you intervene is just as important.

Approach the school as a friend – not an enemy.

Partnering with your child's school as early as possible can help resolve the issue quickly and effectively to ensure your child's safety.

A statement such as, "My son is having a problem with one of his classmates and I would like to help find a solution," is much better than, "Why aren't you doing something about the boy who is bullying my son?"

Things to keep in mind:

- Make notes based on what your child tells you and bring these notes to the meeting.
- Know the school policies that protect students from harassment, bullying, and physical violence.
- Get copies of these policies and procedures.
- Arrive at the meeting with as much information as you can get from your child about the problem.
- In the meeting, discuss the incidents and give copies of your documentation to the administration.
- Ask questions or request more information
- Ask what action will be taken according to the school's policy and get a time frame for the action plan.
- Take notes at the meeting.
- Decide on how and when you will follow-up on the plan.
- Follow-up!

In schools in which there is an awareness campaign about bullying and where there are policies and procedures in place to combat this form of abuse, children are encouraged to report any form of mistreatment. In these schools, it is likely that there is a strong level of trust and open communication between staff and students who are then more likely to report being victimized.

Some children do not even tell their parents when they are being bullied. There are some common warning signs to watch for if you suspect that your child is being victimized.

WARNING SIGNS:

- torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings
- unexplained cuts, bruises and scratches
- fear of going to school
- taking a long, 'illogical' route when walking to or from school
- loss of interest in school work or suddenly doing poorly in school
- appearing sad, moody or depressed when he or she comes home from school
- frequent complaints of headaches, stomachaches, or other physical ailments
- trouble sleeping or bad dreams
- loss of appetite
- general anxiety



PRACTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

THE 'GOODWILL SANDWICH' APPROACH

In the book, *Sam and the Goodwill Sandwich*, Sam's father shows him how conflicts between friends can be solved through a simple and straightforward approach called the 'Goodwill Sandwich.'

A 'Goodwill Sandwich' is a strategic communication technique. We can use it to give feedback, address issues of controversy, offer criticism, redirect the conversation, and de-escalate problems.

The essence of your thoughtful communication is that you make sure the other person knows you value his/her relationship and can empathize with his/her needs with a fair and non-judgmental description of the issue you are trying to resolve. By starting and ending your communication (the two pieces of 'bread') with statements that underline your regard and goodwill for the other person, it increases your chances of gaining their cooperation on solving the issue (the 'filling').

The technique uses a combination of goodwill, non-judgmental data and ends with more goodwill in order to engage the other person as an ally in the problem-solving process.

The 'Goodwill Sandwich' approach has three steps:

Step One: Start with your positive intent.

Step Two: Give a non-judgmental, factual description of what you are seeing or hearing but balance it with your observations about times when the other person has been more successful at the given task or behavior.

Step Three: See if you can express the problem in such a way that the other person's needs are combined with yours, or show that you want a good outcome for the other person.

Examples:

Goodwill: "John, I'd like to talk with you about something."

Data: "I noticed that you didn't do your homework this evening, and that's not like you. Is something bothering you?"

Goodwill: "Oh, I see. You don't understand the math problems. I used to have trouble with that myself. Let's sit down and take a look. Maybe I can help you get started and you can get up a bit early and finish the problems in the morning."

Goodwill: "I can see you worked on your room, and I really appreciate that."

Data: "I notice that there are some clothes on the floor over there and some popcorn beside your bed."

Goodwill: "If you can take care of those little things, your room will look perfect! Do you have everything you need to fix those little things?"

Here is another example of a parent to principal 'Goodwill Sandwich' for resolving an issue at school:

"I really appreciate you making time for our appointment today, Principal Carson. I know how busy you are. There is a situation happening with my son, Joe, that has me very concerned. He has come home with money missing and I noticed a big bruise on his arm the other day. He said that Raymond has been taking his money in the locker room. I asked him where Coach Wilson was, and he said that he was busy gathering the equipment and didn't see what happened. I am working with Joe to give him some ideas for standing up for himself, but if this problem is happening for Joe, it could involve others as well. I know you want to address bullying at your school. I wonder how the boys in the locker room can be protected while still allowing Coach Wilson adequate time to prepare for class?"



TAKING A STAND: BEING ASSERTIVE

In *Sam Takes a Stand*, Sam learns how to speak up on his own behalf with Jake, a boy Sam would not choose to have as a friend. Learning to deal with put-downs, mean jokes, demeaning comments, teasing, and verbal abuse, without resorting to counter-attack or aggression, is a task that most of our children have to learn today. We hope that this story will allow you to help your children learn verbal strategies for leaving abusive situations with their dignity intact.

In *Sam Takes a Stand*, Sam's mother gives Sam the following ideas for standing up to Jake:

"Maybe you were just kidding around when you called me a loser, but I didn't take it as a joke. I am not going to call you names and I want you to stop calling me names. Now, is there a problem we have to work out?"

"Hold on, Jake. I guess you are going to keep calling me names if that is really what you want to do, but you could also decide to stop and let us have a normal conversation. If you want to treat me with respect, I'll be happy to stay here and talk. Otherwise, I'm leaving."

"Hold on, Jake. I don't mistreat others, and I don't allow others to mistreat me. So stop calling me names."

INTERVENTION SKILLS

Your child will likely find her/himself in situations in which he or she observes instances of social cruelty, deliberate exclusion, name-calling or harassment of individual people or groups. Having a few strategies to intervene effectively will serve your child well.

Here are two strategies that children seem to pick up easily and enjoy putting into practice:

BALANCING: A strategy used to speak up for a person or group who is not present; to balance a put-down or rumor about the person or group without being argumentative or antagonistic.

Strategy: Start with a mild 'yes' before you moving to a stronger 'but.' In other words, agree with some part of the speaker's statement, but then add something that would give a more complete (and charitable) view of the person or group. In essence, balancing is, "Yes...but..."

Examples: (To a person putting down kids in the drama group)

- "Well, I'm sure that there are some drama kids who like attention, but you must admit, it DOES take a lot of courage to get up and sing and dance in front of the people in this school...we can be a tough crowd."
- "I've heard that too....but it didn't sound like the person I know. He must have been having a bad day."

DISTRACTING: A strategy for shortening an argument or incident of mistreatment by tactfully interrupting the conversation, changing the subject, or gently guiding people away from the scene.

Strategy: Interrupt by finding one piece of the existing conversation that you can 'pull' in a different direction.

Examples:

- "Speaking of friends, has anyone seen the new *Friends* movie? I hear it's really great."
- "I know you are all talking about something important here; can I just talk with Joe for just one second?" (Guide Joe away from the scene.)

OTHER RESPONSES

Sometimes a simple one-line response will de-escalate a potential conflict. Here are some examples:

- Yes, I did get a low mark. What do you think I can do to improve?
- The fact that I'm failing Math seems to interest you.
- What is it about my shirt that you don't like?
- Yes, I agree, this jacket is funny looking.
- So, what exactly do you want from me?
- Sorry if my hat bothers you.

*When other children intervene, more than half the time,
the bullying will stop within 10 seconds.*

Pepler and Craig

SPEAKING RESPECTFULLY TO ADULTS

In *Sam Speaks Up*, Sam learns how to speak up for himself with an adult in a respectful way. There will be times when your child feels that she or he has been treated unfairly by an adult.

It takes a lot of courage to speak up to an authority-person (AP). By definition, APs have the ability to make things harder or easier for the people the AP supervises. Let's face it - no one wants to get on the 'bad side' of their boss! On the other hand, people have the right to speak up in a respectful way if they believe they have been treated unfairly, or if a decision has been made with inaccurate information, or if they believe their perspectives have not been taken into consideration by the people in charge.

The ideas in this section are intended to help you as an adult coach, prepare your child for situations when he or she wishes to speak up to someone in a position of authority.

Skill One: Prepare.

In *Sam Takes a Stand*, Sam's mother teaches him the skill of 'self-talk.' Saying short, positive statements to himself allowed Sam to be mentally ready for the conversation. ***Examples of 'self-talk':***

- "I can do this."
- "I can speak up for myself in a respectful way."

Skill Two: Pick a good time to approach the Authority-Person (AP).

If the concern is not an emergency, coach your child to try to find a time and place where he or she can have a private talk with the AP. If there are a lot of other people around, or if something else important is happening, the AP might not have time to hear your child out. If other people are around, it makes it harder for APs to modify what they said or did, since they might feel sensitive about 'being challenged,' even if it is done respectfully and with good data.

Examples:

- "Mr. Jones, do you have a minute to talk about something?"
- "Mrs. Smith, I'd like to talk with you about something that will take about three minutes. Do you have time now?"
- "Mr. Williams, when do you think I could spend about three minutes with you when I won't be interrupting you?"

Skill Three: Start by acknowledging the AP's authority.

If your child starts by acknowledging the AP's authority, it immediately de-escalates potential power struggles. ***Examples:***

- "Mr. Jones, I realize that you are the teacher and have to keep order in the class."
- "Mom, I know you are in charge around here and I am not being disrespectful or anything."
- "Mrs. Smith, I know you will do whatever you think is best."

Skill Four: Ask the AP to listen to your perspective.

The difficult part of this step is to make sure your child doesn't make the AP look 'wrong.' Usually this can be accomplished by talking about 'point of view' and then asking for permission to share another perspective. Your child might have to be prepared for a 'no' answer. Often, being asked reinforces the belief on the part of the AP that she or he is still seen as being 'in charge' and therefore, less threatened and more open-minded. **Examples:**

- "I have a different view of what happened in class today. May I tell you about it?"
- "I saw things a little differently than you did. May I tell you what I saw?"
- "You might not know this part. May I tell you what I heard?"

Skill Five: Give new data about the situation.

Data could involve both inner events (feelings) or outer events (facts), but the key is to make sure the data does not include judgment or opinion. To say, "You were mean to John," is a judgment. "John cried after class," is a fact. "You were unfair," is a judgment. "I didn't have a chance to speak," is a fact. This is the hardest part - saying things in such a way that it doesn't make the person look 'wrong' or 'bad.' If there is any way to help the AP save face, it will help him or her accept the new data. **Examples:**

- "I know you thought you heard my voice, but I wasn't the one talking."
- "You may not have meant it, but that comment hurt my feelings."
- "I know you think you told us about the quiz, but none of my friends in class heard you say anything about it."

Skill Six: Ask for something different.

This is where your child asks for a different outcome, either this time or next time. The essence of this skill is to discuss what is bothering us without making the other person look wrong. Once again, asking doesn't mean an automatic 'yes.' **Examples:**

- "Would you be willing to cancel my detention if I can prove that I wasn't the one doing the talking?"
- "Would you please kid me about something other than that, next time?"
- "Could you please write down the quiz date changes on the board from now on? That way all of us will remember."

Because of the extra skill needed to speak assertively with APs, it is important for people of all ages to feel confident about the points they want to make. Encourage your child to rehearse what she or he wants to say.



PARENT TO CHILD: USING STRATEGIC LANGUAGE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

'PERSUASION POWER'

Our children learn a lot about problem solving by observing us. In this section, we will offer a few strategies that will be useful to parents in dealing with problem solving situations with their own children.

The approach called 'Persuasion Power' is helpful in gaining cooperation from your child.

1. Start with a connection statement.

Doing this helps establish the personal part of the relationship before getting into the issue at hand. **Example:**

"Sam, is everything OK with you?"

2. Give data non-judgmentally.

Describe what you are seeing or hearing. People can debate opinions, but can't deny facts. In some cases, you can just ask for clarification. **Example:**

"I saw you chasing your sister and you looked angry." *Balanced data, cites past successes or cooperation along with the current exception.*

"You look angry and I see you chasing your sister around the room, and that isn't like you."

3. Ask for information.

“Can you fill me in on what’s happening?” is less intimidating than, “What’s going on here?”

4. Find a point of agreement or show empathy.

Try to find a point of agreement in your child’s description of his or her actions. It might just mean saying, “I agree, that is frustrating.” Mention what is right or OK about the behavior. This will often be the reason, intent, or feelings motivating the behavior rather than the behavior, itself. **Examples:**

- “I can understand why you were upset. It’s perfectly reasonable for you to want _____. ” (people to respect you, people to stop calling you names, etc.)
- “I get it. You were really angry because you asked her to stop and she wouldn’t. It is frustrating when people ignore us.”

(If you remember to pause after giving an empathy statement, your child will feel like his/her feelings were understood and validated.)

5. Define the issue or problem.

Many times, this will mean describing how the person’s actions have affected other people or the social order. **Example:**

“Here’s the issue, though. When you chase your sister with a plan to hit her because you are angry, someone is going to get hurt. In our family, we talk about our problems, we don’t hurt each other.” (If you are asking the person to start doing something, make sure you mention the advantages for making the change. If you are asking the person to stop doing something, always cite a fair reason, such as the need to uphold the good of the family or the rules. Avoid making it a personal power trip, i.e. “You’ll do it because I said so.”)

6. State consequences.

Example:

"If you continue to chase your sister to get even with her, I will have to ask you to spend some time in your room and I have no desire to spoil your play time."

7. Explore legitimate alternatives for meeting underlying needs or offer help.

Example:

"So what can you do to solve this problem that doesn't involve hitting?" *Express the desire to see a good outcome for the person and give the person hope that a resolution is possible.* "I think this can work out. What do you think would happen if you ____?"

8. Gain commitment to the new future behavior.

Example:

"Are you willing to do that next time? Great!"

Let's put it all together:

"Tonya, I'd like to talk with you about something important. You seem to be having trouble getting to school on time. I know how difficult it can be sometimes to get up when the alarm goes off. Sleeping in is OK on weekends but on weekdays it is important that you get up in time. When you're late, you miss important announcements and also the first class. Is there anything I can do to help you get up on time?"

Remember the 'Goodwill Sandwich' example for the school gym situation? It didn't make a change. Here is a 'Persuasion Power' approach:

“Thank you for seeing me again, Principal Carson. Joe told me that nothing has changed in the locker room, and that Raymond is still scaring boys into giving him ‘protection money.’ It seems like the situation has not improved. I thought you would want to know, since you have always tried to fix problems once they come to your attention. Can you tell me what you have done already, and what you might do as a next step?”

(Principal Carson said he talked with Coach Wilson, and Coach Wilson downplayed the issue, saying, ‘These things usually sort themselves out over time...the smaller boys get taller and stronger, and the situation stops on its own...no one has really gotten hurt...it is just part of life lessons in middle school.’ And he told everyone not to bring money to school, because he is not their babysitter or bodyguard. He thinks it makes the boys stronger when they take care of their own problems. But he said he would try to be more watchful.)

“Coach Wilson has seen a lot of boys come and go and I know he can’t be everywhere at the same time. I imagine that a number of the situations seem to have worked themselves out. And I am all for the boys learning to solve their own problems, as long as no one gets hurt or victimized. *(Pause, pause, pause...)* Here’s the issue...Waiting for the boys to grow big enough to defend themselves is not a solution. If we can’t change Coach Wilson’s mind about the wisdom of his hands-off approach, or we can’t get more supervision in the locker room, something else needs to be done. It isn’t right that Joe or anyone else gets hurt.

Would it be helpful if I participated in your next meeting with Coach Wilson? I think we both agree that it is very important to keep the boys from being victimized in the locker room. I would really like to hear your ideas on how this victimization can be stopped as of today.”

SHORT INTERVENTIONS: PARENT TO CHILD

- “You know that if anybody was doing that to you, I would make them stop.”
- “I can tell that this is important to you. Is there a way for you to tell me what you want or feel without _____?” (yelling, cursing)
- “I’m pointing out this problem to you this time, but if I make a mistake that I don’t recognize, I hope you’ll point it out to me.”
- “Is that really helping you?”
- “I’m sure there is a solution to this that will help us both. Let’s find it.”
- “I’m willing to do _____. What are you willing to do?”
- “I’m not going to ____ you (scream at you, accuse you, blame you, etc.), and I’d like you to treat me the same way.”
- “It’s OK to _____, it’s just not OK to _____.”

GENTLE CORRECTIONS

"_____ has to get done by _____. What's your plan for getting it done?"

Examples:

- "This room has to get straightened up before our company arrives. What's your plan for getting it done?"
 - "This garbage has to go out before trash time tomorrow. What's your plan for getting it done?"
-

"When people _____, it makes it hard for me to _____."

Examples:

- "When people are yelling, it makes it hard for me to listen to what each person is saying."
 - "When people are arguing in the back seat, it makes it hard for me to concentrate on my driving."
-

"It matters to me that _____."

Examples:

- "It matters to me that everyone gets a turn."
- "It matters to me that nobody gets hurt."
- "It matters to me that people feel respected in this house."
- "It matters to me that people learn good manners."

"_____ is one way of _____ (getting what you want). Can you think of a different way?"

Examples:

- "Yelling at your brother is one way of getting his attention. Can you think of a different way?"
 - "Slamming doors is one way of showing me that you're angry. Can you think of a different way?"
-

"I like it a lot better when people say (or do) _____ when they need something from me."

Examples:

- "I like it a lot better when people wait until I'm off the phone to say something to me."
 - "I like it a lot better when people say, 'Excuse me, It's important,' if they have to interrupt me when I'm on the phone."
-

"In our family (or class), we (or people) _____."

Examples:

- "In our family, people listen to each other."
- "In our family, people's feelings count."

MAKE DEPOSITS IN YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT:

If you have a good relationship with your child, it is likely that he or she will talk with you about any problems that are happening at school.

In his book , *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey uses an Emotional Bank Account as a metaphor that describes the amount of trust and the feeling of safeness that has been built up in a relationship.

If an adult makes deposits into the Emotional Bank Account of a child, by showing or expressing kindness, courtesy, honesty and keeping commitments, a reserve is built up. Trust becomes higher and communication between the adult and child becomes easier and more effective.

On the other hand, if the adult has a habit of showing discourtesy or disrespect by overreacting, ignoring or betraying trust, eventually the bank account becomes overdrawn. The trust level gets low and the adult has to be very careful of everything she or he says. By making many deposits in the Emotional Bank Account of your child, you will build a high level of trust and communication. This will serve you well when problems arise so that your child will not be reluctant to share them with you.

How a Child Learns

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, she learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, she learns to feel guilty.

But...

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,
she learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, she learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, she learns to like herself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
he learns to find love in the world.

Dorothy Law Nolte

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

“There is an emerging consensus among the bullying prevention literature that the ‘whole-school’ approach is an effective and lasting approach to prevent bullying in schools. The ‘whole-school’ approach includes the creation and adoption of an anti-bullying policy and anti-bullying initiatives. The ‘whole-school’ policy that guides this approach outlines the roles, responsibilities and procedures for staff, a code of conduct for students as well as the consequences for bullying and improvements in the way bullying incidents are addressed.”*

Generally, successful ‘whole-school’ preventive responses must exhibit the following key principles:

- strong teacher and adult leadership
- clear and consistent behavioral norms
- adult awareness and involvement
- effective (focused and intense) supervision
- involvement of multiple stakeholders
- involvement of youth in program development and delivery
- focus on early, long-term intervention

*<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca>

Bullying is characterized by acts of intentional harm, repeated over time, in a relationship where an imbalance of power exists. It includes physical actions, verbal actions and social exclusion.

Drs. Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig



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