Lesson 2: Roles in bullying and cyberbullying

- 2.1 The protagonists of bullying
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- 2.3 Exercise

2.1 The protagonists of bullying

Bullying is a relational phenomenon in which there are at least two co-players, but there is also the participation of other actors.

Thus, there are several figures:

● The child or young person (CYP) engaged in bullying behaviour: is actually the one who commits acts of bullying.

● The helper: he is a follower of the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour. He often acts in a bullying manner as well.

● The supporter: is the one who by laughing, inciting or simply observing tends to reinforce the bully's behavior

● The target: is the one who suffers the bullying.

● The upstander or defender: is the one who stands up for the victim by trying to console him or her or to make the bullying stop

● The outsider: is a passive bystander who tries to stay out of the situation

https://www.youtube.com/embed/85cLpFcpagg?ab_channel=NoelleKinman

The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour

There are different types of bullies. In general, the definition refers to a person who feels the need to dominate over others, feels a strong need for power and self-assertion, and tries to impose their wishes or dominance on another person or group. The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour tends to seek to dominate others by instilling fear, targeting weaker or defenceless members of the group, and seeking to recruit the complicity of other group members (bystanders). In most cases he/she uses physical force, relational dominance, or social popularity within the group to achieve their

objective: he/she usually has a physical build that allows him/her to do so and is frequently supported by supposed helpers.

CYP who engage in bullying behaviour can do so for many reasons. In fact, there is evidence that CYP can switch roles depending on circumstance or people. There is also evidence that those who engage in bullying behaviour can also have low self-esteem, be vulnerable, or have experienced bullying themselve. Typically, he/she is a person who likes to stand up for him/herself, who presents dominant personality and a decidedly impulsive temperament, which easily manifests itself when he feels under pressure. The intention is to frighten others into perceiving their strength and power and to try to gain control over the victim. In reality, those that engage in bullying behaviour towards others may be a fragile person who uses this behavior to hide their perceived "flaws" as best he/she can.

The target

The individual targeted within a bullying interaction generally presents as someone who differs or is distinct from the perceived norms or expectations of the group. Research has shown that regular targeted individuals in bullying share a number of key features. These are

- Children who have difficulties in social understanding relationship skills (Garner & Stow Hinton, 2010)
- Low social status within the group (Card & Hodges, 2007)
- Perceived ‘difference’ or deviation from peer group norms (Horowitz et al, 2004)
- Present as either passive/submissive or as provocative victims (Olweus, 1993)

The outcomes of being targeted by bullying interactions can mean these young people become more anxious and insecure than others. They may also become socially withdrawn and have low self esteem or views of themselves.

Some indicators of violence are encountered in the victim:

- Anxious Symptoms: physical and psychomotor agitation, nervous tics, night terrors and altered sleep-wake rhythm, altered appetite, widespread fear and avoidance of group settings.
- Somatic Symptoms: stomach pain, gastrointestinal problems, headaches, dermatitis.
- Depressive Symptoms: apathy and disinterest, fatigue, sadness, asthenia, sudden bursts of anger, unwarranted isolation

Bystanders

Bystanders are students who witness bullying. They can be powerful influencers — how they react can either encourage or inhibit those who bully others. There are different types of bystanders:

- followers (assistants) - do not initiate, but take an active role in the bullying behaviour

- supporters (reinforcers) - do not actively attack the target, but give positive feedback to the initiator of the bullying behaviour, providing an audience by laughing and making other encouraging gestures
- defenders - dislike the bullying and try to help the target by intervening, getting teacher support (using safe telling) or providing direct support to the target
- outsiders - stay away, do not take sides with anyone or become actively involved, but allow the bullying to continue by their 'silent approval'.

Bystanders can play a number of different roles:

- helping students who are engaged in bullying behaviour and actively joining in
- encouraging or showing approval to the students who are engaging in bullying behaviour
- doing nothing or being passive
- defending or supporting the target (the student who is being bullied) by intervening, getting help or comforting them.

Bystanders who take no action or behave in ways that give silent approval (watching, nodding, turning a blind eye) encourage the bullying behaviour to continue. Teaching bystanders to respond appropriately (by discouraging, intervening in or reporting bullying) can be an effective way to limit and prevent bullying.

ACTIVITY

- How can you pass from being a bystander to be an upstander? (There is no right answer).

2.2 How to react in case of bullying

Am I a Bullying target?

To know whether you are being bullied or not, it is important to check the attitude of the alleged bully towards you, but what you feel inside is also important, both physically and psychologically. Let's see together what these signs are, how they manifest themselves and how to remedy them!

If one or more people have targeted you with insults or threats and the attacks have lasted for some time, then it is likely that you are being bullied.

A fight with friends, for example during a football match, can always happen, but for there to be bullying, it means that there is an intention to hurt you in order to frighten you into submission and eventually isolate you from your fellow students.

There are other signs that will enable you and your parents to recognize if you are being bullied.

- If no longer feel like inviting your classmates or peers home and spend less and less time with them
- If you no longer go on the Internet, or vice versa, check your social media often
- If you are afraid to go to school or other places of gathering that you used to frequent

Other alarms can be physical discomfort before going to places of gathering where bullying happens:

- stomach ache
- headache
- humour swings
- shoots of anger

https://www.youtube.com/embed/JKYR9xxF_Hg?ab_channel=Psych2Go

Advice for the Target - How to react

1. The bully's goal is to undermine your personality by instilling fear in you. If you do not show fear, he will lose interest and give up.

2. If a bully approaches you while you are at school, in the pool or elsewhere, keep doing what you were doing and do not listen to him. Think about something else, if you are with other classmates

keep talking to them.

3. Bullies usually pick on people they consider weaker than they actually are. You are not less strong - and strong does not only mean physical strength - even if the bully wants you to believe so. Have confidence in yourself and do not give in to his provocations.

4. Bullies feel strong by attacking one person, but it is very difficult for them to do this with a group. If you don't feel safe, go out with your friends and don't stay alone at times when you think you might meet him.

5. Do not be afraid to ask for help, it is very important that you do so and it is not an act of weakness. If you are being bullied, talk to your mum and dad and possibly a teacher straight away. If you can't talk, get help from a close friend.

6. Tell exactly what happened, where and when, what the bully did, how you reacted and how long it has been going on.

Why is it important to react?

You may find it difficult to talk about what happened to you. This is normal. You feel ashamed and embarrassed, and it is precisely on these things that the bully builds his strength. This is especially the case if the offense is based on something that you perceive as your fault, and then you will tend not to talk about it because you would be forced to point out what you see as a problem.

You will also tend to remain silent out of fear that the bully will retaliate, but this will only make things worse. Resisting insults will only complicate the situation.

As you can see, because of bullying your mental well-being is also at stake, so you should never neglect the problem. Talk about it with your parents or teacher and also ask what preventive measures and behaviors are available to counteract bullying.

2.3 Exercise

Read the following story

“I've always wondered why girls were meaner than boys when it came to fights. It was a day like any other that I've been trying to cancel for weeks. I was walking up the stairs, it started as a special day: backpack and a big smile to my dad who had accompanied me to school. He worked a lot because we were alone, I lived with him since he divorced my mom. They argued every day and finally, when I was starting sixth grade, the judge assigned me to him because he was the only one with a steady job.

Returning to that day, that awful day... I was on the stairs and I was happy, after the fourth or fifth step I felt my backpack pull me back, a strong and decisive tug that made me fall backwards. I did not understand what was happening. Ache. A shooting pain in the end of the back. I had pounded on the steps but then pain again. The head. A great male

to the head. In front of me Clara and Valentina: "So you learn to say that there is homework when the teachers forget it!". They walked away giggling and I just stood there in disbelief.

It hurt more inside than out. I arrived in class only a little late because I didn't have

the courage to enter in tears and I went to the bathroom to rinse my face.

"Everything alright, Altegni?" "Yes, professor" I limited myself to answering, pretending to be calm as I heard Clara and Valentina giggling again. I spent recess sitting at

thinking about whether or not to tell my dad what had happened, but he was so tired when he came home at nine in the evening and I didn't want to worry him too, it was just a coincidence, just a stupid gesture. I thought so, yet I was wrong.

The following two months were hell: jokes, objects from my desk that ended up in the basket and every recess passed without eating, because the snack was intended for those who weren't full that day.

I felt worse and worse, the days at school seemed to never end and I couldn't wait to go home, where I spent the afternoons alone and sad, closed in on myself like flowers at night that close to protect themselves from the cold while I I felt that cold all around me.

My friends, whom I had known since primary school, began to notice my different behavior, made so by those gestures that hurt me more every day. Initially I didn't have an answer to give to their questions, I was sick but I didn't want to sadden them, no one would want to tell such ugly and sad things to their friends; I was too ashamed. My father didn't notice that I was losing weight, he didn't notice that I spent hours crying alone in the bathroom and I didn't feel like talking anymore.

I was truly alone, alone as when one has a big problem and is so afraid to tell it.

At school the situation was only getting worse, I was more and more dominated by what

it happened and recess was the worst time.

“Why can't I find the money on my bank anymore?” Valentina said arrogantly. I stammered

something indistinct.

"How come you can't talk anymore? And yet you talked a lot with the professors.” I lowered my eyes.

“Look me in the face! Oh no, Mommy and Daddy were too busy arguing to teach you any manners."

I didn't answer.

“I TOLD YOU TO LOOK AT ME!”

PAF extension

I slapped her, I never thought I could hit my partner

classy, I would never have done it, it wasn't like me so I immediately regretted it.

"How dare you stupid!" Valentina didn't expect it, she thought she could insult me when and how much she felt like it. She ran to the bathroom with her friends chasing her and me with my hand tingling in pain.

That was the last time I rebelled because that same afternoon Valentina

he filled social media with photos showing his red cheek and writings full of hate. Only that

done, there was no trace of what she had been doing to me for months; there was no evidence of what his

friends had done on my wrists every time they tugged on me, there wasn't one

single word that showed who the real victim was. I was tired of everything, I even decided not to go to school the next day and then the next day and so until the end of the week. Dad knew nothing.

The following Monday I entered the classroom and found a new teacher, young, on

thirty, dark hair full of curls, a gentle smile that warmed my heart for a while

moment, making me forget where I was.

"Hello, and you are...?" “Michela, um... Michela Altegni”. She must have been a substitute teacher or something because I'd never seen her, not even at school.

“Hello guys, I'm Professor Nille, Francesca Nille. I will teach you maths and physics for the next three months, i.e. until the end of this school year, because your teacher has had surgery and therefore you will be my crew for a while” He was a bubbly person and reminded me of who I was some time before.

The following days no one bothered me anymore except for a few whispers and shouts at the bathroom and at the time change, a few jokes about my clothing. Professor Nille would help us, explain things to me over and over if I didn't understand and push me to do my best, calling me to the blackboard and shushing some of the usual giggles. I was passionate about scientific subjects and was almost happy to go to school; in the end I had always liked studying and learning new things.

Everything was going smoothly when my birthday arrived and the nightmare manifested itself all at once. The whole class was full of photos and posters, there were animals and monsters

with my face and banana peels and scraps of food on my counter. That day at

first hour the class assembly was scheduled and I had told Professor Nille, that there

he had granted the time, that I would come in halfway through the hour to go and do the analyses

of blood in the village clinic. Apparently someone heard me. I was petrified at that scenario, incredulous because I thought it was all over. But no. It wasn't finished at all. With tears streaming down my face and my hands shaking with fear and the

strong discouragement, I felt pulled towards the door by continuous pushes from my classmates who had surrounded me saying "now she's not happy anymore" "she thought she could get away with it" "that's how she learns" "this time she'll understand she's a loser" "the little did little princess trip over the slipper?” They opened the door and kicked me out of the classroom. I ran to the bathroom, I didn't want to believe it. "Michael?" I stopped sobbing and lifted my face from the sink I had thrown myself over to wash away the tears and sadness that seemed

sew in my eyes. I saw Professor Nille, she had a worried look and she brought me

moment. "Tell me what happened Michela, calm down and breathe"

I told her about my situation, my past with my classmates and as soon as I arrived

at what had happened that day she ran away and I heard her scream: she had entered my class and had seen what I had seen just before.

You can imagine what happened after that day, my dear, they called grandpa and grandma, the principal made a long speech to all of us in the class, but then I decided to change schools; the grandfather asked for a transfer here, in Viterbo ... right where I met your dad!"

“Santa Stephen!” Francesca said, my little Francesca who was doing at school

a project against bullying with the province of Viterbo and he asked me if I had ever experienced something similar. That was enough for me to begin to recall those black months of school. “My love always remember that all those things that seem like a joke, if

they remain isolated facts... all together and repeated over time have a different name. It's about bullying and you love, you have to call him by his name, your name is Francesca and he's Bullying, but I hope you never have to remember this word, it will mean that this bad bad thing that happened to mom will never happen again and it will only be something old, like prehistory.” I gave her a kiss on the forehead because perhaps it was too serious a conversation for a girl of the first grade secondary school, but I think she really understood

that bad things like this shouldn't happen and in everything they should be called by their name and denounced. Bullying sounds like a game but it's the game no child should have to learn.

Story taken from:

https://www.focusjunior.it/junior-reporter-news/

racconto-bullismo-michela-fiore-di-notte/

Now it's your turn!

After reading this story, why don't you try asking your parents if they had similar experiences at your age as Michela's mom?

Do an interview based on these questions:

1. Hi Mom and Dad, what were you like as children?
2. Were you shy or sociable?
3. Did you like to study?
4. Did your friends involve you in afternoon activities?
5. Or were you mostly the ones who involved your friends?
6. Now that you are older and you are my parents, do you know what bullying is...but did you ever hear about it as children?
7. Do you remember incidents that can be described with the term "bullying" today?
8. If yes, can you tell me about at least one incident?
9. Have you talked to your parents about it?

Thank you for answering my questions! You know, I have been told that it's important to talk to an adult about these issues.