

What to Do about Bullying

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**For the forum 'Stand up to Bullying!', sponsored by the Connecticut Office of the
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Getting school bullying into perspective

Not a problem

- Denial
- Asserting its inevitability
- Emphasising positive effects of bullying

A massive problem

- Very high prevalence
- Typical horrific effects
- Getting worse and worse





Definitions

- **Definitions that inflate its perceived prevalence**
 - The desire to hurt or put somebody under pressure
 - The occurrence of **any form** of negative behaviour directed towards another person
- **Definitions that provided a more limited estimate of its occurrence**
 - Negative behaviour that is **unfairly** directed toward a **less powerful person** who cannot defend himself/herself adequately in a given situation
 - Typically **repeated** over time

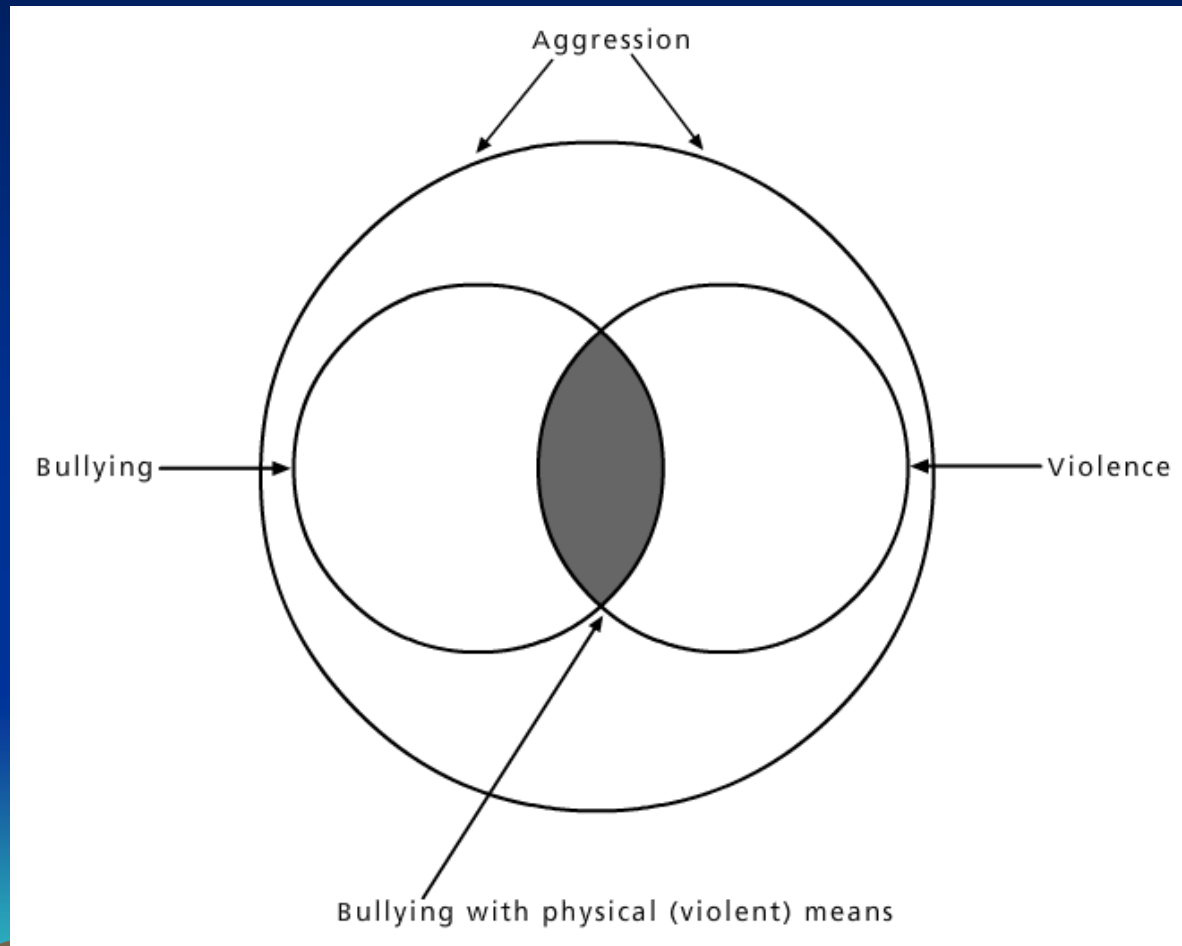


Some negative behaviors

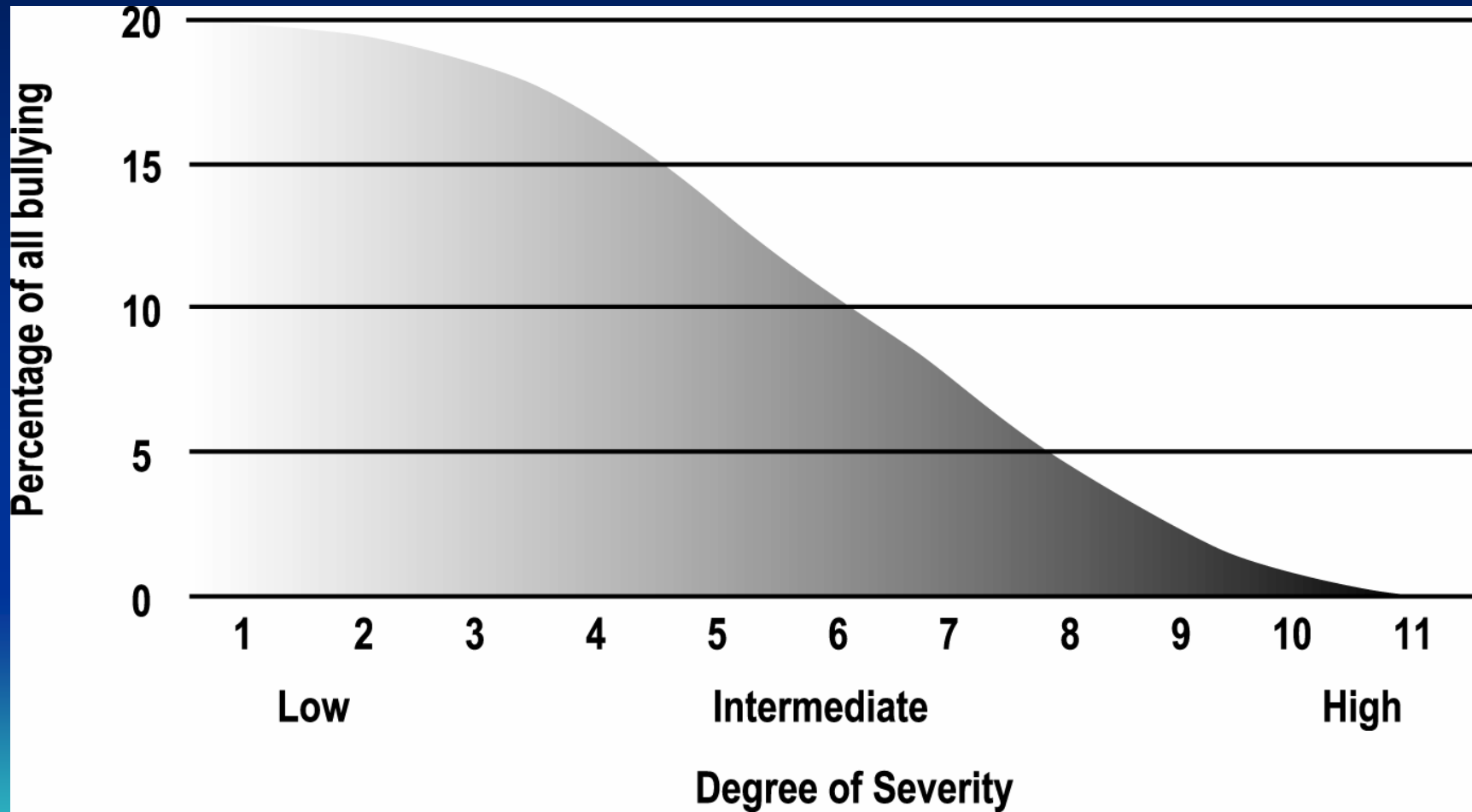
	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Indirect</u>
<u>Verbal</u>	Insulting language	Persuading another person to verbally abuse someone
•	Name calling	Spreading malicious
•	rumours	
•	Ridicule	Anonymous phone calls,
•	Cruel teasing or taunting	offensive sms and emails.
•		
<u>Physical</u>	Striking, kicking	Deliberately and unfairly excluding someone
•	Spitting	
•	Happy slapping	Removing, hiding things
•	Throwing objects	
•	Using a weapon	
•		
<u>Gestural</u>	Threatening motions	Repeatedly turning away
•	Staring at someone	



Aggression, violence and bullying



Gradations or levels of bullying severity



What can be done about bullying by schools ?

- Education of staff
- Discovery of the extent and nature of the problem in one's school
- The development of an agreed anti-bullying program
- Conducting surveillance of children's behaviour
- Working with children in classrooms on the problem
- Handling cases of bullying appropriately
- Collaborating with parents



Suggestions for anti-bullying policy

- A statement of the **school's stand against bullying**
- A **succinct definition** of bullying with a listing of the different kinds, both direct and indirect. Explicit reference should be made to racial, sexual and cyber bullying.
- A **declaration of the rights** of individuals in the school community - students, teachers, other workers and parents - to be free of bullying
- A statement of the **responsibilities** of those who see bullying going on to seek to stop it.
- A general description of what the school will do in seeking to prevent bullying, including undertaking **risk management procedures** and the inclusion of content relating to bullying in the **school curriculum**.
- In general terms, how the school proposes to **deal with cases of bullying**.
- An undertaking to **collaborate with parents** in addressing the problem of bullying, especially in the resolution of cases in which action is to be taken by both the school and parents.
- An undertaking to **evaluate the policy** in the near future



Working with children in classrooms

Knowledge

- What bullying is
- Why it must be stopped – the harm it does
- The content of the school's anti-bullying policy

Attitudes

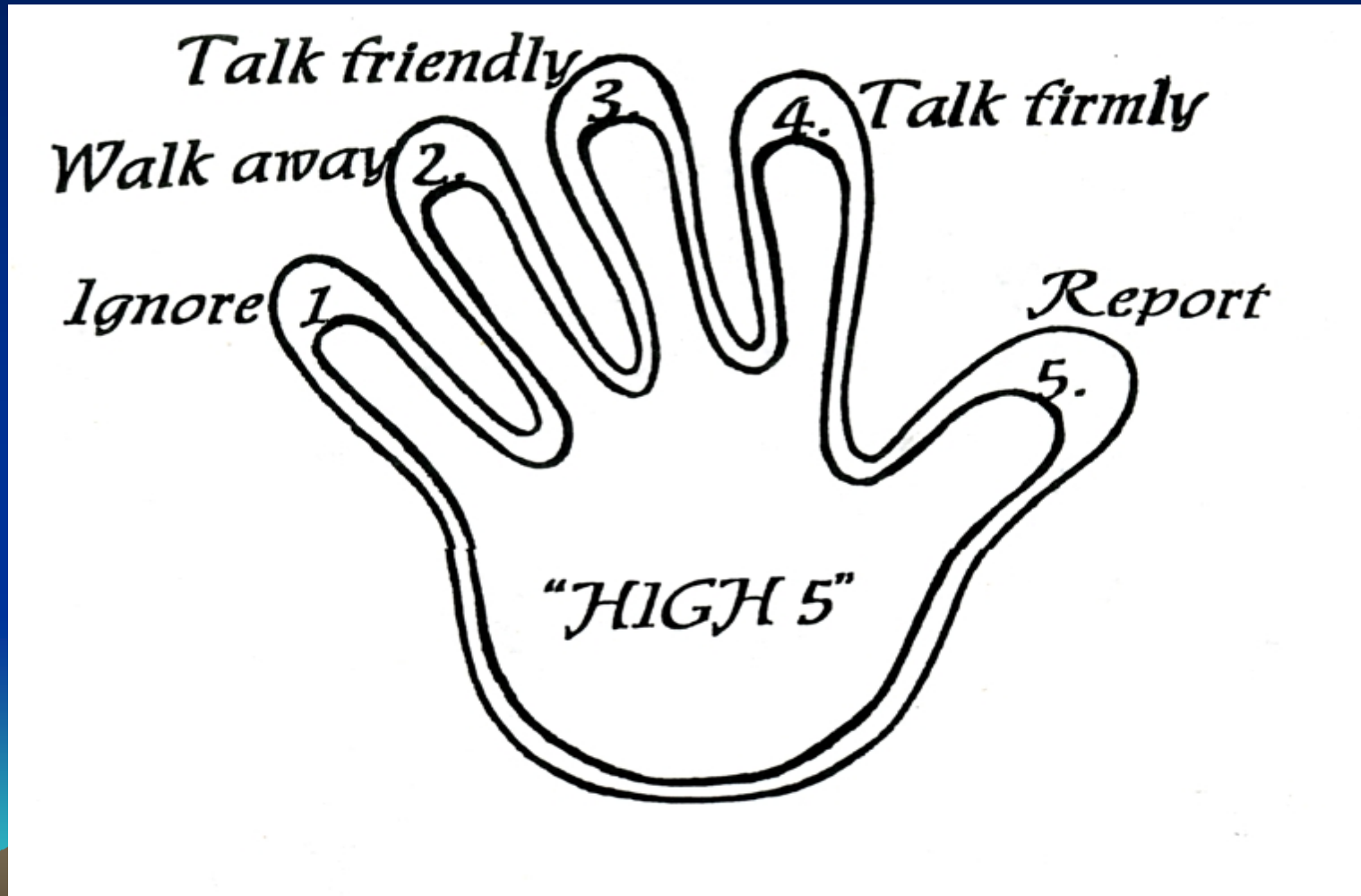
- Being unprejudiced
- Being cooperative and empathic
- Resisting negative group pressure
- Self-acceptance, as an antidote to discouragement

Skills

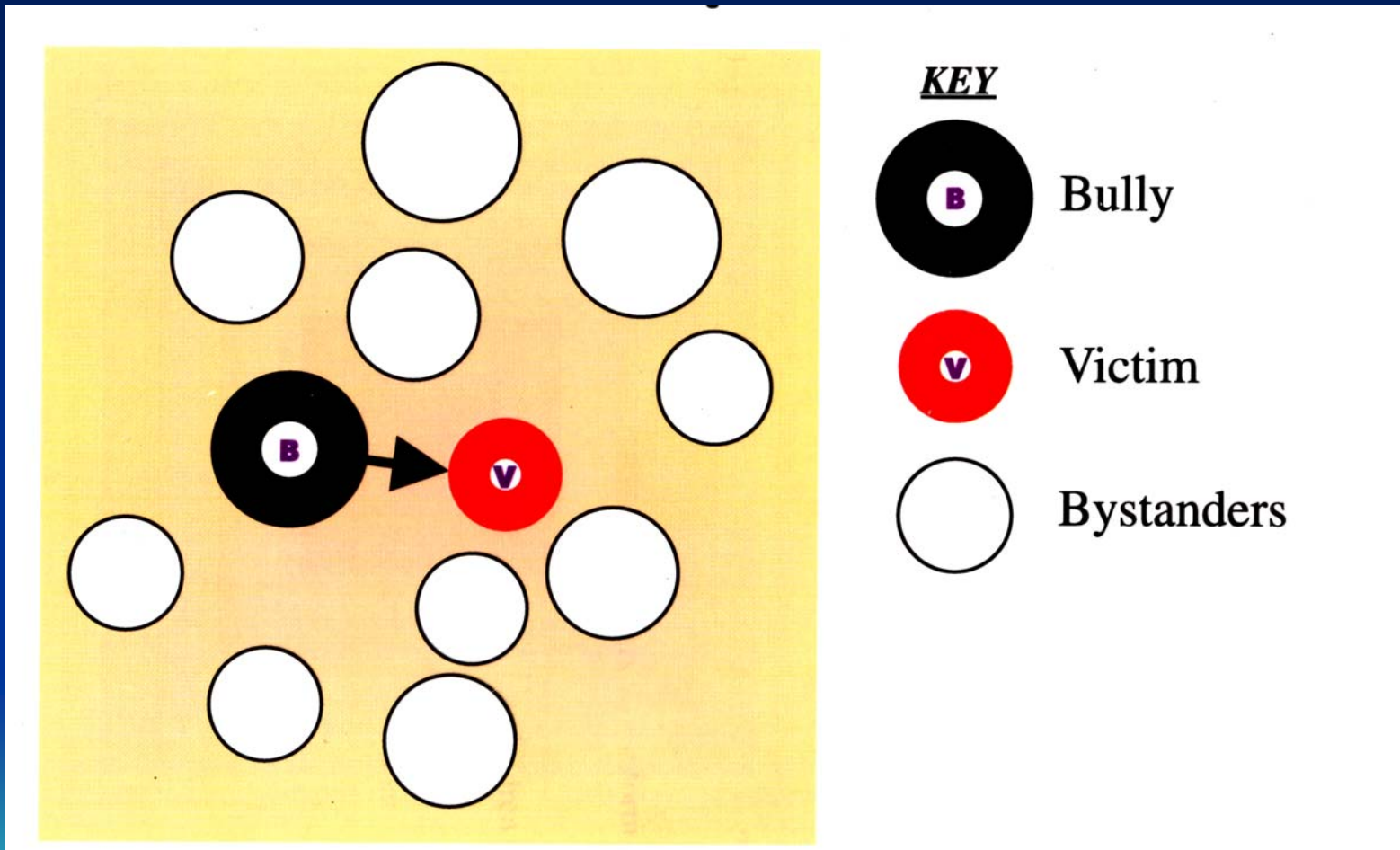
- Being assertive and not acting aggressively
- Resolving differences constructively
- Helping others who are being bullied, as a good bystander.
- Reacting appropriately and effectively if bullied



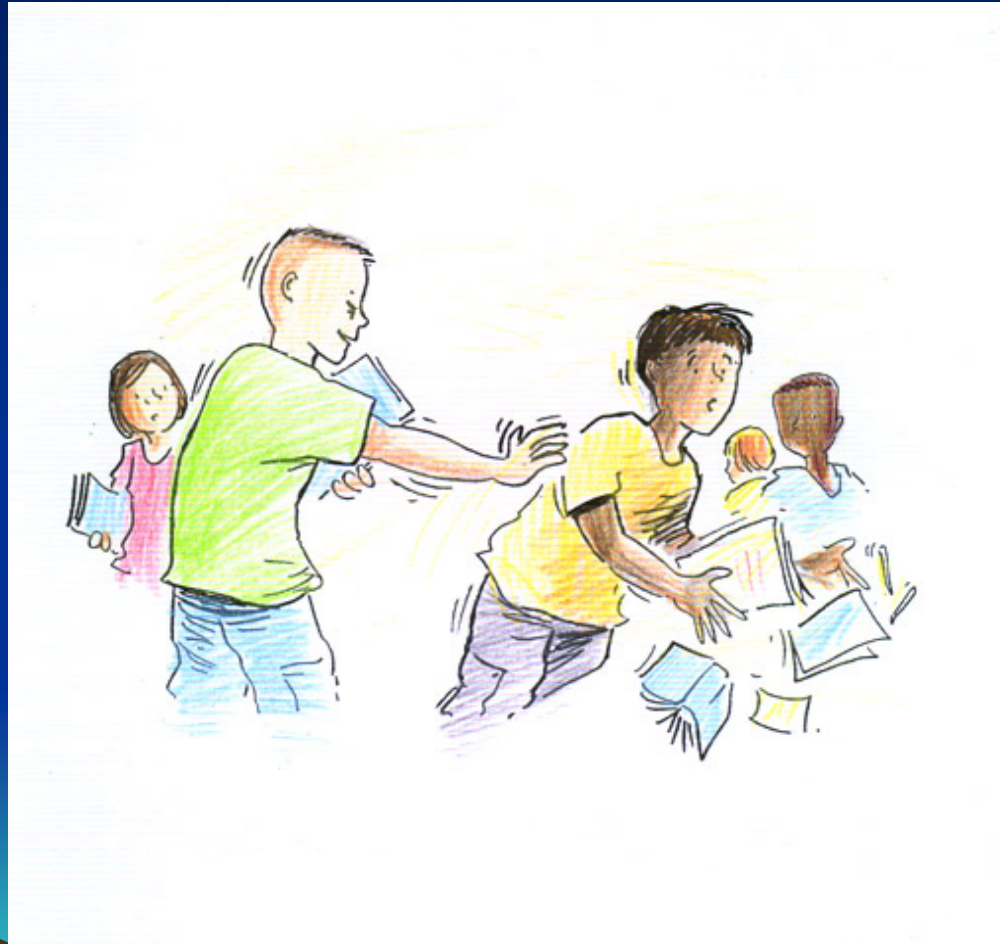
Graduated responding



The bystander situation



Physical bullying with bystanders present

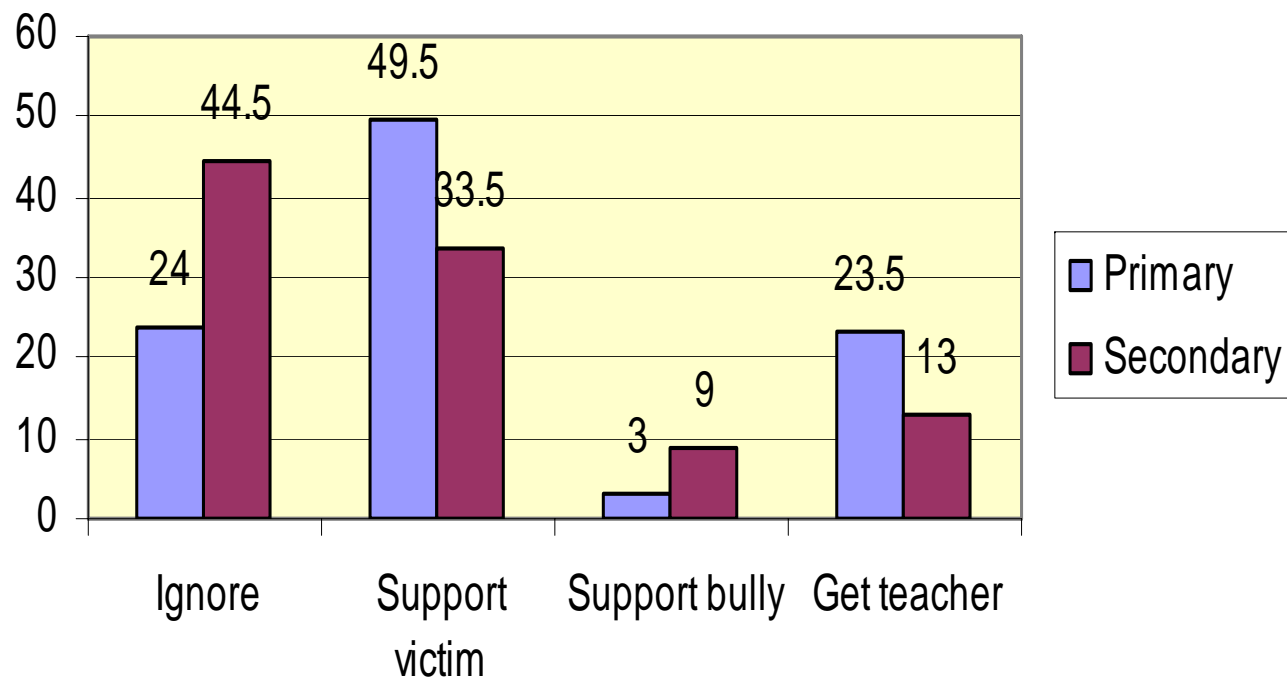




What would you do as a bystander ?



Distribution of responses



Why bystanders do as they do

- Although there can be many reasons for action or non-action, clearly **beliefs and attitudes** are important
- Hence it is valuable for teachers and parents to explore those attitudes with children
- We find that although a good number are reluctant to intervene (sometimes because of the danger to them) many give strong moral reasons for helping the victim.
- By helping children to consider what others (especially their friends) think, interventions can be promoted – with due caution !



- All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing

Edmund Burke



Intervening in cases of bullying

- The Use of Rules and Sanctions (The Olweus Program)
- Empowering the target of bullying
- Mediation
- Restorative Justice
- The Support Group Method (Of Maines and Robinson)
- The Method of Shared Concern (The Pikas Method).



- ‘She was wise, subtle, and knew more than one way to skin a cat.’ -- Mark Twain, from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889)
- Or to skin a bully !



What parents can do

- Help your infant to become securely attached
- Take care over the use of Child Care centres
- Avoid styles of parenting known to increase a child's involvement in bullying
 - Cold, over-controlling
 - Neglectful
 - Restrictive or over-protective

Attitudes that parents can promote

- Acceptance of others and abhorrence of prejudice
- Independence of negative peer group pressure
- The ethic of: Do unto others as you would they do unto you



Interests and skills parents can promote

- Encourage a child's positive interests: a child who has deeply felt interests is a less vulnerable child
- Encourage the development of social skills: especially appropriate assertiveness and the capacity to make friends
- Encourage the child to experience the joys of cooperation and helping others.



Parent's handling of cases: when a child is being bullied

- Listen to the child, offer support; don't judge or offer soft reassurances
- Seek to understand just what has happened
- Explore options
- If necessary – ideally with the child's approval – share the problem with the school
- Work **with** the school, but be prepared to stand firm if the school is not helpful – and explore other avenues.



Generally quite mistaken strategies

- Tell the school what they must do about it.
- Immediately accuse the school of negligence and threaten to go to the press or sue.
- Seek out the bully and chastise him/her
- Confront the parent of the bully and sort it out with that person



Other roles for parents

- **Selecting a school** – becomes most relevant if the child is known to be quite vulnerable (Ask about the School Anti-bullying Policy and procedures)
- **Supporting and advising the school** through attending meetings and making suggestions. (Parents are often more concerned with the problem than teachers and sometimes more informed).



Websites

- Ken Rigby's website:
www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/
- For the DVD on the Method of Shared Concern:
- www.readymade.com.au/method



Book for parents



Children & Bullying

How Parents and Educators Can
Reduce Bullying at School

 **Blackwell**
Publishing

Kenneth Rigby