



Resilience Counseling & Training Center

*Providing counseling, training and
consulting services around the world.*



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RCTC Newsletter February 2017



Resilience Counseling & Training Center

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Bullying Prevention: Re-thinking what works & what doesn't!

Bullying has gained widespread attention as an increasing problem in our communities. Despite the significant amount of attention given to the problem of bullying over these past many years, the problem persists unabated. Studies by both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on youth behavior and the National Center for Education Statistics have indicated no change in the rate of bullying incidents among youth. National anti-bullying campaigns, PSA's on national television, school anti-bullying policies, and legislative mandates have all had no measureable effect. The data continues to indicate that approximately 20-25% of students ages 12 – 18 are bullied on school property during each school year and another 7% report being victims of cyberbullying. There are gender differences as well. Females are more likely to be bullied via social aggression tactics while males report a higher rates of bullying via physical aggression. Studies further indicate that approximately 70% of all students have been exposed to bullying in their school by witnessing bullying behaviors. The witnessing of acts of bullying, aka social aggression, results in similar adverse effects for these "vicarious victims".

The adverse consequences of bullying have been well documented. Victims of bullying experience higher levels of psychological distress, decreased school attendance, lowered academic achievement, diminished school engagement, poorer psychosocial adjustment and increased physical health problems. These adverse effects often continue into adulthood. The outcomes for perpetrators of bullying are equally disconcerting. Bullying behavior is associated with increased anti-social and violent behavior in adolescence and adulthood. Finally, bullying has a negative impact on the overall "school culture". Research evidence has continually identified school culture as being the single most important factor in creating highly effective schools and successful students.

Ineffective Strategies for Bullying Prevention

So, what have we learned from researching the dynamics of bullying and the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs? What does actually reduce bullying and what does not? First, let's look at what does not work. Studies have consistently shown that our most commonly employed strategies for preventing bullying, and handling incidents that do occur, simply do not work and indeed, sometimes backfire and increase bullying episodes! These commonly employed ineffective methods are:

1. **Anti-Bullying Policies:** The establishing of anti-bullying policies, particularly “Zero Tolerance” policies. Such a “get tough” approach sounds, at first glance, quite attractive from a political or public relations perspective. But such policies simply do not work. In fact, they are found to often backfire and exacerbate the problem by over-reactions to minor incidents or the “turning of heads” to incidents due to the severity of the consequences.
2. **Strict Disciplinary Actions:** Enacting strict disciplinary, or Conduct Codes, strategies that seek to identify, investigate, and punish bullies via detentions, suspension or expulsion. This often involves such misinformed strategies as the filing of formal complaints, staff “investigations”, and exclusionary punishments such as suspension, expulsion or detentions. As Twemlow & Sacco have noted in their book, “*Why School Anti-Bullying Programs Don’t Work*”, this is the same model as used in the “War on Drugs” movement. This strategy did not work in eliminating drugs and likewise doesn’t work for bullying/abuse either. The bullying problem, like the drug problem, is much more extensive, pervasive and systemically based.
3. **Anti-Bullying Events:** Conducting “One -Time Only Events” such as anti-bullying assemblies, motivational guest speakers, campus poster campaigns, or other anti-bullying awareness weeks or activities have, at best, a short term impact. Then, life goes back to normal. In other words, this is a “quick and dirty” way to appear to address a problem without any true commitment to, or engagement in, resolving the problem. To be successful, bullying prevention must be an on-going, systemic approach encompassing issues of school culture, classroom climates, school organization, student demographics, and social-emotional competencies.

Effective Strategies for Bullying Prevention

So what exactly does appear to result in sustained improvement including not only a reduction in bullying incidents but an overall improvement in the school culture? While it is beyond the scope of this short column to delineate all components of an effective bullying prevention strategy, some of the most effective strategies research has identified include the following:

1. **Focusing on the Role of the Bystanders.** Bullies can only do what the bystanders will allow. Or, in the words of Edmund Burke, “*All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing*”. In our homes and classrooms, we need to assist our children in honoring those who step forward when they see a wrong being done and intervene on behalf of the victim. To not get involved sends a clear message to the victim and the bully that you condone such behavior. A fifth grade student articulated the “not getting involved” myth quite accurately when he stated to me that the bullying itself was not as hurtful as the sense of being abandoned, all alone, by ‘friends’ who just walked by and said nothing. A parent once reported that her child was being bullied on the school bus by an older student. That statement was incorrect! In actual fact, there were 40 students on that bus. Therefore, while there was only one victim, there were no less than 40 bullies who actively or passively engaged in supporting and continuing the harassment.
2. **Implementing Social-Emotional Learning Programs:** Infusing a comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) into the school’s curriculum has been consistently shown to result in not only a significant decrease in bullying/social aggression but also in improved school cultures and increases in academic achievement scores of 11-17%! This is the key element in any long-term bullying prevention initiative! As Dr. John Phillips so aptly put it in 1781 when starting one of the first schools in America open to the general public, Phillips Exeter Academy, “*Above all the attention of the instructors to the disposition of the minds and morals of the youth...will exceed every other care... though goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous...both united form the noblest character.*”
3. **Addressing the 500 pound Gorilla in the Room.** Bullying is a learned behavior and occurs in all areas of society. If you open a dictionary to the definition of “bullying” and then to the definition of “abuse”, you will find the terms are synonymous. Bullying is, simply put, the abusive treatment of another individual! In the home we call it “Domestic Violence and Child Abuse”, in the school it is termed “Bullying” and in the workplace it is called “Mobbing or Workplace Bullying”. It is an uncomfortable fact that some parents, teachers, school administrators and workplace managers employ bullying tactics. It is also estimated that 1 in every 4 girls will be involved in an abusive dating relationship during her high school years.

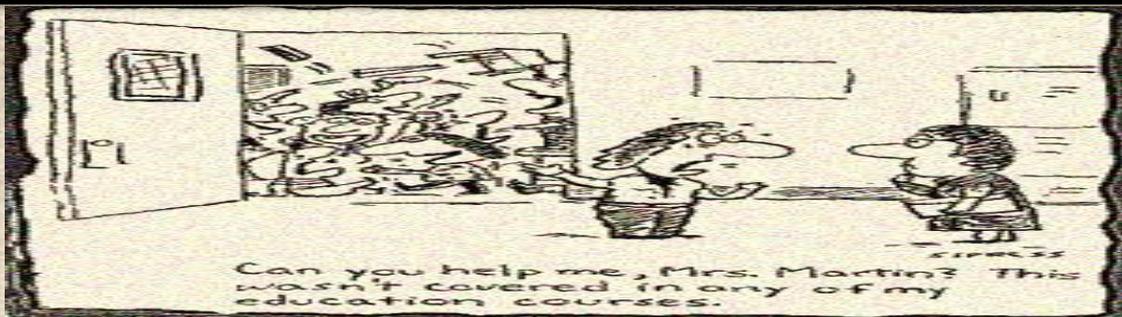
One cannot teach a child not to bully or abuse another when one, in turn, actively models these very same behaviors. Schools need to move beyond the outdated, ineffective disciplinary codes of conduct that rely on threats, punishments (e.g. detentions), exclusionary tactics (suspension and expulsion) or compliance based reward system. These have all consistently been found to be, in the long term, ineffective at best and counter-

productive at worst. Yet, we continue using these methods based on tradition rather than proven effectiveness. Restorative justice based programs, mentoring, and counseling programs (individual and group based) have all demonstrated superior outcomes.

Also, one cannot address bullying and abuse in one social context while ignoring its presence in others. Research has consistently found that positive, yet firm, behavior management styles result in superior social development and academic achievement. Yet, neither parents nor teachers are systematically provided training in the skills of what is now termed the ‘authoritative’ (not authoritarian!) style of child behavior management. Effective anti-bullying programs include the training of parents, teachers, and all adults working with youth in positive, non-punitive/non-bullying authoritative-based behavior management method as well as in how to effectively intervene in observed or reported bullying incidents.

4. **Addressing the Systemic Factors.** Many systemic factors contribute to increased bullying behaviors. For example, a school culture that emphasizes competition for high academic and athletic achievement is correlated with increased bullying behaviors; bullying increases in high performing schools! Diversity in school populations including ethnic, racial, religious, and socio-economic also contribute to increased bullying. So too does community prejudices of all sorts and types (sexual, racial, ethnic, SES, etc.) fuel bullying behaviors. These issues must be directly addressed, discussed and resolved among students, faculty and parents.

[NOTE: Interested in learning more about implementing an effective Bullying Prevention program in your school? Contact our RCTC office for information. We have provided training for schools worldwide]



UNH Professional Development Workshop

for teachers, administrators, school counselors, & school psychologists

Resilience-Based Classroom Behavior Management

Interested in “going beyond” the old, counter-productive reward/punish methods? Learn to employ an evidence-based, positive, empowering approach that reduces disruptive behavior while increasing student achievement & learning motivation

Sponsored by: UNH Office of Professional Development & Training

Location: UNH Manchester Campus

Date/Time: 24 May 2017 – 9:00am-3:30pm

Instructor: William G. Nicoll, Ph.D. Consultant/Trainer/Author with the Resilience Counseling & Training Center. Bill has served as classroom teacher, special education teachers (behavior disorders), school counselor, university professor, and consultant for the US Dept. of State’s Office of Overseas Schools. He has provided training seminars for educators across 5 continents around the world on effective classroom behavior management, creating positive school cultures & classroom climates, engaging & motivating students, and facilitating home/school collaboration.

For further Information and Registration:

<http://learnforlife.unh.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=641107&selectedProgramArealD=16119&selectedProgramStreamId=16139>

Announcing

International Conference on Social-Emotional Learning

The European Network for Social-Emotional Competence will hold their 6th Conference this June bringing together educators and researchers from around the world regarding the development of children's social-emotional competencies. For Information and details:

: www.oru.se/ensec2017



European Network for Social and Emotional Competence

6th ENSEC Conference

Theme: **DiVerSiTy**

7-9 June 2017 | Stockholm, Sweden

UNH Professional Development Seminar

for Counselors, Social Workers, Psychologists, & Professional Coaches

Resilience-Focused Counseling & Coaching

Sponsored by: **UNH Office of Professional Development & Training**

Location: **UNH Portsmouth/Pease Campus**

Date/Time: **3 May 2017 – 9:00am-3:30pm**

For mental health professionals seeking to go beyond the psychopathology and symptom based paradigm of the DSM/ICD and to instead focus treatment upon increasing client resilience and psychosocial wellbeing. The approach integrates Adlerian Psychology with other positive, wellness oriented therapeutic approaches. Applications of the model in both counseling/therapy and coaching contexts will be explored along with specific techniques for: assessing central underlying issues, reframing case conceptualizations from pathology to adaptive compensation, and focusing treatment upon increasing client resilience & psychosocial well-being.

Instructor: **William G. Nicoll, Ph.D.** *Consultant/Trainer/Author with the Resilience Counseling & Training Center. Bill has served as a Dept. Chair & Professor of Counseling, National Trainer for the American Counseling Association, and therapist in private practice, agency and correctional settings. He has provided over 500 training seminars for mental health professionals throughout North American and in nations on five continents around the world.*

CEU's available

For further Information and Registration:

<http://learnforlife.unh.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=640980&selectedProgramAraId=16119&selectedProgramStreamId=16142>



Intensive Marital or Personal Counseling/Coaching Retreats

The Resilience Counseling & Training Center offers both intensive **marital** and **personal** counseling/coaching retreats. These 3-day intensive retreats are intended to assist couples to build more satisfying marital relationships and for individuals to increase their personal resilience, self-understanding and overall wellbeing. Participants are engaged in several hours daily of intensive, growth-oriented counseling/coaching sessions with our RCTC team along with participating in resilience and wellness promoting assignments between sessions.

Take the time now to *“Roll up Your Sleeves”* and get to work on building your Resilience Quotient (RQ) and achieving a more satisfying personal life or a more mutually fulfilling and resilient marital relationship.

Create a more fulfilling life or marriage while enjoying the natural beauty and recreational activities of New Hampshire’s White Mountains.

For information: Call RCTC at 603-730-5467



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Monica A. Nicoll, Ph.D., LCMHC

**Individual, Couples/Marriage, Child/Adolescent & Family Counseling services.
Learn to achieve a more fulfilling personal, marital, and family life**

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