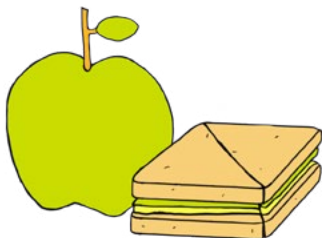# The 6 Methods of Intervention

Ken Rigby

The strategy of **strengthening the target** seeks to improve the capacity of the intended target to cope more effectively with bullying.

Rationale

The rationale behind this approach is that by improving the target's coping skills:

- The targeted person can be helped to acquire the capacity to deal effectively with the threat of being bullied by someone, without any external intervention.
- The power imbalance inherent in the bullying situation can be redressed.
- The school may not have to take action against the aggressor.
- The self-esteem of the targeted child improves and he or she is likely to be able to cope better with other potential aggressors.

Application

The strengthening the target approach can be appropriately and most successfully implemented as follows:

1. A case is chosen in which a child is being verbally bullied and may be helped by some advice or training in how to deal with the situation.
2. The child is approached and the situation carefully examined. Suggestions are made as to how he or she might act to improve matters by learning how to respond more effectively.
3. If the child is interested, advice and training are provided. This may include assertiveness training, friendship-making, rational emotive education (REE), the promotion of emotional intelligence and the use of a 'fogging' technique.
4. The situation is carefully monitored.

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Limitations

- This approach should not be used in cases where physical violence is threatened, or where the imbalance of power is great (as is the case when bullied by a group).
- Some targeted children may be unable (due to extreme vulnerability) or unwilling to learn techniques that could help them to resist being bullied.
- Helping some targeted children to acquire appropriate skills can be time-consuming and challenging to would-be trainers.
- Acquiring martial arts skills may exacerbate the problem, especially when the victim is inclined to use such skills in order to discourage verbal harassment.
- This approach may address only one side of the problem and ignore factors that may be contributing to the bullying, such as family dysfunction and discriminatory attitudes.
- Some teachers do not feel comfortable with assisting the target to stand up to the bully as they believe that targets are already doing their best and would resist if they could.

Conclusion

In selected cases and with appropriate training, this approach can be useful, especially as an adjunct to other approaches. However, at this stage there has been no reported evaluation of its general effectiveness.

References

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