



HELPING HANDS

- Early identification of hidden bullying
- Togetherness, inclusion, teamwork, psychological safety



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So what is Hidden Bullying?

Bullying that is visible to the students but deliberately hidden from teachers and school authorities.

According to Martin (2005) bullying 'rarely appears on the menu of problems that beset teachers', because it 'is silent and smooth on the surface' (Vaillancourt, 2007)

Victim, perpetrator, students all collude.

Schools / DES exhort students to report bullying, but very few do:-

- 85% of teenagers do not report
- 77% of 10 year olds do not report

(Growing up in Ireland survey)

Cineáltas – Key Principles

- Prevention
- Support
- Oversight
- Community

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Understanding the Psychological structure of the classroom

- We can ensure *physical* safety at school
- *Psychological* safety more challenging to identify
- Psychological structure of relationship dynamics in the peer group is frequently ***invisible to teachers***
- Focus is on learning – not on how to relate
- Cineáltas / Wellbeing programme



Understanding The Bullying Dynamic

- Perpetrator seeks a target to gain power in peer group – hides intention to harm
- Not a behaviour problem – a power abuse problem
- Perpetrator makes the problem appear like a conflict
- Targets fear the articulate skills of the perpetrator
- Targets aware of the lack of tangible evidence

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Bullying – not a behaviour problem
Does not respond to sanctions

An abuse of power problem
Need to reset the power dynamics

Teachers cannot always see the power dynamics at play in the peer group
To reset power dynamics we need to recognise them

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Understanding victims Fears

- **Shame:** *'I'm ashamed of being a victim, it means I'm a wimp, less of a person'*
- **Denial:** Students do not want to acknowledge that they are victims
'If I'm not a victim I am a normal student, this is not happening to me'
'Maybe it might stop or go away'

Denial can be the only protection available to some victims. It is important not to try and remove it when other protections are not in place

- **Self attribution:** *'maybe its my fault, perhaps I caused it'*
- **Confusion:** The perpetrator can become *'so nice'* to the victim if they suspect a change in the relationship dynamic, or they can use a combination of inclusion one day and exclusion the next

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Fear of others

- Perpetrator and peer group

- The perpetrator has all the power, some targets refer to their *'incredible'* power (often not visible to parents or teachers)
- Victims feel in an entirely unequal contest
- They fear provoking an angry bully who would *'lash out'* in a worse manner if bullying is reported
- Terrified to mention the perpetrator's name (so how can they report?)

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Fear of others

- Perpetrator and peer group

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- The peer group will punish 'ratting', 'snitching' by further rejection and exclusion - unbearable for already vulnerable and rejected students - hanging on at the edge of the group
- Exclusion from the peer group, frequently perceived to be an unbearable fate
- *my throat gets dried up ... yea it (throat) gets too dry and yea it just does that'*



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Twin Problems – bullying behaviour is unreported / unseen

Bullying behaviour that is reported may not be bullying

- it may be a conflict or
- the perpetrator may report that they are being bullied

The peer group bystanders

Bullying is a group process.

Bystanders may feel frightened when they witness the treatment of the target



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- A powerful aggressor with high levels of social skills can manipulate the peer group and use it as an instrument of aggression.
- It is not possible for bystanders to stand up or intervene if they do not have the personal power or the social status in the peer group to do so
- They especially cannot stand up to a powerful perpetrator who is frequently able and prepared to punish them



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- This is especially so where the bullying is subtle, easily denied by the perpetrator and difficult for the victim to put into words
- Powerless bystanders recognise the danger they face. They are unlikely to reveal hidden bullying as they know that they too will be targeted if they break the unspoken code
- Their powerlessness is real but is often not well understood by adults who exhort bystanders to report

An example from the adult world exemplifies

(The Neary Case – Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital,
Drogheda)

This excerpt from the report of Judge Harding Clarke (2006, p. 32) crystalizes the silence that surrounds bullying:

'No one saw anything out of the ordinary... not the patients, their partners nor their families...not the junior doctors... [nor] registrars...not the anaesthetists...not the surgical nurses...not the midwives...not the pathologists and technicians...not the matrons...not the sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary...not one of the various GP's...not any of the parties who read the maternity hospital's biennial report in the years when it was published. No one made a formal complaint, and no one questioned openly'.

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What is Sociometry ^{1/3}

- Those who seek to dominate may resort to hidden bullying which requires an individual to 'put his / her intentions to harm another person in a favourable light'
- Sociometry accesses the hidden world. It does not rely on visible behaviours
- Asking choices in a specific context
- Student voice

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The Power of Sociometry ^{2/3}

- Time consuming traumatic investigations are removed
- A 'heat map' of relationship dynamics
- It can focus the actions of school authorities on hidden problems and prevent escalation



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The Power of Sociometry 3/3


- It also assigns students to classroom teams for optimally effective teamwork
- It can ensure that all students are included and are on a team where they feel wanted or welcome
- It identifies the social status of students in relation to their peers, revealing the underlying psychological structure of classroom relationships
- In an unsafe environment, victims deny the bullying - an (ineffective) self-protective measure, it can penetrate this denial

Test results for Class 4 Willow Mr. Ryan


McMullan	Daniel	0.52	-3.24	R	1
Murphy	Conor	-1.27	0.62	N	9
Noonan	Eimear	0.18	2.06	L	9
O'Brien	Shaun	-0.06	-3.07	R UN	1
O'Kennedy	Michelle	0.71	-3.43	R	1
Petkus	Sofija	-0.27	0.86	UC	4
Power	Nicole	0.16	1.67	L	7
Stack	Barry	-0.1	0.28	A	3
Walsh	Amy	-0.89	0.24	UC	6

3

 Update team size

 Back to test selection

Behaviour of Perpetrator/Bully	Behaviour of Target/Victim
<p>Well behaved Visible and outspoken, impress their teachers and be well liked by them and display leadership skills</p>	<p>Well behaved Quiet, unseen and unobtrusive</p>
<p>Disruptive Loud, disrespectful, aggressive, intimidating, conflictual and threatening behaviour</p>	<p>Disruptive Awkward, disorganised, undisciplined, irritate peers and exasperate teachers</p>
<p>Angry Quick to anger and rage, displaying proactive aggression. Rarely feel regret. Hostile attributional bias</p>	<p>Angry Reactive aggression to unseen provocation. Typically feel regret afterwards Self attributional bias</p>
<p>Normal Attendance</p>	<p>Frequent absence / illness</p>



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Overview

Helping Hands

Three Parts

- Sociometric Software Diagnostic Instrument
- Teacher Professional Learning
 - 5 online sessions
 - Live ongoing sessions
 - Dedicated support officer
- Interventions
 - Individual interventions
 - Core Team Interventions
 - Class Interventions

OVERSIGHT

Core Team

- Roll out – Team based
- Student Support Team,
- Management Team,
- Wellbeing Team,
- Helping Hands Team

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SUPPORT Interventions

- Class Teamwork
- Support vulnerable students – Empathic interviews
- Support for vulnerable student teams
- Removing inappropriate power
- Supporting positive leadership
- Cooperative Learning
- Kindness template

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Prevention :

- Helping Hands diagnostic sociogram identifies vulnerable, isolated, rejected students and identifies high status students who can positively (or negatively) impact classroom relationships

Support :

- Helping Hands 4 levels of interventions
- Ongoing expert professional learning
- Helping Hands dedicated school support officer
- structured peer support amongst students

Oversight :

- Core Team upskilled and empowered to lead the school community Wellbeing and Anti-Bullying Prog
- Core Team link with Teaching Team
- Core team engage with identified vulnerable students

Community :

- parents empowered to support the school and their children (rather than simply report problems)
- psychologically safe school and class cultures created