



Article from: "Project Happy Child"

The "No Blame" Approach to Bullying

This month I want to focus on a subject that although has no direct relevance to learning, its impact on those who are at school, college, university and even in the work place can be devastating. Bullying is a big problem and if you have ever been the victim of a bully you will know how terrible an experience it can be. But how should it be dealt with? Many think that retribution through appropriate punishment is the best way but is it? Is the victim really helped by this approach and do the perpetrators really understand what they have done?

One way that has been developed to deal with the problem is called "The No Blame Approach to Bullying" developed by George Robinson and Barbara Maines. It is a simple 7 step process that has the following four essential ingredients:

The absence of blame
The encouragement of empathy
Shared Responsibility
Problem Solving

And the steps involved are as follows:

Step 1 - Talk with the victim

A facilitator trained in the approach talks to the victim to establish the impact that the bullying has had on them. It is not designed to gather "facts" about who said or did what to who. The victim will be encouraged to suggest the names of people to form a group who should help solve the problem. These will include those involved, colluders and perhaps friends of the victim.



The victim is also asked to produce a piece of writing or a picture to express how the bullying is affecting them. [*see note at foot of this page, however]

Step 2 - convene a meeting of the group

The facilitator gathers the group together ensuring that there is a balance between helpful and reliable students and those whose behaviour has been causing a problem.

Step 3 - explain the problem

The facilitator explains that there is a problem and that "Sarah" is experiencing certain difficulties. Without discussing specific incidents or accusations the facilitator explains how "Sarah" is feeling using the piece of writing from the victim to illustrate this.

Step 4 - share responsibility

The facilitator points out that no one is going to be punished and that the group has been convened to help solve the problem because there is a shared responsibility for "Sarah's" happiness.

Step 5 - Ask for ideas

The facilitator asks the group to suggest ways that they may be able to alleviate the suffering felt by the victim. Members of the group are encouraged to use "I" language (I will sit next to her in lessons, I will walk to school with her etc) so that they take ownership of the solutions. These ideas are not imposed on the group by the facilitator.

Step 6 - leave it up to them

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support and arranges a meeting to see how things are going.



Step 7 - meet them again

The facilitator meets each of the group individually a week later to see how things are going.

Well, does this work? If you read the book "Crying for Help - the No Blame Approach to Bullying" you can establish that for yourself from accounts from teachers, parents and pupils.

•see also the [Article about The No Blame Approach to Bullying in Schools](#), on line at the website of the publishers of the book, and particularly the review quoted in it, by Sue Young (about half way down) - Educational Psychology in Practice - especially the section "Intervening with the support group approach" where for example "We do not concentrate on the feelings of the victim or request a picture or piece of writing to illustrate them" . This whole review is well worth a read through and concludes: "The confidence of Maines and Robinson has been substantiated in our experience, so much so that now SENSS [Special Educational Needs Support Service] advises the schools to adopt this approach, unless there are compelling and usually obvious reasons why it would not be appropriate".

As this review comments, "An approach so successful deserves to be better known and more widely used."

