



The 6 Methods of Intervention

The **Support Group Method** is a non-punitive intervention strategy that gathers assistance for the victimised student.

It does this by sharing knowledge of his or her distress at a meeting with the perpetrators, together with peers who would offer support to the victim.

Rationale

The rationale behind using the Support Group Method is as follows:

- Victims of school bullying will describe to a practitioner the distress they have experienced by those who have bullied them, especially when they are convinced that the perpetrators will not be punished. They will also disclose the names of the perpetrators.
- Perpetrators will empathise with what has been happening to their victim when they are told about their distress especially if they attend a meeting convened by the practitioner in the company of some other students who are supportive of the victim.
- In these circumstances the perpetrators will accept responsibility for helping to alleviate the victim's distress and act accordingly.

Application

The Support Group Method can be appropriately and most successfully implemented as follows:

1. The target is approached by a teacher for a one-on-one meeting, and encouraged to talk about what has been happening and how he or she has been affected. The target may be asked to write about it or draw a picture describing their experience. After being told that no-one is to be punished the target is asked to name the bullies.
2. The named bullies are invited to a meeting with the practitioner, together with several other students whom the practitioner expects to be supportive of the victim, and the distress of the target is graphically described. It is made clear that no-one is to be punished. At the same time it is emphasised that everyone present has a responsibility to help.
3. Each group member is asked to state publicly what they are prepared to do to improve the situation.
4. Subsequently, the situation is monitored and further meetings may take place to assess progress.

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Limitations

- It is generally thought to be unsuitable for extreme or criminal forms of bullying.
- Punishment or the threat of punishment cannot play a part in the process.
- The method was designed for use with bullying by groups rather than one-on-one bullying.
- Although members of the bullying group may experience remorse they are not required to apologise (and this is sometimes thought necessary) but rather to act helpfully.
- It requires that some students who are known to be sympathetic to the target are ready to become part of the support group.
- It presupposes a high level of skill in sympathetically interviewing the target and subsequently working with the group.
- Unlike Restorative Practice and The Method of Shared Concern, the bullies and the target do NOT meet together with the practitioner to resolve the issue. There is no opportunity therefore for both parties to work things out together.

Conclusion

Although this method does not seek to bring bullies and victims together to reach a mediated solution, it has proved to be highly effective in preventing bullying from continuing without the use of punishment and with the active cooperation of peers.

References

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