APPENDIX C

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is a professional organization representing school psychologists in the United States and abroad, helping advance effective practices to improve students' learning, behavior, and mental health, as well as supporting school psychologists in their professional practice. The following is a selection of NASP resources relevant to Kyle's specific needs, offering useful information and additional recommendations for his family and teachers. These resources can help deepen the understanding of Kyle's challenges and provide practical strategies to support him in various situations:

- Home and School Anger and Aggression (S2H1, S2H2): These guides present valuable advice for handling anger and aggression in both the home and school environments, providing family members and educators with actionable strategies.
- Bullying (S2H4, S2H5): By offering insights on addressing and preventing bullying at home and in school settings, these resources aim to cultivate a safe space for all students.
- Gang Involvement (S2H11): This informative handout sheds light on recognizing and addressing gang involvement, while proposing ways to redirect Kyle's energy toward constructive activities and connections.
- Lying, Stealing, Cheating (S2H12, S2H13): With a focus on managing dishonest behaviors, these materials present practical solutions for both home and school contexts.
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (S2H14, S2H15): These resources delve into dealing with oppositional behaviors and provide guidance for supporting children facing these challenges.
- Peer Relationships (S2H16): This helpful resource offers methods for nurturing healthy peer relationships in school settings, promoting positive social experiences.
- Threat Assessment (S2H24): This crucial handout guides schools on evaluating and responding to threats or potentially harmful situations, ensuring a secure learning environment.
- Discipline at Home (S6H3): This resource assists parents in establishing and maintaining consistent discipline practices, contributing to a more stable home setting.
- Using Praise and Rewards (S6H4): This insightful handout suggests effective ways to utilize praise and rewards to encourage positive behavior and acknowledge accomplishments.
- Employing these resources, Kyle, his family, and teachers can work together to better comprehend and manage his unique challenges, ultimately helping him excel academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home

CAROLINE BOXMEYER, NICOLE POWELL, JOHN LOCHMAN, & TAMMY BARRY

INTRODUCTION

Emotional outbursts and aggressive behavior are fairly common in young children. These behaviors typically decrease as children approach school age and develop better verbal and self-regulatory skills. When a child's angry outbursts and aggressive behavior occur more frequently than among other children, it is important that these difficulties be addressed early. If not, they tend to persist and increase the child's risk for a variety of later negative outcomes, including delinquency, academic difficulties, substance use, conduct problems, and poor adjustment. Verbal and physical aggression are often the first signs of some childhood psychiatric disorders, including oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD). Both of these disorders occur in up to 10% of the general population (higher among males), making it all the more important to recognize and treat aggressive behaviors early. Early onset (before age 10) of symptoms of ODD and CD increases the risk that an antisocial behavior pattern may continue into adulthood. Thus, early treatment and prevention, before a formal disorder is diagnosed, are critically important.

This handout is to help parents of children and adolescents who often are angry and aggressive. However, most parents may find many of the recommendations helpful.

Characteristics of childhood anger and aggression can vary from problems controlling emotions and mood to severe assaultive and manipulative behaviors. Types of anger and aggression are exhibited in varying degrees and can include behaviors such as the following:

- Arguing and yelling
- Bullying—including verbal and physical, such as calling names or pushing, and cyberbullying, or using e-mail, social media, or the Internet to intimidate others
- Threatening verbally or physically
- Starting rumors
- Excluding others
- Striking back in anger
- Using force to get something they want
- Physically fighting

Notably, aggressive behaviors do not always involve physical contact with others. Verbal aggression in the elementary school years may include starting rumors, excluding others, and arguing. Children's aggression can involve deliberate efforts to bully, intimidate, and gain social dominance over others, or it can be intense episodes of physiological arousal and failure to regulate emotions. Such emotional arousal often occurs immediately after the child perceives a threat. Emotionally charged aggression often occurs in children who are highly irritable and easily angered, and can be accompanied by, or lead to, the child experiencing anxiety and depression. Whether aggression is deliberate or results from poor emotional regulation, interventions should be designed appropriately. Interventions for children who primarily display deliberate aggression should focus on teaching them about the consequences of their behavior, whereas interventions for children whose aggression arises from poor emotional regulation should focus instead on helping them gain greater control of their emotions.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

Various factors contribute to the development of anger and aggression problems in children. Children who engage in deviant behavior in childhood, rather than

in adolescence, are more likely to display the most persistent, severe, and violent antisocial behavior over time. Indeed, childhood aggression is often viewed as an indication of a broader pattern of problems, frequently involving rule breaking and defiance toward adults (known as oppositional and defiant behaviors and covert rule-breaking behaviors) that could lead to more serious violations in adolescence.

Early Signs of Anger and Aggression Problems

The first signs of children's problems with anger and aggression may start very early, such as in infants with irritable, difficult-to-soothe temperaments. Early behavioral problems in toddlers and preschoolers, such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, and temper tantrums, may eventually develop into more serious disruptive and aggressive behaviors, such as arguing with adults, defying rules, bullying others, and starting fights. Since almost all young children have some temper tantrums at this age, the focus of this handout is on children who have temper tantrums of unusually high intensity, frequency, and severity, and who have great difficulty regulating their emotions, or calming down.

Difficulties in Parent–Child Relationships

Children with difficult temperaments and early emerging behavioral problems often fail to develop positive attachments with their parents or significant caregivers. As a result, they may become involved in increasingly hostile and coercive exchanges with their parents and other significant adults, including teachers. Parents of children with disruptive behavior problems often display high rates of harsh and inconsistent discipline and show low rates of positive involvement. In some cases, this response occurs because the child's difficult behavior makes it difficult for parents to provide warm and nurturing responses. In this context, the parents' normal ways of parenting, which may be very useful with a sibling, may not be sufficient to meet the demands of a child with impulsive behavior and poor emotional regulation. Parents of such children will learn that they need to set very clear rules and expectations and have flexible discipline strategies and problem-solving skills. Highly punishing parenting behaviors can make matters worse, increasing the coercive exchanges between parents and their aggressive children.

Social Difficulties

As children experience more coercive interactions with parents, they may begin to use similar behaviors in other social interactions, leading to increasingly aggressive and disruptive behavior with peers and adults. After repeated coercive interactions, children may begin to have problems processing social information or getting along with others. Such problems include relying on aggressive solutions when presented with social conflicts, such as hitting or kicking to get a toy from another child; expecting that aggressive solutions will work because physical intimidation has worked in the past; and having trouble interpreting social information accurately, such as seeing the harmless actions of others as intentionally hostile. Such social misperceptions have been documented as early as preschool.

Environmental Factors

The environment in which a child develops plays an important role in shaping the child's behavior. A number of environmental factors have been shown to increase children's risk of aggressive behavior. Children who are exposed to violence, either in their homes or in their neighborhoods, are at increased risk of exhibiting aggressive behavior themselves. Family stressors, such as lack of or loss of financial resources, a parent's substance use or mental health problems, high parental stress, and low parental social support, put young children at increased risk. Parents who are themselves depressed because of the stressors in their lives tend to become more inconsistent in their discipline efforts and less supportive of their children, leading to increasing rates of oppositional (defiant) and aggressive behaviors. Poor or unavailable parental supervision of children's activities also increases the risk of a child's aggressive behavior. A child who lives in a neighborhood with a high crime rate and low social cohesion will likely have fewer opportunities to connect in safe and positive ways with peers. These environmental characteristics often occur together, and children with multiple environmental risk factors tend to be at greatest risk. Such risk factors can affect the quality and nature of the parent's and child's relationship and the development of children's effective coping and social problem-solving skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preventing and Reducing Child Anger and Aggression Problems

Many children with anger and aggression problems will respond favorably to positive parenting techniques. Parents can help prevent and reduce

anger and aggression problems using the following recommendations.

1. ***Set up regular opportunities for parent and child "special time."*** Ideally, this would be at least 10–15 minutes each day in which you connect positively with your child and avoid arguments, criticism, or sensitive topics. Connecting in this way regularly can strengthen the bond between you and your child and reduce arguments.
2. ***Praise or reward your child for exhibiting positive behavior.*** Make an effort to notice when your child displays the positive opposite of a problem behavior and offer praise or a reward for this. For example, you can praise your child for playing cooperatively with a sibling rather than fighting, for following an instruction without talking back, or for staying calm when something does not go his or her way. See *Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home*, for specific recommendations for the best use of praise and rewards.
3. ***Develop and reinforce age-appropriate limits and consequences for your child.*** Children behave better when they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and when limits are enforced calmly and consistently. Establish family rules, such as "We solve problems using words and kind voices." Then, if your child yells or hits, take away access to video games for the rest of the night and explain that it is for breaking this rule.
4. ***Work with other adults who spend time with your child.*** Communicate closely with all of the adults who spend time with your child, such as your spouse, teachers, and coaches, to ensure that you are consistent in how you are reinforcing your child's positive behavior (e.g., solving problems calmly) and providing consequences for problem behavior (e.g., yelling, hitting, or refusing to follow directions).
5. ***Let your child see you resolve problems with others in a calm, respectful way.*** Talk with your child about the techniques you use, sharing how you know when you are beginning to feel angry, what you do to calm yourself down, how you try to see situations from others' perspectives, and how you try to resolve problems calmly and respectfully.
6. ***When you see your child becoming angry, provide coaching.*** Coach your child on how to notice when his or her body is starting to feel angry and on how to calm down. For example, say "I notice your voice getting louder and I can see that it is difficult for you and your sister to share the computer. Let's figure out a way for you each to have a turn."
7. ***Limit your child's exposure to anger and aggression.*** Limit your child's exposure to peers who encourage teasing or fighting. Also, limit your child's access to video games, television shows, or movies that model and reinforce violent behavior.
8. ***Manage the stress of parenting to better model calm problem-solving for your child.*** It is easier to handle difficult situations calmly when we feel less stressed ourselves. Care for yourself by limiting extra commitments and regularly taking time for yourself to relax and rejuvenate.
9. ***Teach your child skills for effectively expressing his or her needs.*** Children are less likely to use aggression or defiance as a means of getting what they want if they are able to discuss their needs with peers, parents, and teachers in a direct, respectful manner. For example, teach your child to make polite requests (e.g., suggest asking: "Can you please help stop my little brother from going in my room and taking my things?") and be responsive to reasonable requests.

Responding When a Child Has Anger and Aggression Problems

Children who develop problems with anger and aggression will need extra support from their parents and caregivers so that they can learn more effective strategies for expressing their feelings and getting their needs met. Mental health professionals can work with parents and children to provide personalized intervention and support. Parents are also advised to work with their child's teachers and school professionals, such as school psychologists, to ensure that the child's behavior is addressed consistently at home and at school. Parents can ask if their child needs special resources or services, such as counseling or anger management training, or special arrangements and accommodations in the classroom.

The following strategies will give parents and caregivers ideas to help their child develop self-control and learn how to deal with anger and aggression. These examples are commonly found in prevention and intervention programs and have been shown to be effective.

10. ***When your child shows anger and aggression, remain calm and model positive problem-solving.*** If you feel yourself becoming angry in response

to your child's anger, take a moment to calm yourself by practicing deep breathing or using coping self-statements before responding to your child. If you need more time and can step away from the situation, let your child know that you need to take a break. Be sure to state this in terms of your feelings and let your child know that you will return shortly (e.g., "I am starting to feel upset and I'll be able to work with you better in a few minutes when I am more calm"), so your child does not feel abandoned or blamed.

11. ***Ignore minor disruptive behaviors such as whining and complaining.*** Ignoring minor problem behaviors can be an effective way to decrease unwanted behaviors and reduce arguments with your child. However, do not ignore unsafe behavior. Provide attention and praise when your child stops the negative behavior. Also, do not be surprised if the problem behaviors initially increase before they get better. Children can be very persistent! It will be important to be consistent until a reduction occurs.
12. ***Respond quickly with consequences when your child breaks a rule or exhibits unsafe behavior.*** When your child does not follow instructions, breaks rules, or engages in aggressive behavior, provide an immediate, logical consequence in a calm but firm voice. Responses can include implementing a time-out, assigning extra work or chores, or revoking a privilege.
13. ***When your child is angry or aggressive, do not try to rationalize or argue with your child.*** Getting into a discussion about the aggressive behavior or explaining why you are imposing a consequence encourages a power struggle. Inform your child that you will discuss the situation later, when he or she is calm and can be receptive to talking about how to avoid similar problems in the future.
14. ***Help your child stop and think of effective ways to solve the problem.*** First, help your child describe what the problem is. Then discuss alternative responses (both positive and negative). Evaluate these alternatives and coach your child in selecting and enacting the best response. This will help your child practice real-life problem solving with adult guidance.
15. ***Remind your child to use relaxation techniques to calm down.*** These might consist of counting to 10, taking deep breaths, or using soothing self-talk (such as about making better choices when one feels less angry).
16. ***Help your child develop a list of coping statements to deal with anger.*** Practice these statements at calmer times so your child will be able to use the statements when provoked by others. Help your child memorize a few favorite coping statements, such as "Don't be a fool, keep your cool," "Grow up, don't blow up," or "Practice the golden rule." Then, when your child appears angry, coach him or her on using one of these coping statements or a coping statement specific to the situation, such as "It hurts to lose a game, but it won't help to take out my anger on my family and friends.").
17. ***Help your child recognize the feelings, behaviors, and thoughts that accompany anger.*** Physical signals of anger may include a racing heartbeat, faster breathing, and tense muscles. Behaviors may include slamming doors, stomping, and yelling. When your child notices those responses, you can also talk about the accompanying thoughts (such as "It isn't fair," or "Why am I always the one that gets blamed?") and about steps to manage anger when these signals appear. Anger management strategies that can be used include walking away, taking deep breaths, or saying coping statements.
18. ***Help your child think about what others may be thinking and feeling.*** If you are talking to your child about an event that made her or him angry, practice taking another person's perspective. For example, if your son thinks it isn't fair that he is being asked to take out the trash, help him see the situation from his sister's perspective (i.e., she unpacked the groceries and helped cook dinner before he got home). Or help your daughter consider how it makes others in the family feel when she complains about having to clean up the dinner dishes after she ate a nice meal that others worked hard to prepare.
19. ***Praise, encourage, and reinforce your child's use of the anger management strategies he or she is learning.*** Even when such use is not perfect, supporting the effort is important. Developing the ability to control strong feelings takes a long time and requires motivation, encouragement, continuing guidance, and support.
20. ***Set up a behavioral contract with your child.*** The contract should list positive behaviors that you expect and name a reward that your child can receive for meeting a certain number of these

behaviors. For example, if your child often argues, your target behavior is your child discussing something calmly. Rewards can be naturally occurring, such as getting more computer time, playing a game with a parent, or getting to watch a favorite television program.

21. ***Don't hesitate to seek help if you are very concerned about ongoing inappropriate behavior.*** Your physician or a teacher can help arrange a comprehensive evaluation by a qualified mental health professional to determine if more intensive treatment, such as individual or family therapy, is needed.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

www.aacap.org

The website of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry provides a thorough overview of current knowledge regarding the causes, symptoms, and treatment of oppositional defiant disorder (https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/resource_centers/odd/odd_resource_center_odd_guide.pdf).

https://www.livesinthebalance.org/parents-families

The website for Lives in the Balance provides resources for parents and families related to its Collaborative and Proactive Solutions model for handling children with challenging behavior, as well as links to related parenting resources.

http://yaleparentingcenter.yale.edu/

This website for the Yale Parenting Center provides resources related to the Kazdin Method for parenting children with oppositional defiant behavior, as well as links to related parenting resources.

Books

Barkley, R. A., & Benton, C. M. (2013). *Your defiant child: Eight steps to better behavior* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

This book provides practical, research-based advice for parenting a child with oppositional, defiant, and aggressive behavior.

Greene, R. W. (2014). *The explosive child: A new approach for understanding and parenting easily frustrated, chronically inflexible children*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

This book helps parents of children with emotional and behavior difficulties understand why and when their child displays challenging behaviors and how to respond in ways that are nonpunitive, nonadversarial, humane, and effective.

Kazdin, A. E. (2008). *The Kazdin method for parenting the defiant child.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This book gives parents specific strategies from a parenting program for children with oppositional defiant and aggressive behavior. The program has been proven effective in research studies.

Related Helping Handouts for Home

ADHD: Helping Handout for Home

Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home

Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior and Developing Self-Discipline: Helping Handout for Home

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home

Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for School

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INTRODUCTION

Anger and aggression among students is a common classroom problem. Not only does such behavior directly disrupt the classroom, but students who exhibit such problems can have persistent and negative outcomes. Problems can include academic difficulties, substance use, severe conduct problems and delinquency, and poor school adjustment overall. Moreover, verbal and physical aggression are often the first signs, and later the defining symptoms, of several childhood psychiatric disorders. Disorders include the disruptive behavior disorders of childhood—oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD)—which may affect as many as 10% of children, making the need to recognize and treat anger and aggression early all the more important, including within the school context.

Angry and aggressive behaviors that occur at school can vary widely. Although anger in itself is an acceptable human emotion, when students have difficulty coping with angry emotions or regulating their mood, their problems can multiply. If left unchecked, students' lack of adaptive coping can lead to aggressive behaviors such as arguing with other students or authority figures; bullying peers, including verbally, physically, and through cyberbullying; threatening others; excluding others; starting rumors; striking back in anger; manipulating to get something they want; and fighting. Although anger often precedes reactive forms of aggression—that is, responding to a real or perceived threat or wrongdoing—some aggressive behaviors are used deliberately to achieve a goal. Regardless of their initial cause or purpose, aggressive behaviors can be very disruptive in the school setting for the students, teachers, and peers. Therefore, it is imperative that school personnel have interventions that can prevent such behaviors as well as intervene when they occur.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

When selecting supports and interventions for anger and aggression in the schools, school counselors and teachers should consider several factors that contribute to students' behaviors, including developmental, biological, environmental, and cultural factors.

Developmental and Age Differences

Different types of interventions are more effective when they are implemented at different developmental levels. For example, universal interventions—those that target all students in a classroom or school, regardless of risk for aggression or disruptive behaviors—appear to be more effective with younger students than older students. The Good Behavior Game and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) are examples of universal interventions that can benefit all students and reduce anger and aggression problems (see Related Helping Handouts under Recommended Resources at end of this handout). The behaviors targeted by interventions also may need to change across students' developmental age, because aggressive behaviors manifest differently with age. For example, cyberbullying is a common problem among junior and senior high school students but occurs infrequently among early elementary students.

Gender Differences

Types of aggressive behaviors vary significantly across gender, with many more boys displaying aggression

than girls. However, those gender differences are more apparent for physical aggression than for verbal aggression, which is similar among both genders. Biological variations explain some of these differences, such as higher testosterone in boys, and have cultivated more aggression among males than females. Moreover, environmental factors, including social learning, account for some of the differences in aggressive behavior related to gender. Social norms about expectations, attitudes, and values that differ for boys and girls also promote higher levels of aggression among boys (e.g., aggression is reinforced at higher rates among boys). Although most school-based interventions for aggressive behavior are designed for both boys and girls, school counselors or teachers may consider gender when selecting interventions to target the influences of social learning and social norms on aggression.

Environmental and Cultural Differences

Peers have been shown to have a strong influence on aggressive and deviant behaviors. For students who appear to engage in increased aggressive behavior because of deviant peer affiliations, teachers or counselors should select an intervention program that teaches students to develop friendships with prosocial peers and empowers students to resist peer pressure. Students whose aggressive behavior may be related to past abuse or other adverse events would benefit from a trauma-informed treatment approach. Cultural expectations regarding the use of aggression should also be considered when selecting and implementing interventions in the school setting. For example, a child who has consistently heard that it is important to "show others who is boss" (by any means necessary, including aggression) or who has been exposed to violence outside of school may need additional time spent on establishing roles and expectations at school versus in other settings. In summary, a person-specific approach is necessary not only for understanding the underpinnings of aggression but also for intervening when aggression occurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the aftermath of school violence around the country, educators and policy makers have increased their focus on programs that prevent aggression in children as well as interventions that address this behavior. Recommendations for preventing and responding to student anger and aggression follow.

Preventing and Reducing Anger and Aggression

An evidence base for effectively preventing and reducing aggressive behavior in children has emerged. Group intervention programs, which are both time- and cost-efficient, are often as effective as individual therapy in treating aggressive children. An excellent source of reviews of evidence-based programs is the website of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (www.CASEL.com). Two programs aimed at directly addressing aggressive behavior in the school are FastTrack (Bierman et al., 2017) and the Anger Coping/Coping Power Program (Larson & Lochman, 2010). These programs target children who are at risk for aggression. Other prevention and intervention techniques, such as the Good Behavior Game, PATHS, and peer mediation can be implemented at the classroom level or even school-wide.

Fast Track

Developed by the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, FastTrack is a long-term program for at-risk children, beginning in the first grade. The program involves lessons delivered directly to students at school to enhance social skills and emotional development. Notably, the FastTrack program is comprehensive and includes out-of-school components, such as academic tutoring, "friendship groups" for children, home visiting, and parenting components.

Anger Coping and Coping Power Programs

Focusing on reducing children's anger and aggressive behavior and preventing those behaviors from persisting and becoming more problematic, the Anger Coping Program teaches at-risk children coping and problem-solving skills. Both the Anger Coping Program and the child component of the Coping Power Program aim to improve children's ability to regulate aggressive behavior, to function well in a variety of settings, and to better manage their anger. These programs are typically provided in a school-based group format, making them both efficient and cost-effective. The programs also are comprehensive, with the expanded Coping Power Program seeking to bring about change in the family system by working with both children and parents. Parent groups are often offered at the school but can occur in other settings as well.

Good Behavior Game

The Good Behavior Game focuses on structured instructional periods in the classroom that reward

children for appropriate classroom behaviors, including staying on task and reducing aggressive behaviors. This intervention is classroom-wide and, to increase motivation, the class is divided into two teams that compete with one another. Teams earn a point if any team member displays an inappropriate behavior. The game ends when one team has the fewest points, earning a group reward. If both teams are tied, they can share in the reward (see *Implementing the Good Behavior Game: Helping Handout for School* for detailed instructions on using this intervention).

PATHS

Classroom-wide social and emotional learning programs such as PATHS have been shown to reduce children's anger and aggression. In PATHS, weekly lessons teach children to identify a range of different feelings, communicate about their feelings, calm themselves down when aroused, practice basic friendship skills, and solve social problems effectively. Teachers' ability to maintain a positive classroom environment and to model and reinforce these skills during teachable moments throughout the school day strengthen the program's positive effects on children's social skills and self-regulation.

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation programs in schools have been shown to be successful in conflict resolution and to prevent problems and subsequent aggression from escalating (Johnson & Johnson, 2006). Such programs are particularly useful with adolescent students. The overarching goals of most peer mediation programs include improving understanding about anger and conflict, understanding alternatives for conflict resolution, and choosing a solution that minimizes conflict and aggressive behaviors. Peer mediation can be implemented either through a classroom or school-wide model.

Responding to Child Anger and Aggression Problems

In addition to using the evidence-based prevention programs described above, teachers can use numerous practical strategies to address anger and aggression in the school setting. These strategies come from components of the evidence-based prevention and intervention programs and include the following examples.

1. ***Catch the student behaving well and praise positive behaviors.*** No child misbehaves all the time. Providing additional opportunities for students to act appropriately gives you a chance to respond with positive feedback. If you notice only the inappropriate and aggressive behaviors, the student may use those behaviors to get your attention.
2. ***Remain calm and model positive problem-solving.*** Do not become angry in response to the student's anger. Instead, let the student see you take a calm, thoughtful approach to understanding exactly what the problem is and how it would be best addressed.
3. ***Always let the student know that you care for and respect him or her.*** Remind the student that it is the inappropriate behaviors (not the individual) that you do not like. Increase ongoing communication and cohesion between yourself and the student when possible. Students who have positive relationships with significant adults are more likely to seek assistance when a problem arises.
4. ***Ignore minor disruptive behaviors such as whining and complaining so that they are not rewarded with attention.*** However, do not ignore inappropriate aggression or behaviors that are disruptive to other students or that present a safety concern.
5. ***Avoid a power struggle.*** Do not try to rationalize with the student about aggressive behavior or why you are invoking consequences.
6. ***Be sure to give directions to the student that are concise, direct, positively stated, and given one at a time.*** Avoid commands phrased as questions (e.g., "Would you like to work on your math worksheet now?") because they give the student the opportunity to say no. Avoid "Let's ..." commands, unless you actually plan to help a student with the task. Avoid commands that are vague, include multiple steps, or are overly wordy.
7. ***Remind the student of classroom rules that all students must always follow, and of the consequences of breaking them.*** Some of the rules can focus on decreasing undesired behavior. If the student breaks a rule, give an immediate consequence, such as removing a privilege, instead of giving a verbal warning.
8. ***Set up a behavioral contract to help students take control of their own behavior.*** Have the contract list positive behaviors that are expected (target behaviors) and identify a reward that can be received for meeting a certain number of the behaviors. Rewards can be naturally occurring,

such as something that the student already wants to do, like being the teacher's helper the rest of the day. The target behaviors should be positive behaviors; for example, students who do not hit other children are rewarded for keeping their hands to themselves.

9. ***Model effective problem-solving.*** Demonstrate the steps of identifying the problem, generating alternative responses (both positive and negative), evaluating the alternatives, and selecting the best response. Help students see problem-solving in action and find opportunities to help them apply these principles when a problem occurs.
10. ***Notice the specific situations in which the student tends to become angry or aggressive and try to understand why these situations are triggering events.*** Think of creative solutions to help the student avoid such situations or to help the student handle the anger quickly.
11. ***Teach the student quick but effective relaxation techniques.*** This might consist of taking deep breaths or counting to 10, to calm down.
12. ***Help the student develop a list of coping statements to deal with anger.*** Examples of such statements are "Grow up, don't blow up," or "I will handle this better if I keep my cool." Practice these strategies with the student, such as by recalling uncomfortable situations.
13. ***Help the student understand others' perspectives when conflicts arise.*** For example, talk about what the other person may be thinking and feeling. Have the student practice others' perspectives when calm so that the student will be better prepared to do so when provoked.
14. ***Teach the student skills for effectively negotiating his or her needs with teachers and peers.*** Help the student learn to speak up about his or her feelings or specific needs. When students are taught how to communicate assertively, they will be less likely to use aggression or defiance as a means of getting what they want.
15. ***Discuss serious concerns about the student's ongoing disruptive or aggressive behavior with the parents or caregivers.*** Children's angry outbursts and aggressive behavior can be lessened substantially when parents and teachers are shown how to follow a consistent approach at home and school. Daily or frequent communication between the home and school is a helpful strategy for preventing and addressing such behaviors.

If the informal classroom strategies recommended in this section are not sufficient for managing the student's angry outbursts or aggressive behaviors, the school's support staff should help to develop more formal behavioral support strategies and services. Those might include a Section 504 or Individualized Education Program as well as comprehensive evaluation by a qualified mental health professional or referral to mental health treatment.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

www.CASEL.com

The website of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning offers information about research, policy, and programs that support children's social and emotional learning in schools.

http://copingpower.com

This website offers information about the Coping Power Program, a cognitive–behavioral intervention for children with anger and aggression difficulties and their parents.

www.interventioncentral.com

The website for Intervention Central offers resources to help learners who are struggling academically and behaviorally.

Books

Cole, A. J., & Shupp, A. M. (2012). *Recognize and respond to emotional and behavioral issues in the classroom: A teacher's guide*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

This book is a resource guide for teachers on recognizing and addressing children's emotional and behavioral difficulties in the classroom, including child anger and aggression problems.

Larson, J., & Lochman, J. E. (2010). *Helping school children cope with anger: A cognitive–behavioral intervention* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

This book includes a treatment manual for the Anger Coping Program for elementary-age children with anger difficulties.

Lochman, J. E., Wells, K. C., & Lenhart, L. (2008). *Coping Power: Child group facilitators' guide.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

This book includes a treatment manual for the child component of the Coping Power Program, a cognitive–behavioral intervention for children with or at risk for disruptive behavior disorders.

Related Helping Handouts

ADHD: Helping Handout for Home
ADHD: Helping Handout for School
Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home
Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home
Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for School
Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School
Trauma: Helping Handout for School
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Bullying: Helping Handout for Home

JOHANNA HOMAN, GEORGE BEAR, & ANGELA HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is unwanted acts of aggression that are meant to harm the victim. The acts can be physical (e.g., hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property); verbal (e.g., hurtful comments or threats); or social (e.g., excluding the victim or spreading rumors). When it occurs over digital devices or social media, it is called cyberbullying. To be considered bullying, the acts must be repeated over time. An imbalance of power also must exist, which means that the bully is in a position of strength relative to the victim. For instance, the bully may be bigger or older than the victim or may have more social "strength," such as popularity or access to embarrassing information. For several reasons, reported rates of bullying in schools vary greatly, especially because of differences in how it is defined and measured (Bear, Mantz, Glutting, Yang, & Boyer, 2015). However, national studies suggest that approximately 20% of students ages 12 to 18 have been bullied (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Bullying has become a great concern because of its negative outcomes. For example, victims are at increased risk for low self-esteem; depression or anxiety (and potentially self-harm or suicide); social isolation; poorer academic achievement; and "acting out" behaviors (Rueger & Jenkins, 2013). The impact on bullies—especially when their behavior does not coexist with other significant concerns—is less clear (Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). In other words, when students bully, but do not otherwise show major social, emotional, or academic problems, they do not seem to experience poor outcomes later in life. Bullying can also affect those less directly involved, such as classmates, teachers, and parents—creating an overall negative school climate that interferes with learning, teaching, and social relationships.

No one can say with certainty who will become a victim. However, research tells us that students who are seen as different from their peers are at greater risk. This includes students with disabilities, especially ones with obvious physical features or with behaviors such as poor social skills (Bear et al., 2015). Students who are much smaller or heavier than their peers are more at risk, as are students who belong to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) community or who have a nonnormative sexual orientation or gender identity (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). Less is understood about the characteristics of bullies, and it can be difficult to tell which students will bully others. Some bullies are well accepted by their peer groups; others are rejected. Some bullies lack social skills, but others don't (Gini, 2006). In addition, *a bully can also be a victim!*

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

Many factors contribute to bullying—from home to school to social environments. Individual characteristics of the victim or the bully can affect situations too. Some factors, such as a child's gender, sexual orientation, or disability, are unchangeable. Other factors, such as models of bullying in the media, are difficult for parents to alter. However, parents can play an important role in preventing and responding to bullying by (a) being proactive and engaged and (b) understanding the importance of the home environment.

Being Proactive and Engaged

Parents have a wide range of knowledge and personal experiences that can affect their thoughts about bullying. However, many parents would benefit from more information on how to deal with bullying. Parents may be unsure what behaviors qualify as bullying or may see it as a normal part of childhood. It can also be hard for parents to navigate the strong emotional reactions that occur when their child is identified as either a victim or a bully.

As a parent, it is important for you to educate yourself. Your child's school is a good place to turn for more information, and parent–school partnerships are a critical way to help prevent bullying. By understanding what constitutes bullying (including the school's definition), what rules and consequences apply, and what services and supports exist, you can help the school carry out its antibullying efforts. For example, you can help by (a) reinforcing lessons that your child has learned in the classroom, (b) becoming involved at your child's school and supporting the school's work in the community, and (c) remaining vigilant for signs that your child may be involved in a bullying situation. Even if you know (or suspect) that bullying has occurred, remember that children do not always reveal the extent of what has happened. Therefore, you should be particularly mindful if your child is more likely to be a target (for example, if he or she has a disability), or if your child is prone to bully others (see www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/index.html for specific risk factors).

Understanding the Importance of the Home Environment

Overall, positive home environments—those characterized by warmth and support—can help prevent behaviors associated with bullying. Such environments also help children to develop resilience if they are involved in a bullying situation (Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt, & Arseneault, 2010). For instance, an authoritative approach to parenting can help reduce the likelihood that a child is either a victim or a bully. This approach balances *social support*, by building and maintaining a positive relationship with the child and responding to psychological needs, with *structure,* by having clear behavioral expectations, closely monitoring behavior, and setting rules and consequences that are clear and fair.

In addition, various relationships at home may affect children's behavior. For instance, sibling interactions can affect how a child relates to peers. A child who is often aggressive with siblings may show more bullying behaviors at school. Likewise, a child who is targeted by siblings may be more vulnerable to victimization at school.

RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

The following interventions and supports are arranged in two general categories: (a) preventing bullying and (b) responding to bullying.

Preventing Bullying

The following strategies apply to all children, including victims and bullies.

1. ***Teach and encourage important social behaviors.*** Positive classroom and school climates are critical for preventing bullying—and how students relate to each other is critical for developing healthy climates. Thus, children need to learn and understand the importance of social–emotional skills that help develop strong peer relationships, such as cooperation, respect, empathy, caring, kindness, and responsibility. Help to model and promote these behaviors in your own child. Check with the school to see if they place an emphasis on certain behaviors and highlight them at home.
2. ***Help your child understand what bullying is—and what it is not.*** Explain what bullying is and why it is harmful. Your child's school should be able to provide you with a definition if you are unsure. Parents should be encouraged to discuss different types of bullying with their child and to talk about how individuals, schools, and communities are affected. It also is important to teach children that *not all acts of aggression, fighting, exclusion, or teasing constitute bullying.* For instance, when two close friends have a disagreement and call each other names (or even fight physically), this behavior, while hurtful, is not bullying. Recognize that the term *bullying* is now used frequently, and casually, in our society. Therefore, *be careful*. Using the word too often or incorrectly can lead to unfair accusations. It also makes children and adults less sensitive to real incidents of bullying.
3. ***Teach children how to respond to bullying.*** Victims are unlikely to stop the bullying they are experiencing on their own. However, there are things that victims or other children might do:
    - Be assertive and tell the bully to stop in a firm and calm voice.
    - Act as if the bully is joking and try to laugh it off.
    - Tell a teacher, parent, or other adult who may be able to help.
    - Try to avoid meeting the bully, especially when alone. If the bully is nearby, try to stay around adults and friends.

    Children should understand that these strategies do not always work. Also, tell your child that he or she should *never* ignore or laugh off a serious or violent threat.

4. ***Help your child understand the school's expectations, rules, and consequences related to bullying.*** Reinforce the school's policies with your child. The school may also have authority beyond the building, such as at the bus stop. In addition, when off-site behavior, such as cyberbullying, significantly affects the learning environment, schools may discipline students for it (see https://cyberbullying.org/bullying-laws).
5. ***Recognize signs of bullying.*** Many students hesitate to report bullying. Victims might feel ashamed or embarrassed. Both victims and witnesses might fear retaliation. Watch for signs that your child may be either a victim or a bully. The federal website www.stopbullying.gov gives the following warning signs.

   Signs that a child is being bullied:

   - Has mysterious injuries or destroyed or "lost" clothing, electronics, books, etc.
   - Feels sick or fakes illness (e.g., frequent headaches or stomachaches)
   - Has changes in eating habits (e.g., skipping meals at school or home, eating too much at one time)
   - Has frequent nightmares or trouble sleeping
   - Loses interest in school or schoolwork or has worse grades
   - Avoids social situations or has a sudden loss of friends
   - Feels helpless or has decreased self-esteem
   - Exhibits self-destructive (e.g., running away), self-harming, or suicidal behaviors

   Signs that a child is bullying others:

   - Is increasingly aggressive and gets into verbal or physical fights
   - Receives frequent consequences at school (e.g., detention, office visits)
   - Has extra money or new belongings without any explanation
   - Blames others for his or her problems or doesn't accept responsibility for his or her actions
   - Is competitive and worries about his or her reputation or popularity
   - Has friends who bully others
6. ***Learn how you or your child can report bullying—and do so when necessary.*** There may be specific people you need to contact or certain forms to fill out. *Do not wait to file reports with the school.* As time passes, the accuracy or efficiency of an investigation and resolution often decreases. In addition, always report *each* case of suspected bullying. Do not assume that the school is aware that something has occurred.
7. ***Build and maintain positive relationships with your child's teachers and encourage your child to do the same.*** Strong relationships between students and teachers are related to less bullying in the classroom, and victims are more likely to report bullying to adults with whom they have a good relationship (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). Encourage your child to build trust with teachers. If a connection with the teacher does not form, help your child identify another adult in the school who can be a source of support.
8. ***Keep communication open between you and your child.*** Children, especially older children, often don't tell their parents when they are involved in a situation with bullying. Therefore, ask your child daily about school, friends, and activities; for example, "What was one good thing that happened today? Any bad things?" This relays interest in your child's life and can encourage him or her to confide in you if something is wrong. Make sure to read school newsletters and websites and attend open houses and conferences to remain aware of what is happening at school.

   In addition, talk with your child *directly* about bullying, asking questions such as: "Why do you think people bully?" or "What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying?" Visit www.stopbullying.gov for questions to guide these conversations.
9. ***Help your child build wider social networks.*** Both victims and bullies often feel less support from other people in their classrooms, schools, or lives. Encourage your child to do things that help him or her feel confident and connected; this can increase self-esteem, social skills, and friendships. Creating wider systems of support may help your child avoid bullying—or be more resilient if it occurs.
10. ***Buffer your child from poor role models.*** This is not an easy task in today's society, especially when children are exposed to frequent acts of aggression and bullying in videos, movies, games, and the media. Nevertheless, make every effort to reduce your child's exposure to games that reward children for bullying behaviors, videos in which others laugh at or make fun of victims, or friends who engage in or support bullying.

11. ***Reflect on your own behavior and experiences.*** Parents should exhibit positive social behaviors too. Take time to recognize your own attitudes toward bullying and how your actions may model undesirable behaviors for your child. These would include sarcastic, humiliating, or otherwise hurtful comments—especially in the presence of your child.

    Also, parents' childhood experiences can affect how they react when their own child is involved in a situation with bullying. For instance, if you were victimized, you may develop more overwhelming, complicated feelings that could affect your ability to remain objective, calm, or supportive.

Responding to Bullying

The following interventions and supports help parents respond when they believe—or are told—that their child may be involved in a bullying incident. *Remember that the reported behavior may or may not be bullying*. For example, it may be unclear if the behavior has continued over time. Regardless, reports of bullying should be investigated further. A school's response will depend on a number of things, such as the seriousness of the behavior, the ages of the students, and the relationships between those involved.

Note that the classroom teacher is unlikely to be solely responsible for intervening at this point. Many schools have a clear process for reporting and investigating bullying, and the policies and procedures of a school or district often specify who handles reports. Therefore, your child's teacher may not be your primary contact during an investigation.

12. ***Respond right away.*** If you believe your child may be a victim or a bully, don't overreact but don't ignore the situation. Always communicate that you are taking the situation seriously and that the behavior will not be tolerated. In addition, get help immediately if your child appears at serious or immediate risk of being hurt or of hurting others.
13. ***Try to determine what has happened.*** Listen to your child and try to answer questions such as: "Can you tell me exactly what happened? Has this happened before, and if so, when? Who else was involved?" It can be helpful to write down your child's answers so that you can more accurately describe the experience to the school.
14. ***Do not contact the parents of other children involved or take matters into your own hands.*** It is usually best to allow the school to address the behavior, especially when someone involved has a documented history of bullying. Getting parents and children together to settle the problem can be humiliating to one or both children and could make the situation worse (e.g., the victim is embarrassed and withdraws socially or the bully seeks revenge).
15. ***Be patient—bullying investigations can take time.*** Sorting out all the facts and information can take a while. Expect the school to act in a timely manner, but do not rush the process. When you interact with the school, remember to stay respectful. Although emotions can be heightened, you still remain a model of behavior for your child. Try not to act in ways that could embarrass your child or make school more difficult.

    The school's response, including disciplinary action, will typically depend on whether or not the behavior is considered bullying. In addition, if the situation involves certain populations (e.g., a student with a disability), further steps may be necessary. However, even during an investigation, a school can begin to implement a response plan to support your child (whether he or she is a victim or an aggressor).
16. ***Communicate that you will work with the school to stop the behavior and make a plan.*** Neither victims nor bullies should be responsible for ending the behavior on their own. Parents, along with school staff, also should assume responsibility. Make this clear in what you say *and* do—children are more likely to report bullying when they feel their parents or teachers will do something (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). Provide your child with advice but also ask what else could help, and use his or her ideas when appropriate. Work with the school and agree to a plan that includes action steps, both for your child and for the adults.

    If your child is a victim, remember that the school will not be able to share information with you about the aggressor, including any consequences. An exception would be a plan that includes "reparative" consequences, such as apologizing to your child (preferably in writing), replacing a broken or stolen item, or doing an act of kindness for your child.

17. ***If your child has been identified as a victim, avoid advice that can make the situation worse.*** Instead, use the following approaches to support your child:
    - *Don't blame your child*. Instead, reassure your child that it is not his or her fault.
    - *Don't tell your child to simply ignore the bullying.* In some situations, it may be appropriate for a child to ignore verbal aggression (e.g., walking away)—but only when used in combination with other strategies. In addition, a child should never be told to ignore serious threats or physical aggression.
    - *Don't encourage your child to "work it out" with the bully.* This can help when there is a problem between two equals (e.g., friends) but not when there is an imbalance of power (i.e., a victim and a bully).
    - *Don't encourage your child to retaliate.* Do not endorse behavior that could aggravate the bully or result in disciplinary action for your child.
18. ***Do not label the bully as a bad person.*** Emphasize that it is the behavior—not the child—that you strongly dislike. Children can change their behavior, but being labeled a bad person suggests a more permanent personality trait. Therefore, if your child has been identified as an aggressor, clearly communicate that you disapprove of your child's actions, emphasizing that they will not be tolerated. Then focus on the behaviors that your child needs to change and express optimism that he or she will do so. For instance, identify appropriate opportunities that highlight your child's strengths. Likewise, if your child is a victim, do not stigmatize the bully.
19. ***Consider the need for more support.*** This is most important when your child—whether a victim or a bully—exhibits more serious symptoms of depression or anxiety, or when behaviors such as physical aggression do not stop. Getting help from a private mental health specialist can help both you and your child cope with more challenging situations.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

https://www.stopbullying.gov

This website, managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a gold mine of resources. It offers substantial guidance and recommendations on what schools, parents, and students can do to prevent bullying. It also provides information on research, training, and state laws.

https://cyberbullying.org/bullying-laws

This website for the Cyberbullying Research Center is maintained by two professors and researchers of cyberbullying. It offers a wealth of information and resources for parents on cyberbullying.

Related Helping Handouts for Victims of Bullying

Anxiety: Helping Handout for School and Home
Depression: Helping Handout for Home
Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for Home
Friendships—Lacking a Friend and Feeling Lonely: Helping Handout for School and Home
Happiness and Self-Esteem: Helping Handout for School and Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home
Teasing: Helping Handout for School and Home
Trauma: Helping Handout for Home

Additional Helping Handouts for Perpetrators of Bullying

Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home
Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Bullying: Helping Handout for School

GEORGE BEAR, JOHANNA HOMAN, & ANGELA HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

Bullying consists of unwanted acts of aggression that are intended to harm the victim. The acts can be physical (e.g., hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property); verbal (e.g., hurtful comments or threats); or social–relational (e.g., excluding the victim or spreading rumors). When it occurs via digital devices or social media, it is called cyberbullying. To constitute bullying, the acts must be repeated over time; there is also an imbalance of power, and the bully is in a position of strength relative to the victim. For instance, the bully may be physically larger than the victim or have more social clout, such as popularity or access to embarrassing information. Because studies use different definitions, measurement techniques, and student populations, statistics on the frequency of bullying can vary greatly (Bear, Mantz, Glutting, Yang, & Boyer, 2015). However, national studies suggest that approximately 20% of students ages 12 to 18 have been bullied (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Bullying has become a greater national concern because of its negative outcomes, particularly for victims. For example, victims are at increased risk for low self-esteem; depression and anxiety (and potentially self-harm or suicide); social isolation and withdrawal; poorer academic achievement and school engagement; and "acting out" behaviors (Rueger & Jenkins, 2013). The susceptibility of bullies to negative outcomes—especially when their behavior does not coexist with other significant concerns regarding their social–emotional development—is more controversial (Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). Bullying can also affect those less directly involved, such as classmates, teachers, and parents, because it can create an overall negative school climate that interferes with learning, teaching, and social relationships.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

A range of factors influence bullying: classroom, school, home, community, and societal. Individual characteristics of the victim, bully, or bystanders can uniquely influence each situation as well. Some factors, such as gender, sexual orientation, or disability, are unalterable; thus, they are not targets for change. Other factors, such as models of bullying in the home, community, or media, are extremely difficult for schools to alter. Although it is important to understand how these factors affect students, the following section provides recommendations to help teachers and other staff recognize what they *can* change to prevent or address bullying. When selecting interventions and supports, there are two areas of focus: (a) student characteristics and (b) classroom and school characteristics.

Student Characteristics

Whereas no one can predict with certainty who will become a victim, research has identified characteristics that increase a student's risk of being targeted. In general, the primary risk factor is a perception that the student is different, or deviates, from the peer group. For example, students are at greater risk if they have a disability, especially one characterized by observable physical features or behaviors, such as impaired social skills (Bear et al., 2015). Students who are substantially smaller or heavier than their peers face increased risk, as do students with a nonnormative sexual orientation or gender identity (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). Further, students are greater targets when they exhibit behaviors associated with poor social acceptance or peer rejection (e.g., annoying or bothering others or acting impulsively). They may have trouble defending themselves or advocating for their needs and may possess poorer coping skills.

Less is understood about the characteristics of bullies, though there seem to be some features they share. For instance, they tend to value aggression and power and lack empathy or guilt (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). They often desire to fit in by impressing peers, especially those peers who encourage or reinforce their behaviors. In addition, these students may have experienced parental abuse or neglect, or other life stressors that interfere with social–emotional development. Whereas some bullies are well accepted by the peer group, others are rejected. Some bullies lack social skills, but others don't (Gini, 2006). As with victims, no characteristic is a telltale, and it can be difficult to discern which students will bully others. In addition, it's important to remember that *a bully can also be a victim,* and thus have attributes of both.

Classroom and School Characteristics

Classroom and school characteristics greatly influence the prevalence of bullying. In brief, less bullying occurs in classrooms and schools in which teacher–student and student–student relationships are characterized by mutual respect and support (including support from bystanders). The school's social values and accepted norms also promote positive climates. Further, classrooms and schools that employ an authoritative approach to management and school discipline experience less bullying (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2015). This approach balances *social support* (including an emphasis on building and maintaining positive relationships) with *structure* (e.g., clear behavioral expectations, close monitoring of behavior, and rules and consequences that are clear and fair). See *Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School*; *Improving Teacher–Student Relationships: Helping Handout for School*; and *Peer Relationships: Helping Handout for School* for specific recommendations consistent with the authoritative approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following supports and interventions are arranged in two general categories: (a) preventing bullying and (b) responding to bullying.

Preventing Bullying

The following prevention strategies apply to all students, including victims and bullies. The strategies can be used at the individual, classroom, and, when appropriate, school-wide levels. For example, a school might design an assembly to highlight prosocial behaviors; a teacher might lead a complementary lesson in his or her classroom; and a school psychologist or school counselor might work in a targeted manner with individuals who need specific skill building.

1. ***Teach and encourage prosocial behaviors.*** Positive classroom and school climates are critical for preventing bullying—and how students relate to each other is critical for developing healthy climates. Thus, students need to learn and understand the importance of social–emotional skills that help develop strong peer relationships, such as cooperation, respect, empathy, caring, kindness, and responsibility. Such skills should be highlighted in the regular curriculum, such as in literacy and social studies, and also communicated, modeled, and reinforced in classroom meetings, announcements, assemblies or pep rallies, service learning times, and media.
2. ***Help students understand what bullying is and the impact it has.*** Explain what bullying is and why it is harmful. Teach students about different types of bullying, highlighting the effect on individuals as well as on classroom and school communities. Use a variety of teaching methods, including videos, discussions, and role-playing, to engage students and help them practice their skills. It also is important to teach students that *not all acts of aggression, fighting, exclusion, or teasing constitute bullying.* For instance, two close friends have a disagreement and call each other names, or even fight physically. Although those behaviors are certainly undesirable—and hurtful—it is unlikely that they constitute bullying. This is especially true if both engage in the same behaviors and if there is no imbalance of power. Using the word *bullying* too liberally can lead to unfair accusations and labeling, affect students' self-perceptions (whether they are seen as victims or bullies), and desensitize students and staff to true incidents of bullying.
3. ***Teach students how to respond to bullying.*** Victims are unlikely to stop bullying solely with their actions. Regardless, there are strategies victims or bystanders can employ:
    - Be assertive and tell the bully to stop in a firm and calm voice.
    - Act as if the bully is joking and try to laugh it off.
    - Inform a teacher, parent, or other adult who may be able to help.

- Try to avoid encounters with the bully, especially when alone. If the bully is nearby, try to stay around adults and friends.

Students should learn that these strategies may not always work, as their effectiveness depends on a host of factors (e.g., how the strategy is used, the characteristics of the bully, or the type of bullying). Students should also recognize when a certain strategy should *not* be used, such as making light of serious or violent threats.

4. ***Make sure that expectations, rules, and consequences pertaining to bullying are clear.*** This should be done using multiple methods, including presentations to students and parents, printed materials, websites, and signed contracts. The school's authority may also extend beyond its grounds, such as at the bus stop, or even to digital devices and online activity. When off-campus behavior (e.g., cyberbullying) substantially disrupts the learning environment, federal law allows schools to discipline students for these actions (see https://cyberbullying.org/bullying-laws). Purposefully relay this information to ensure that students and parents are aware.
5. ***Recognize signs of bullying.*** Many students are reluctant to report bullying. Victims might feel ashamed or embarrassed, and both victims and witnesses might fear retaliation. Thus, it is important that teachers, other staff, and parents watch for signs that a student is a victim or an aggressor. The federal website stopbullying.gov gives the following warning signs.

Signs that a child is being bullied:

- Has unexplainable injuries or destroyed or "lost" clothing, electronics, books, and so on
- Feels sick or fakes illness (e.g., frequent headaches or stomachaches)
- Exhibits changes in eating habits (e.g., skipping meals at school or home, binge eating)
- Has frequent nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Loses interest in school or schoolwork or has declining grades
- Avoids social situations or has a sudden loss of friends
- Displays feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Exhibits self-destructive (e.g., running away) or self-harm or suicidal behaviors

Signs that a child is bullying others:

- Is increasingly aggressive and gets into verbal or physical fights
- Receives frequent punitive consequences at school (e.g., detention, office visits)
- Has extra money or new belongings without explanation
- Blames others for his or her problems and doesn't accept responsibility for his or her actions
- Is competitive and worries about reputation or popularity
- Has friends who bully others

6. ***Develop a process by which students can report bullying anonymously.*** Some students might not report bullying if they fear possible retribution. Therefore, students should be able to share information without having to reveal themselves. Submissions can include the name of the bully, the victim, or both. All students, school staff, and parents should be familiar with the reporting process (e.g., a box or website), and students should be taught to use it honestly and responsibly.
7. ***Set up the physical environment purposefully with increased supervision, as appropriate.*** Arrange seats and work groups in a manner that separates students who have been—or who are likely to be—involved in a bullying situation. Separation and close monitoring is particularly important at times or locations more prone to bullying, such as during unstructured learning activities, at recess, in the hallways and cafeteria, and on the bus.
8. ***Build and maintain positive teacher–student relationships.*** Strong relationships between students and teachers are related to less bullying in the classroom. Moreover, victims are more likely to report bullying to adults with whom they have good relationships (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014).
9. ***Reflect upon your own behavior.*** Teachers and staff should ensure that they themselves exhibit prosocial behaviors. Take time to recognize your own attitudes toward bullying and how your actions may model undesirable behaviors for your students. This would include sarcastic, humiliating, or otherwise hurtful comments, as well as the use of corporal punishment (as allowed by law in some states).
10. ***Educate families about bullying.*** Parents play an important role in preventing and responding to

bullying. Help parents understand what constitutes bullying (e.g., the school's definition), what rules and consequences apply, and what services and supports the school provides for preventing and responding to bullying. Use a variety of methods to disseminate information, such as printed materials, websites, open-house presentations, and conferences. Also tell parents what they can do at home to support their children.

11. ***Consider adopting an evidence-based, school-wide prevention program.*** While there are many packaged programs, not all are supported by research, especially beyond elementary school. However, research-backed programs typically have the following features (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011):
    - Whole-school, multidisciplinary approach with high intensity (i.e., several components implemented regularly over a long period of time)
    - Authoritative approach to classroom management and school discipline
    - Adequate teacher training
    - Informational sessions or materials for parents
    - Use of videos in lessons
    - Increased playground supervision
    - Counseling for students who bully

Responding to Bullying

The following interventions and supports help teachers and other adults respond appropriately when someone reports or observes potential bullying. *Remember that the behavior may or may not constitute bullying*. For example, it may be unclear, or unknown, if the behavior has continued over time. Regardless, reports of bullying should be investigated further, especially when behavior is unwanted and emotionally or physically harmful for students. A school's response, however, depends on a number of circumstances, such as the severity or longevity of the behavior, the ages of the students, and the relationships between those involved. Schools should also consider whether one or more students has a disability, as this can trigger designated action steps and protective rights—for both victims and bullies—under special education law.

It is important to note that a classroom teacher is unlikely to be responsible for implementing all of the following interventions. Many schools have a clear process for reporting and investigating bullying, and the policies and procedures of a school or district often dictate how and by whom reports are handled.

12. ***Respond right away.*** Don't overreact but don't ignore the behavior. Address students in a calm, caring—yet firm—manner. *Always communicate that you are taking the situation seriously* and that the behavior will not be tolerated.
13. ***Attend to any immediate needs.*** Assess the safety of those involved and the extent of any injuries. Decide if prompt medical attention (e.g., a student complains of pain or has visible injuries) or mental health support (e.g., a student is too upset to remain with the class) is necessary.
14. ***Try to address the behavior privately.*** It is typically best to address the behavior as privately as possible, especially when there is a documented history of bullying. Trying to settle the problem in front of peers can be humiliating to one or both students and could make the situation worse (e.g., the victim is embarrassed and withdraws socially or the bully seeks revenge).
15. ***Try to determine what has happened.*** Listen to both the victim and the aggressor. Speak to each individually and seek information from others, especially witnesses (either students or adults). Talking to peers is particularly important in cases of social–relational aggression. To understand the circumstances involved, try to answer questions such as: "What *exactly* happened? What triggered or contributed to it? What are the perspectives of those involved?" It can take a while to sort out all the facts and information—act in a timely and efficient manner but do not rush the process.
16. ***Decide whether or not the behavior constitutes bullying and identify the appropriate response.*** The people or team investigating the incident needs to determine if the behavior qualifies as bullying. The school's response, including disciplinary action, is likely to differ depending on whether or not the behavior constitutes bullying. In addition, if the situation involves certain populations (e.g., a student with a disability), more formalized measures may be necessary. For example, disciplinary provisions governing special education law might apply. When formulating its response, the school should also weigh factors such as student age, the seriousness of the behavior, and so on.

    Bullying investigations can take time. However, even during an investigation, a school can begin to implement a response plan designed to support the students, both the victim and the aggressor. Further, regardless of the school's

formal determination, students' needs should be considered when bullying behaviors arise.

17. ***Communicate that you will work to stop the behavior and make a plan.*** Neither the victim nor the bully should be solely responsible for ending the behavior. Teachers, other staff, and parents should share responsibility. Make this clear in what you say *and* do—students are more likely to continue to report bullying when they feel teachers or others will actively intervene (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). Provide the victim with advice and guidance, but also ask him or her what could help, and incorporate those ideas when feasible. Work with the victim and the parents and agree to a plan that includes actions for both students and adults. Formulate a similar plan for the bully.
18. ***Avoid certain messages and advice that can make the situation worse.*** For instance:
    - *Don't blame the victim*. Instead, reassure the victim that the bullying is not his or her fault.
    - *Don't tell the victim to simply ignore the bullying.* In some situations, it may be appropriate for a student to ignore verbal aggression (e.g., walking away)—but only when used in combination with other strategies. In addition, a student should never be told to ignore serious threats or physical aggression.
    - *Don't encourage the victim to "work it out" with the bully.* Peer mediation often helps when there is conflict between two equals (e.g., friends) but not when there is an imbalance of power (i.e., a victim and a bully).
    - *Don't encourage the victim to retaliate.* Do not advocate behavior that could aggravate the bully or result in disciplinary action for the victim.
19. ***Don't label the bully as a bad student.*** When responding to the bully, clearly communicate that you disapprove of his or her actions and that they will not be tolerated. However, emphasize that it is the behavior—not the student—that you strongly dislike. A student can change his or her behavior, but being labeled a bad person is suggestive of a fixed personality characteristic. Therefore, focus on behaviors the bully needs to change and express optimism that he or she will do so. Also point out positive qualities, or strengths, of the student.
20. ***Emphasize the negative impact of the bully's behavior on the victim***. Encourage the bully to assume the perspective of the victim, especially how the victim could or did feel. Use role-playing in which the roles are reversed (i.e., the bully is a victim). This helps foster perspective taking, empathy, and a sense of responsibility for one's own actions.
21. ***Invoke punitive consequences, when appropriate.*** These consequences should depend on the severity of the behavior and circumstances involved. Responses are typically guided by the school's code of conduct, with suspension (in or out of school) as a frequent consequence for bullying. However, the limitations of suspension and other forms of harsh punishment are clear—primarily, they do little to teach replacement behaviors or repair the problem. Therefore, punitive techniques should always be used in combination with educational, reparative, and positive consequences.
22. ***Include educational consequences.*** Include tasks that help educate the student about bullying and how it affects others. For example, require the student to read a book or watch a video on bullying, write an essay or research report, mentor (with adult guidance) a younger student, or lead a discussion about bullying and the importance of not harming others.
23. ***Consider reparative consequences.*** Challenge and help the bully to repair harm done to the victim or others. This might include apologizing to the victim (preferably in writing), replacing a broken or stolen item, or doing an act of kindness for the victim or others.
24. ***Plan for positive consequences.*** Be sure to praise—and provide recognitions or rewards, as necessary—to teach and reinforce student behaviors that help prevent bullying. Do this for the victim and the bully. For example, praise the victim for assertiveness, or praise the bully for prosocial behaviors.
25. ***Identify skill deficits in both the victim and the bully.*** For instance, if the victim is missing communication or problem-solving skills, determine how (i.e., where, when, and by whom) those skills could be taught. Make a similar plan for a bully who lacks, for example, social–emotional skills like empathy or anger regulation.
26. ***Identify students' strengths and use them in interventions.*** Capitalizing on strengths in both the victim and the bully enhances intervention effectiveness. It also helps avoid the message that the bully is a "bad" person. For example, if

the victim has a friendship network, use it to help build a peer support system that could buffer the effects of bullying. If the bully values power or social capital, identify appropriate leadership opportunities (e.g., in sports) and emphasize the prosocial behaviors associated with leadership (e.g., sportsmanship).

27. ***Consider the need for more significant interventions and supports.*** This is most important when the victim or the bully exhibits internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression)—or when the bully's externalizing behaviors (e.g., physical aggression) do not cease when the recommendations above are implemented. Further supports are also appropriate when the victim or the bully substantially lacks social or emotional competencies (e.g., trouble with making or keeping friends). These interventions would include many of those previously mentioned, but they would be delivered with more intensity (e.g., frequent monitoring, additional social skills lessons). They should also be individualized—guided by an assessment of the student's needs—and implemented by a mental health specialist who works closely with the student, teachers, and family.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Programs

These school-wide bullying prevention programs are among the few that have multiple empirical studies supporting their effectiveness (also see CASEL.org for reviews of other programs).

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program—http://www.violencepreventionworks.org
- Second Step—http://www.secondstep.org/
- KiVa Bullying Prevention Program—http://www.kivaprogram.net/program

Websites

https://www.stopbullying.gov

This website, managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a gold mine of resources for educators. It offers substantial guidance and recommendations on what schools, parents, and students can do to prevent bullying. It also provides information on research, training, and state laws.

https://cyberbullying.org/bullying-laws

This website for the Cyberbullying Research Center is maintained by two professors and researchers of cyberbullying. It offers a wealth of information and resources for educators and parents on cyberbullying.

Books

Swearer, S. M., Espelage, D. L., & Napolitano, S. A. (2009). *Bullying prevention and intervention: Realistic strategies for schools*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

This book provides educators with practical strategies and materials, based on research, for preventing and responding to bullying, including cyberbullying.

Related Helping Handouts for Victims of Bullying

Anxiety: Helping Handout for School and Home
Depression: Helping Handout for School
Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School
Friendships—Lacking a Friend and Feeling Lonely: Helping Handout for School and Home
Happiness and Self-Esteem: Helping Handout for School and Home
Peer Relationships: Helping Handout for School
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School
Teasing: Helping Handout for School and Home
Trauma: Helping Handout for School

Related Helping Handouts for Perpetrators of Bullying

Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for School
Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for School
Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Gang Involvement and Getting Out of It: Helping Handout for School and Home

JILL D. SHARKEY & LUKE JANES

INTRODUCTION

Youth gangs are a widespread problem affecting urban and suburban communities. About 8%–9% of youth ages 12–17 in the United States identify as gang members, but this can vary widely, to as high as 30% in some communities (Howell, 2010). What is alarming about gang involvement is the connection between gang identification and aggressive, violent, and criminal acts. Youth gang members are more likely than other youth to have been exposed to and perpetuate violence. Youth gangs may offer the prospect of social, psychological, and physical protection for youth who have experienced trauma, an unhealthy home environment, and a lack of belonging in school (Sharkey, Shekhtmeyster, Chavez-Lopez, Norris, & Sass, 2011). Youth join gangs to achieve respect, gain protection, earn money, or hang out with friends. The best ways to prevent and end youth gang involvement is (a) to surround students with caring adults who take a genuine interest in them and will be role models, and (b) to provide safer opportunities for students to experience friendships, fun, power, respect, and a sense of safety and belonging.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

Gang membership recruitment starts as early as Grade 5, and most students who become involved with gangs do so by the end of middle school or the beginning of high school. Thus, prevention to address childhood factors that make students more vulnerable to gangs can and should start in elementary school.

Youth in early adolescence are vulnerable to gangs because gangs can meet various needs that are centrally important at this stage of life. Those include safety, self-esteem, social belonging and identity, power, popularity, financial means, fun, opportunities to interact with the opposite sex, and a rite of passage into adulthood. Prevention and intervention efforts should help students find alternative, healthy ways to meet their psychological needs so that gangs are less appealing and easier to leave. This section discusses major factors related to gang involvement that should be considered in prevention and intervention efforts.

Environmental Factors

Many risk factors for gang membership are difficult to change, such as poverty, exposure to violence and crime, limited resources in neighborhoods, and past experiences of trauma. However, responses by many communities, schools, and justice systems also can affect gang membership and can be changed. School factors that exacerbate gang membership include disciplinary policies that are harsh and emphasize school exclusion, biased treatment, and poor educational practices. Factors that protect against gang membership include high-quality student–teacher relationships, a warm school climate, positive peers, and development of students' academic skills, including students with various abilities and disabilities. Adolescents need positive role models that they can relate to. Family members, teachers, and other caring adults who have also experienced similar struggles and risks can have a powerful impact on an adolescent's decision to join or leave a gang. This is

particularly true for role models from an adolescent's own racial, ethnic, or cultural background.

Individual Characteristics

Students are at higher risk of joining a gang if they believe that a gang lifestyle or criminal behavior is a way to achieve success. Teens who are delinquent, aggressive, or violent and lack empathy tend to be attracted to gangs. In addition, students who have behavior or academic problems at school and associate with delinquent or gang-involved peers are at higher risk for joining a gang.

Cultural and Gender Differences

The racial makeup of gangs in individual communities tends to parallel the racial makeup of that community. Yet, according to the National Youth Gang Survey, 50% of participants who self-report gang membership are Latino, 32% are Black, and 11% are White (Howell, 2010). This racial imbalance occurs because gangs are more common in communities that experience poverty, prejudice, racism, and limited opportunity to achieve success.

Media portrayals suggest that most gang members are boys, yet girls make up somewhere between a third and a half of gang members. However, girls are more likely to want to leave gangs if they experience a "pull" motivation, to move toward outside responsibilities and life changes such as parenthood, employment, or family responsibilities. By contrast, boys are more likely to want to leave as a result of "push" motivations—that is, moving away from negative aspects of being in a gang, such as trauma and loss (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011).

Gang Factors

A common belief is that gangs are groups with tightly defined membership that can be very dangerous to attempt to leave. More commonly, however, gangs are loosely defined social networks with fluid, shifting membership along a continuum of involvement. Leaving a gang sometimes means making a clean cut, especially when a student moves to a new area. But it often is a more gradual process of changing values and social networks. Most youth do not experience hostility or violence when leaving a gang (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). This is especially true for youth who have a positive reason to leave a gang, such as a job or a family responsibility. Their peers in the gang are more supportive of the change. However, it can be very lonely and difficult for youth to leave a gang and lose their social network. Thus, gang interventions should focus on providing opportunities to connect with safer alternatives that meet the same needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this handout are meant to help keep or get a student out of a gang. The recommendations are divided into three sections: for home and school, for teachers and school, and for parents and home. However, parents, teachers, and any other caring adult might find helpful suggestions in any section.

Recommendations for Home and School

1. ***Make it clear that the student is welcome in the school.*** Teachers should assume and find the best in every student. Parents and teachers should provide students the support and high expectations that will help them meet challenges. Both parents and teachers should praise and highlight the student's successes.
2. ***Help identify the student's interests and link them to educational accomplishments.*** Supportive activities could promote future aspirations for college and life linked to current educational pursuits. For example, students who enjoy art might be encouraged to learn how to make a living selling their art, including entrepreneurship and business skills.
3. ***Encourage the student's identity development.*** The student should be encouraged to explore and connect to their cultural or ethnic community or religious or spiritual practice**s**. Students who are an ethnic minority in their school should be given an opportunity to explore what racial and ethnic identity means to them. Such involvement could include participation in a church, ethnic student group, or counseling group that focuses on ethnic belonging and pride.
4. ***Provide rites of passage into more adult roles.*** Adults can help adolescents achieve and celebrate milestones. Those may represent difficult challenges students have faced that have given them greater rights and responsibilities. Examples include presenting work in academic showcases, completing volunteer and service-learning projects, getting a driver's license, or having a part-time job.
5. ***Help the student find ways to connect with the school and to feel a sense of belonging with***

healthy peers. Parents and schools should identify available resources and ask community leaders to help create opportunities for the student to participate in clubs, activities, leadership, extracurricular classes, or sports, including both after school and outside of school.

6. ***Teach coping strategies and social skills.*** Coping strategies may include deep breathing practice to reduce stress or methods for expressing anger and frustration with words rather than violence. Social skills may include making and keeping friends; speaking respectfully to adults; finding, getting, and keeping a job; and taking care of oneself.
7. ***Engage the student in discussions about moral questions.*** Discussing ethical and moral dilemmas when they come up in home or classroom helps develop the student's social problem-solving skills, especially the ability to take others' perspectives and to feel empathy. Identifying successful positive solutions can help the student learn responses to challenges that respect others and avoid responses that harm or exploit others.
8. ***Assist the student in processing traumatic experiences.*** Trauma can lead to greater risk for gang involvement, for example, if students develop a "fight" response and act out to cope. However, with support, trauma can lead to posttraumatic growth, in which students reconsider their values, thoughts, and plans about their life. Parents and teachers should not push the student to make positive meaning out of a traumatic event, but they can provide a safe and supportive environment to process an event and evaluate what it means. Therapy should be pursued when needed.
9. ***Find mental health and substance abuse counseling, if needed.*** See *Substance Use and Abuse: Helping Handout for School and Home* for specific recommendations.

Recommendations for Teachers and the School

10. ***Treat the student respectfully.*** Teachers should view every student as a person, not as a gang member. If the student has been absent for disciplinary reasons, the student should be welcomed back and not judged.
11. ***Find ways to make school relevant, fun, meaningful, and rewarding.*** Teachers who express enthusiasm can engage students and connect the academic content to students' interests. Methods could include incorporating diverse assignments, including independent student-led projects and cooperative learning (avoiding work packets), and accommodating students' individual learning level and needs.
12. ***Ask the students to take on responsibilities or meaningful roles in school and the community.*** Meaningful responsibilities might include serving as a mentor, sharing their life story for the benefit of others, or helping at a gang-prevention organization.
13. ***Help provide or connect the student to vocational training and access to employment opportunities.*** Vocational training might include taking electives in school or working with local nonprofits. The student will benefit from learning occupational skills and practicing them in an internship or apprenticeship.
14. ***Provide extra help if the student is struggling academically.*** Suggestions include connecting them with peer tutoring, setting up an after-school homework center, or finding other ways to connect the student to after-school support.
15. ***Consider taking on a mentorship role or connecting the student to other mentors.*** Students need positive role models in their lives. Mentors can provide students with emotional and practical support by forming lasting, caring relationships. Important activities of mentors include being supportive, encouraging, listening, and providing perspective.
16. ***Where appropriate and feasible, find alternative interventions to removing the student from the classroom and school.*** Removing students from class and school often alienates them from the school and increases the likelihood that they will find gangs appealing. Removal is sometimes required for serious transgressions that harm others, such as weapon and drug possession, but it often does more harm than good. Removal tends to worsen the behavior of adolescents who are giving up on school or who are experiencing trauma or mental health difficulties.
17. ***Provide opportunities for students to experience law enforcement and security personnel as human and supportive.*** Schools should create positive opportunities for law enforcement personnel and students to interact. By developing positive relationships with students, officers will be more likely to interrupt behavior before it gets worse and identify ways to correct behavior that helps engage students at school. Punishment is more

effective when it is tied to natural consequences, such as having students clean up their graffiti, rather than when it removes students from learning opportunities.

18. ***Make sure any referral for vocational, mental health, substance use, or other services is followed up on.*** Teachers should plan to introduce the student to new service providers to make sure the student feels comfortable following through with any referrals.

Recommendations for Parents and the Home

19. ***Provide multiple stable and supportive caregivers.*** Children ideally will have a responsible and caring adult available for supervision and support within and outside the home. Having a caring adult outside the home as well, such as a counselor, coach, or mentor, has been shown to be an important factor in positive youth development. Parents or caregivers should get to know the adults to make sure they will not expose the child to abuse, neglect, or trauma.
20. ***Set aside time to talk to and have fun with the student every day.*** Parents or caregivers can bring consistency to the student's life by doing something special together, such as eating meals together or finding another ritual they both enjoy.
21. ***Provide unconditional love.*** When parents are disappointed about the student's behavior, they should show that their love and support are paired with high expectations and fair consequences. When the student behaves poorly, parents can take the opportunity to discuss how to do better in the future.
22. ***Monitor the student throughout adolescence.*** Monitoring involves setting clear expectations, keeping track of where the student is and whom the student hangs out with, and enforcing fair and firm rules and consequences.
23. ***Provide opportunities for the student to feel powerful and meaningful in constructive ways.*** Children and adolescents benefit when their parents expect them to take on responsibilities at home, such as cooking meals, cleaning the house, taking out the recycling, and doing laundry. Such responsibilities can be expanded outside the home, such as taking on jobs, volunteering in the community, or mentoring younger children.
24. ***Emphasize the importance of education.*** Praising and valuing success in school instills in students the intrinsic value of learning and the life opportunities that success in school can bring. Parents can be encouraged to work with their children to maximize on-time arrival and school attendance and make sure they have healthy meals, including breakfast and lunch. By talking to them about their school day, and by asking questions about the topics they are learning, parents can help connect the student's school and life. Parents can ensure that the student is accurately tracking homework assignments and has sufficient support, time, and space to complete homework. By communicating with teachers and staff at the school, parents show the student that school is valued.
25. ***Provide a safe place for the student to hang out with friends that balances privacy and supervision.*** Students should be encouraged to bring friends home when parents are home, or to another supervised location where they can hang out in a safe environment. Parents can allow teenagers privacy but should check in with them to enforce important rules, such as not using alcohol or drugs. Allowing the student to explore romantic interests in a supervised setting, and providing opportunities to talk about how to avoid peer pressure and have healthy relationships, will give them some confidence in assessing their experiences.
26. ***Do not glamorize gang involvement.*** Parents who discuss events and family relationships can help their children avoid contact with family members or friends who are involved with gangs. They also should avoid movies, video games, and social media that glamorize gang life.
27. ***Help the student develop reasons and excuses for not participating in gang activities.*** Family responsibilities such as caring for a younger sibling, working to earn money for the family, and helping parents with chores or a family business are seen by gang members as an acceptable reason to stay out or get out of a gang.
28. ***Carefully consider any decision to move away.*** Moving to a new location can help break up unhealthy friendships and gang ties. However, parents should consider additional supports, such as the ones in this handout, that need to be put in place to address the reasons students became involved with gangs.
29. ***Seek parenting classes to learn about alternative parenting strategies, rather than turning to***

punitive measures or shaming. Parents should not condone, value, or model violence as a means to achieve power. Instead, they should give students examples of how to resolve conflicts without violence. Classes are available that teach parents how to use effective disciplinary techniques. Classes may be available through local nonprofit organizations or can be accessed online (e.g., https://centerforparentingeducation.org/online-parenting-workshops-2/online-workshops/).

30. ***Consider family counseling.*** Family counseling and classes are among the ideas that came out of a survey of students doing time at a probation camp. Specifically, teen participants recommended that getting the family together to learn tools to help their children might help them get out of a gang (Sharkey, Stifel, & Mayworm, 2015). Resources are available for families seeking family mediation or counseling to resolve conflicts that they are not able to resolve alone. Family-based treatments include multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, and brief strategic family therapy (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2012). Such interventions can help families communicate and function better. In many places across the United States, dialing 211 or accessing http://www.211.org/ provides a free and confidential service to connect families to resources.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL

Websites

https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Comprehensive-Gang-Model

The website for the National Gang Center helps communities address youth gang involvement.

https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gangs/Pages/welcome.aspx

The website for the National Institute for Justice: Gangs and Crime provides the latest information on antigang strategies.

Books and Articles

Rios, V. M. (2011). *Punished: Policing the lives of Black and Latino boys*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

This book follows the lives of 40 Black and Latino boys. After exploring the ways systems discriminate against and punish these youth, the author offers solutions to support youth development.

Sharkey, J. D., Shekhtmeyster, Z., Chavez-Lopez, L., Norris, E., & Sass, L. (2011). The protective influence of gangs: Can schools compensate? *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 16,* 45–54.

This article describes ways schools can help protect adolescents from joining gangs by addressing their psychological needs.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR HOME

Website

gangfree.org

The Gang Alternatives Program provides services and programs to promote a gang-free lifestyle to young people and their families.

Books

National Gang Center. (2015). *Parents' guide to gangs. A guide designed to provide parents with answers to common questions about gangs to enable them to recognize and prevent gang involvement.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Parents-Guide-to-Gangs.pdf

Rios, V. M. (2011). *Street life: Poverty, gangs, and a Ph.D.* Los Angeles, CA: Five Rivers Press.

The author tells his personal story of transforming from gang member to university professor. He discusses individual and societal reasons why adolescents join gangs. He identifies ways to help young adults understand and overcome challenges in their lives.

Related Helping Handouts

Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School

Improving Teacher–Student Relationships: Helping Handout for School

Peer Relationships: Helping Handout for School

Substance Use and Abuse: Helping Handout for School and Home

Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for Home

GLORIA E. MILLER & DORIANN ADRAGNA

INTRODUCTION

Lying, stealing, and cheating, referred to in this handout as dishonest behavior, are not new childhood problems. Most children at some point in their development will engage in behavior that may be considered dishonest. Many dishonest acts occur as children test the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable (Hughes & Hill, 2006). By some reports, dishonest behaviors have increased in recent years. For example, in an anonymous survey, over 70% of high school students admitted to cheating on tests or copying another person's work (Power & Power, 2006). These students also reported that cheating was easy to do and that they were not offended by this behavior.

Although engaging in dishonest behaviors may seem to hurt no one but the person involved, these behaviors should be taken more seriously if they occur over a period of 6 months; coexist with aggression; are evident at home, at school, and in the community; or are committed purposefully to retaliate, get back at, or harm another person (Miller & Zimprich, 2006). In such cases, harmful social and learning consequences can occur and may lead to later involvement in other antisocial behavior. To stop such negative outcomes, it is important that all major adults in a child's life come together to examine potential reasons a child might engage in dishonest acts and to work together to prevent dishonest behaviors as well as respond to any suspicion of dishonest behaviors. There are multiple reasons why children behave dishonestly. Common reasons are discussed in the next section, followed by recommendations supported by research to prevent and help address lying, stealing, and cheating behaviors.

REASONS CHILDREN ENGAGE IN DISHONEST BEHAVIORS

One reason children may engage in dishonest behavior is confusion about rules and ideas of what is and is not considered dishonesty. For example, in some classes it may be okay to copy from an encyclopedia for a homework assignment, but in later grades this may be viewed as plagiarism or cheating. In some classes it may be fine to discuss answers or to bring notes into an exam, but in other classes this would not be acceptable. Also people often freely share food or personal belongings at home; however, at school such sharing without permission may not be as commonplace. Thus, it is important to determine if unfamiliar or confusing property, personal, and social guidelines across settings are leading to dishonest behavior.

Children are strongly affected by things happening around them at home, at school, and in the community. Participation in dishonest acts is more likely when a child frequently observes others getting away with such behaviors and not receiving any negative consequences. Dishonest acts also can be performed for good reasons, such as concerns about others. For example, in response to a friend's or a family member's emergency, children may take an item to help another, or give exam answers to a peer unable to study after an unfortunate event. Dishonesty also may be influenced by perceived injustices, as when a child steals to help someone in need or to give someone a gift, or tells a lie to protect someone the child thinks is being unfairly treated.

Personal circumstances such as loneliness, anxiety, or poor academic skills also can contribute to a decision to engage in or to resist the impulse to

act dishonestly. For example, a dishonest act may be viewed or required as an initiation to belong to a certain group. Dishonesty also can occur when more weight and recognition are given to getting the highest grade or being the smartest, prettiest, or strongest. A fear of failure can be heightened by an emphasis on competition versus on cooperation and by a lack of recognition of individual effort and persistence. A child who does not feel accepted, listened to, or supported also is more likely to engage in dishonest behavior, especially if it leads to positive social recognition from peers or others.

A child's developmental maturity must be considered as a reason for dishonest behavior. Children as young as age 3 can distinguish between the naughtiness of a lie told as a result of an incorrect idea and a lie that is a deliberate attempt to hide a misdeed (Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). However, it is only with increasing age that children develop the capacity to empathize and think about right and wrong (Eisenberg, 2004). With increasing maturity, youth are less reliant on external factors to help them resist temptation and more reliant on an internalized understanding of justice and honesty (Kohlberg, 1984). For example, young children are likely to explain a wrongdoing in terms of breaking an authority figure's rule, or as a way to avoid a specific punishment for breaking a rule, or to gain a concrete reward for obeying the rule. Older children have a greater capacity to think about fairness and another person's point of view, so their explanations of violations typically include a consideration of the impact on others as well as themselves. For example, a less mature explanation for why it is bad to steal might simply be that you can be sent to jail, whereas a more mature explanation for stealing would consider the circumstances surrounding the event and personal and societal consequences and might also mention a concern for a wider global community. Such advanced understanding indicates a person is guided by an internal compass that helps regulate behavior, which has been found to deter dishonesty more than adherence to a rigid set of rules dictated by others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are divided into two general sections: (a) preventing lying, stealing, and cheating, and (b) responding to lying, stealing, and cheating. Many of the recommendations for preventing the behaviors also apply when responding to them.

Preventing Lying, Stealing, and Cheating

When viewing the following preventive strategies, keep in mind that the strategies are likely to be most successful when they are jointly developed, with input from your child and with others who regularly interact with your child, including immediate family members, relatives, friends, caregivers, teachers, and other people from the community.

1. ***Strengthen interpersonal bonds.*** Communicating sincere interest in what your child says and does can enhance the parent–child relationship. A sense of comfort, safety, and support is best instilled when you regularly give clear expectations about desired behaviors (e.g., "Please say, 'no more milk, please' if you do not want milk.") versus simply imposing restrictions or prohibitions (e.g., "Stop your screaming!").
2. ***Strategically instill prosocial skills.*** Your child's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behavior will be strengthened when you provide explicit versus vague reinforcement of desired behavior (e.g., "Thank you for waiting patiently for your turn while I helped your brother find his shoes" versus "Good job"). Prosocial skills and reasoning also are learned by highlighting instances of tolerance, gratitude, and empathy. This can be done during daily routines or by reading books and viewing movies that inspire conversation about honesty and dishonesty. Help your child identify emotions, evaluate a situation, and problem-solve through role playing to act out specific situations and different prosocial behaviors and solutions.
3. ***Notice effort and growth.*** Concentrate on noticing your child's effort and improvement and avoid placing undue weight on grades or other outcomes, performance, or end products. It often helps to allow children to set short- and long-term goals and then monitor and notice their persistence on tasks and their progress over time on meeting goals. If your child expresses negative thoughts and frustration, such as "I can't do this," restate this perception as "I am not there yet." This encourages the development of a "growth mind-set" so your child learns that there are different ways to demonstrate success and that many things are accomplished by trial and error.
4. ***Clarify expectations and definitions of dishonesty.*** Differences between home, school, and community guidelines relating to property, personal, and social norms can be confusing for children. To help your

child adjust to dissimilar expectations and rules guiding behaviors across settings, openly discuss and explain differences so your child understands what constitutes a lie, stealing, or cheating. For example, sharing personal items like food or a hair brush may be expected and accepted at home but may be restricted and not condoned at school. Examples of what is and is not considered a dishonest act in different settings also can be taught through games and role playing.

5. ***Highlight the impact of dishonesty.*** Help your child understand that dishonest behaviors have real impacts by talking about how these acts harm people and relationships. Children better understand the consequences of dishonest actions when they are given an opportunity to talk to and listen to victims affected by a dishonest act. Discuss your child's role as a member of a community in promoting honesty at home and at school. Also discuss instances of misbehavior that your child exhibits or may be a victim of to teach fairness, empathy, and personal responsibility.
6. ***Set rules so they are understood, respectful, and allow for choices.*** High standards of behavior are nurtured when your child understands reasons for setting rules and making decisions. Take your child's developmental level into consideration when providing explanations and be as clear and concise as possible. For example, instead of yelling "Do not run in the parking lot!" as you get out of the car, you can prepare your child in advance and provide a reason for this rule: "Today we are going shopping, and you must hold my hand and not run in the parking lot. This is to help keep you safe because drivers cannot see you." Children are also more likely to perceive rules as respectful when their opinions are considered and if they are given choices about potential courses of action. For example, instead of arguing with children about finishing dinner before watching TV, parents can ask which order they prefer to eat what is on their plate. Or before serving, parents can ask children how much to put on their plate to ensure all the food is eaten. Children who have had the opportunity to make many choices about little things will make better decisions when facing bigger choices later in life.

Responding to Lying, Stealing, and Cheating

Besides the prevention ideas outlined above, if your child is engaging in or suspected of engaging in dishonest behavior at home, at school, or in the community, other procedures and methods are needed to lessen the likelihood of such behavior recurring.

7. ***Consider the nature and extent of the problem.*** When responding to instances of dishonest behavior, consider the type and degree of the problem and your child's developmental and cognitive level. Does your child have the ability to control impulses, understand cause and effect, or consider consequences? Also identify what your child was trying to gain from the dishonest act. Such acts are more concerning when a child repeatedly performs dishonest acts, when the dishonest act occurs with other antisocial behavior, when the dishonest act occurs in multiple settings (e.g., home and school), and when there is a clear intent to deceive or harm a person or property. For instance, a 3-year-old lying about finishing dinner in order to get a cookie is less concerning than a 10-year-old lying about having your permission and then stealing $20 from your wallet to attend an event.
8. ***If the dishonest behavior occurs at school, collaborate with the teacher and others, as needed.*** If the behavior is seen both at home and at school (or other places), it should be taken more seriously than when it is seen only at home. To help stop the behavior, talk to your child's teacher and decide if the behavior requires additional support from a school psychologist, school counselor, or social worker. Working together with a team of professionals, you can assess if your child's behavior is atypical and if engagement in or accusations of these dishonest actions are affecting relationships with others, academic progress, or other day-to-day functioning.
9. ***Agree on definitions and consistent detection.*** To maximize the success of any intervention, everyone involved must agree on definitions of the behaviors of concern, whether they are considered acts of stealing, lying, or cheating. They also must agree to consistently detect all actual and suspected occurrences of these behaviors. This is because such behaviors are often hard to observe. If dishonest behaviors are identified only some of the time, these acts receive intermittent (i.e., occasional) reinforcement, which can actually increase a behavior. For example, when a child's stealing is spotted only occasionally, the stealing receives intermittent reinforcement if the child

gets to keep the desired item, while thinking, "This might work again; I won't get caught." Thus, before an intervention is put into place, everyone must agree to not ignore misbehavior and instead must agree to try to spot and report all actual and suspected instances of agreed-upon dishonest acts.

10. ***Increase monitoring of dishonest behaviors.*** The difficulty of actually observing these behaviors and the need for consistent detection also means it will be important for all team members to increase monitoring of the child's behavior across settings. Examples of such heightened monitoring might include routinely checking your child's backpack at home and at school to be sure that it contains only labeled personal items; examining all cell phone and Internet usage; or communicating more often with your child's teachers, friends, and friends' parents about any suspected acts of dishonesty. Dishonesty decreases when one does not expect to get away with it. Increasing your monitoring to ensure that all actual and suspected occurrences are repeatedly detected also will help reduce the reputation your child might have developed regarding such behavior.
11. ***Focus on perspective taking and restitution.*** It is imperative that engagement in dishonest behavior be followed up with a clear negative consequence, such as losing privileges or access to preferred activities. Do this as promptly as feasible. Also help your child understand the impact of the dishonest action on the victims by taking their perspective. In addition to requiring your child to compensate for the dishonest act through simple restitution—replacement of or reimbursement for the item—require an additional appropriate behavior. For example, if your child lies about taking money from your purse, require an apology and repayment of the money by docking the child's allowance, but also require help of another sort, such as completing additional chores.
12. ***Increase recognition of prosocial behavior.*** Although implementing greater detection strategies and clear negative consequences for dishonest behaviors is important, it also is imperative that your child receives increased recognition for appropriate behavior. Simply focusing on punishment can cause a child to conceal dishonest behavior more, making it more difficult to detect. Work with others to develop a variety of ways to build on your child's strengths, abilities, and talents and to recognize positive characteristics and instances of alternative, unselfish prosocial behaviors (i.e., "Your decision to stay and help your sister today was highly appreciated and generous.").
13. ***Promote social connections and acceptance.*** Students build positive social support and connections with others when they participate in extracurricular activities and constructive school or community service. If necessary, ask if your child might be paired with a positive peer or adult role model. Involving your child in alternative prosocial activities and with prosocial mentors can strengthen relationships with other people who share similar interests and who display noble and productive strategies and coping skills. Remember also to positively recognize your child's participation in new or alternative prosocial activities, and remind other adults to do the same.
14. ***Address learning or social difficulties.*** If your child engages in dishonest behaviors that may be associated with learning challenges, arrange for additional coaching or tutoring and ask your child's teachers for study and organizational tips and strategies. Also, schedule regular check-ins with teachers, tutors, or mentors. Finally, consider requesting a formal assessment to determine if there are underlying cognitive processing delays or deficits that warrant more intense support and accommodations either at school or at home.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

www.casel.org

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning website provides reviews of evidence-based universal and targeted programs and strategies designed to promote prosocial behaviors and skills.

http://www.iirp.edu/education-programs/continuing-education/projects/safer-saner-schools

This website is part of the International Institute for Restorative Practices and provides information on whole-school restorative justice approaches and findings from schools implementing such practices.

Books

Binkow, H. (2010). *Howard B. Wigglebottom and the monkey on his back*. Singapore: Thunderbolt.

This story follows a bunny character as he faces common situations where it is easier to lie than tell the truth. A discussion guide is included for parents and teachers to prompt further discussions about these issues.

Bowen, F. (2009). *Winner takes all.* Atlanta, Georgia: Peachtree.

In this story, Kyle, a teenager on a baseball team, is dishonest about catching a ball in an important game. This dishonest act leads his team to have an unfair advantage in a championship series. Readers learn important lessons about the impact of cheating.

Cook, J. (2012). *Ricky sticky fingers.* Chattanooga, TN: National Center for Youth Issues.

This story is about a young boy who learns the power of empathy after stealing. Important lessons are learned about ownership and the value of respecting belongings.

Cook, J. (2015). *Lying up a storm.* Chattanooga, TN: National Center for Youth Issues.

This story is about a young boy who learns how one lie leads to more lies and the impact these lies have on people. Parents and teachers will also be happy to learn how lying can be a normal response for children and how to guide them into being truthful.

Related Helping Handouts

Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior and Developing Self-Discipline: Helping Handout for Home

Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home

Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for School

GLORIA E. MILLER

INTRODUCTION

Lying, stealing, and cheating—referred to in this handout as dishonest behavior—are not new school problems. By some reports, their pervasiveness has increased in recent years. In anonymous surveys about school, students of all ages frequently report being a victim of nonconfrontative theft of small objects, money, or other personal belongings that do not cause bodily injury, and over 70% of high school students admit to cheating on tests or copying another person's work, say it is easy to do, and say they are not offended by this behavior (Power & Power, 2006). These dishonest acts are of great concern to educators and are a leading cause of school and clinical referrals. All occurrences of dishonest behavior have personal and societal costs that erode trust, affect relationships and group cohesiveness, and have a damaging influence on classroom and school learning and social climates (Hughes & Hill, 2006). Even though many children engage in dishonest behavior as part of growing up, these acts should be taken seriously to ensure that such behaviors do not persist after age 7. After this age, a pattern of involvement in one or more of these antisocial behaviors is important to address more directly, especially if the behaviors have persisted for over 6 months, or if they occur or are suspected of occurring across home, school, and community settings; if they coexist with aggression; or if they serve malevolent, malicious purposes (Miller & Zimprich, 2006).

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDRESSING DISHONEST BEHAVIOR

Preventing and decreasing students' dishonest behaviors in school depend on understanding the factors that potentially contribute to those behaviors. Teachers and staff who hope to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to prevent and decrease such behaviors in schools and classrooms must consider the situational, environmental, developmental, and cultural factors that can affect students' decisions to participate in dishonest acts. Situational factors that contribute to students' decisions to act dishonestly, or to resist acting dishonestly, include how the students perceive school disciplinary actions and social climate. Dishonesty is more prevalent when students view rules and restrictions as unfair or unjust or when grades are emphasized and rewards are given to the highest performance, resulting in a highly competitive environment. Students also may rationalize dishonesty as a way to cope with personal circumstances, such as a family emergency, fear of failure, or poor academic skills. Changes in social sanctions that are imposed across environments and settings also can cause confusion about what is or is not considered dishonest behavior (Eisenberg, 2004). For example, students in early grades may be required to copy from an encyclopedia, but in later grades the practice is considered plagiarism if students do not attribute the work to the source; also, bringing notes to an exam or collaborating with others on answers is condoned in some classes but not in others.

Teachers also should consider students' developmental maturity, since many dishonest acts occur in the course of learning and testing the boundaries of acceptable social behavior. Children's ability to judge right and wrong and to consider fairness and punishment evolves. At age 3 children can distinguish between the naughtiness of a lie that is told out of false belief and a deliberate distortion that is intended to conceal a misdeed (Stouthamer-Loeber,

1986). As children mature, their understanding of social expectations, their capacity to empathize, and their ability to resist temptation and deter dishonesty shift from a reliance on external factors to internal self-control. The ability to use moral reasoning develops as a child engages as a member of a family, school, and community. Initially, young children describe being bad in terms of an authority figure's rule and their own attempt to gain from the act or avoid punishment. More abstract moral thinking is evident when students explain dishonesty in terms of social disapproval or acceptance. Later rationalizations are based on complex sociomoral scripts that include descriptions of how violations affect others as well as oneself. The highest moral thinking occurs when the value of honesty and dishonesty is discussed in terms of the social good.

Intentional dishonesty also may be a function of positive social intent or a growing recognition of social inequities. Some dishonest acts may be a concerned response to another's situation, as when a student steals to provide a gift or assist another, lies to protect or help another, or provides exam answers to a peer unable to study because of an unfortunate event. Finally, dishonest acts also may be a function of unfamiliar and different property, personal, and social norms between home and school. For example, sharing food or using another person's belongings may be a commonplace occurrence between family members, given their economic circumstances or cultural expectations, and lying may occur to avoid divulging family information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this section are divided into two general categories: (a) recommendations for preventing lying, stealing, and cheating, and (b) recommendations for responding to lying, stealing, and cheating. These recommendations are appropriate for all ages and apply across all three behaviors, with specific examples given to reflect different applications.

Preventing Lying, Stealing, and Cheating

Recommendations in this section are to help deter and prevent instances of dishonesty and to decrease the likelihood that a person will engage in such behavior.

1. ***Promote norms of honesty and integrity.*** Schools that help establish trust between administrators, teachers, and peers help students feel that they belong to a caring community and increase the likelihood of prosocial behaviors characterized by tolerance, gratitude, and empathy. An emphasis on detection and punishment is not sufficient to increase acceptable social behavior. Instead, focus on creating a sense of belonging through a balanced combination of adults' and peers' emotional support, responsiveness, and structure. This climate can be fostered by establishing honor codes that emphasize constructive, positive behavioral expectations rather than restrictions or prohibitions.
2. ***Support prosocial behaviors.*** Actions and behaviors that are positive, constructive, and beneficial to others are considered to be *prosocial* behaviors. Students learn what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable from watching others receive consequences for virtuous behavior as well as dishonest behavior. Strengthen students' acceptance and public recognition of positive, prosocial behaviors during school-wide activities and events, morning announcements and other school media broadcasts, pep rallies, and so on.
3. ***Define dishonesty and highlight the impact of dishonest acts.*** Expected prosocial behavior as well as unacceptable dishonest behavior must be clearly defined, taught, and adopted consistently throughout the school. Lying, stealing, and cheating are reduced when students are given specific examples of what is considered theft, what constitutes a lie, and what plagiarism is. Definitions should highlight and make visible the harmful effects of covert dishonest acts. Discuss why such violations erode trust and hurt the community as well as the student and explain how such behavior interrupts everyone's learning and well-being.
4. ***Develop disciplinary policies collaboratively.*** Rules and policies defining acceptable behavior should be developed through an open, democratic process that elicits input from all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, families, and students. Ensure that classroom and school-wide rules and policies are perceived as fair and that they reflect ideas from all families and students, not just those on the honor roll. Classroom and school-wide rules and policies should be positively worded (i.e., what is expected versus what is not); explicitly stated to give students a clear understanding of what is and is not expected behavior; and widely publicized and consistently applied.

5. ***Provide justification for testing procedures.*** Describe reasons for academic testing and the purpose of different types of assessments. Students who are told what will be covered and what test format to expect will have a greater sense of control. Offer additional assistance, extra tutoring, and study guides on a regular basis. Students have less reason to cheat or to act dishonestly when evaluations are perceived as fair and focused on learning.
6. ***Strategically teach prosocial and moral reasoning skills.*** Embed prosocial skills such as tolerance, gratitude, and empathy into academic content lessons. Methods for enhancing instruction include (a) conducting Socratic discussions and class meetings that inspire dialogue about honesty and dishonesty, (b) using published or real-life moral dilemmas that encourage students to think about how certain behaviors erode community trust, and (c) adopting a school-wide, evidence-based curriculum based on social–emotional learning and character development. By investing in instruction that fosters self-awareness, emotion control, and responsible decision making, schools will engender integrity, honesty, and citizenship at school, at home, and in the community (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; and see www.casel.org).
7. ***Foster a climate of cooperation that recognizes effort, strengths, and talents.*** Cooperative learning strategies can deepen and more equally distribute knowledge by helping students feel responsible for each other's learning. Such strategies can enhance students' natural tendency and desire to help each other by allowing them to share their understanding of the content, which increases their own understanding. Help students learn ways to build self-efficacy and competence by concentrating on their own effort and improvement as a goal as they learn the importance of developing personal wisdom for its own sake. To encourage students to set personal goals and monitor progress toward their achievement, reduce academic tracking based only on grades or testing as the critical outcome. Instead, help students adopt a mastery approach that recognizes different ways of learning and of demonstrating what was learned.
8. ***Give students meaningful opportunities to participate in the disciplinary process.*** School-wide, student-led honor committees or disciplinary panels are increasingly being used to help review violations, decide on consequences, and set restitution expectations. These restorative justice practices foster an environment that encourages respect, empathy, and greater peer reporting. They also can help violators develop a sense of responsibility and rebuild self-esteem, since violators not only get to explain their behavior, but also, and more importantly, get to listen to how their behavior affected others. Moreover, victims of dishonest acts describe the impact this behavior had on their life, and a selected group of supportive adults and peers decide subsequent consequences (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010; and see www.safersanerschools.org).

Responding to Lying, Stealing, and Cheating

Besides the school-wide and classroom approaches to prevention and deterrence outlined in the previous section, targeted strategies are needed that respond immediately to individual instances of dishonesty, which can lessen the likelihood of such behavior recurring.

9. ***Gauge the nature and extent of the problem.*** Educators facing the problem of a student's dishonesty should plan their response by first gauging the nature and extent of the problem and determining if such behaviors are a function of situational or personal factors. A student who acted dishonestly for the first time, who may have complications or disabilities that led to the behavior, or who may have acted impulsively to obtain a reward, evade an obligation, deliver a retribution, or gain approval may be averted from future acts of this nature by swift detection and thoughtfully administered social consequences. Once the initial transgression is understood, the teachers' response should be to decide how to prevent a similar action or alleviate the precipitating circumstances. Dishonest acts are of more concern when they continue even after such efforts, when they co-occur with other antisocial behavior or across settings, or when there is clear intent by the student to deceive or inflict harm to a person or property.
10. ***Develop an individualized intervention plan.*** If a student exhibits more serious, extensive, or continuing forms of dishonesty, a teacher or other staff member should make a referral to a collaborative support team that includes

mental health professionals, such as a school psychologist, counselor or social worker, or other school staff, as well as family members and the targeted student. The team would meet to identify critical circumstances surrounding the violation, the victim, and the perpetrator. Team members would collaborate on a comprehensive plan to evaluate contextual and personal factors that might affect decisions to engage in such behavior (e.g., peer rejection, low self-esteem, poor academic skills, learning deficiencies, test or social anxiety). Subsequent individualized interventions are more likely to be developed and implemented successfully when all team members, including the student, perceive that a thorough, nondiscriminatory assessment has been conducted to identify conditions that can reduce dishonest and increase prosocial behavior.

11. ***Increase monitoring and detection.*** Dishonesty decreases when individuals do not expect to get away with an act and when they receive clear negative consequences. Increasing vigilance demonstrates to students the importance the school places on honesty. Schools have successfully reduced dishonest acts by using video cameras, unannounced desk and locker searches, checks of backpacks, and labeling of personal items; increasing adult supervision, especially in hallways and between periods; using software to detect plagiarism; and amplifying observation during exams.
12. ***Agree to identify all actual and suspected dishonest acts.*** Even with increased monitoring, covert behaviors such as lying, stealing, and cheating are hard to detect. To address that difficulty, everyone involved in a supervisory role, as well as the student, must agree to identify all actual *and suspected* occurrences. There are three main reasons that *suspected* acts must be recognized. First, including suspected occurrences helps ensure that all covert instances are caught, so that dishonest behavior is not inadvertently reinforced (as when a person gets to keep a stolen item). Second, not having to prove that an act occurred avoids arguments, which reduces the likelihood that the behavior will be reinforced through increased adult attention. Third, reducing suspicions of such behavior is important to help eliminate the negative reputation that a student likely has developed after repeated acts of dishonesty. Everyone must understand that the potential overidentification of instances of dishonesty is important so that all suspicions of dishonest behavior are eliminated in the future.
13. ***Use restitution and overcorrection procedures.*** Not only must a student who acts (or is suspected to act) dishonestly receive a clear negative consequence, he or she also needs to understand the effects of that action from the perspective of the victim or victims. Inductive discipline practices focus less on imposing punitive consequences on a student, such as removing privileges or access to chosen activities, and more on having the student consider the negative effects of his or her behavior on others. Overcorrection procedures require more than equivalent replacement or compensation, and might involve asking the student to apologize, to return the stolen item, or to compensate the victim and also select a prized personal possession to give to the victim. In the case of lying or cheating, a student might be asked to perform an additional compensatory activity, such as participating in a community service, completing a supplemental assignment, or writing an extra paper.
14. ***Increase the likelihood that the student will act honestly.*** School or classroom practices that rely on punitive deterrents and disciplinary actions to address dishonesty should be supplemented with efforts that encourage and recognize alternative prosocial behaviors. Indeed, a sole focus on punishment can make dishonest behaviors even more covert and harder to detect. Substantially increasing the recognition a student receives for acting more appropriately can reduce the need to act dishonestly. This recognition, however, should move beyond vague descriptions of desired behaviors (e.g., acting honestly) to instead acknowledge specific prosocial alternatives that are more likely to be understood and replicated (e.g., "Turning in the money you found on the playground today was very thoughtful.").
15. ***Remediate academic deficiencies.*** Dishonest behaviors can be a reflection of poor attention and learning difficulties. If so, it is important that school support teams design, implement, and evaluate targeted interventions, which may include academic coaching or additional tutoring to meet specific learning needs, enhancing study or test-taking skills, or strengthening oral and written communication and English language skills. School-based interventions must not only

remediate deficiencies, however; they also should be designed to enhance students' academic and nonacademic strengths, capabilities, and talents.

16. ***Teach social and emotional skills.*** Students' ability to identify and regulate strong emotions, recognize negative attribution biases (e.g., "I always get left out" or "They did this on purpose to make me mad"), and adopt social problem-solving practices can affect their decisions to act responsibly. Emotional regulation, perspective taking, and means–end thinking are all necessary for students to effectively evaluate a situation, produce a range of potential actions, and weigh positive and negative outcomes. The ability to overcome faulty assumptions and appraisals and to generate a range of solutions can be taught through direct instruction and through practice with hypothetical and real-life situations. Such instruction should be conducted in small group sessions with targeted and nonreferred peers.
17. ***Increase social acceptance and peer status.*** Students who have engaged in dishonest behavior may develop harmful social labels and a damaged reputation, which can lead to peer rejection. To overcome a student's reputation as dishonest, teachers can repair social acceptance and peer relationships by involving the student in structured opportunities to interact with respected peers on shared interests and mutually reinforcing activities and assignments. Or the student can be placed in an esteemed position or in charge of a task that demonstrates trust in his or her integrity (e.g., acting as a lead coach or collecting money for a class project). Positive prosocial networks also can be fostered through engagement in new extracurricular activities, community service projects, or constructive social justice actions that promote positive social interactions, involvement, and interests.
18. ***Assign a trusted adult mentor.*** Teachers can assign an adult mentor or confidant with whom the student can discuss personal issues and relationships, especially those relationships perceived as adversely affecting academic, physical, or mental health (e.g., bullying, peer rejection, gang involvement, or antisocial pressure). The adult might be a teacher, a nonteaching school staff member, a family member, a community member, or someone the student looks up to as a supportive role model. Schedule regular check-ins with the mentor and ask the mentor to engage in other planned and unplanned social or educational activities with the student.
19. ***Foster home–school collaboration.*** Cooperative efforts between a student's family, educators, and community members to address the student's dishonest behavior must be built on trust, nonjudgmental respect, and open, two-way communication. To ensure consistent monitoring and intervention across environments, all parties must feel comfortable discussing these concerns, agree on valued behaviors and definitions of dishonesty, and perceive that working together is in the best interest of the student. Such collaborative partnerships are essential to develop reliable and practical methods that (a) guarantee vigilant reporting of all actual and suspected instances of dishonest behavior; (b) lessen a student's exposure to deviant activities and peers; and (c) promote discipline approaches that increase receptivity, heighten behavioral compliance, and restore interpersonal closeness.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

www.casel.org

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) website provides reviews of evidence-based universal and targeted programs and strategies designed to promote prosocial behaviors and skills.

www.charactercounts.org

The website of Character Counts provides access to information and resources for classrooms, schools, and communities to promote prosocial attributes based on trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, and caring.

www.safersanerschools.org

This website, part of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, provides information on whole-school restorative justice approaches and findings from schools implementing such practices.

Related Helping Handouts

Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School

Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home

Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for School

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School

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Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home

JEFFREY D. BURKE & ARI M. ROMANO-VERTHELYI

INTRODUCTION

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a behavioral disorder characterized by a pattern of chronic and persistent problems with oppositional behavior, interpersonal antagonism, and angry and irritable disposition (see specific symptoms below). ODD is often misunderstood as being nothing more than bad behavior that is shown at one time or another by all children. It is important for parents, teachers, and others to recognize the difference between the kind of noncompliant, hostile, and antagonistic behaviors that nearly all children show at one time or another and the persistent pattern of frequent behaviors that indicate ODD. Put another way, everyone feels sad or down sometimes, but only a small portion of people actually have depression. Similarly, everyone has something that they fear or worry about; only a small portion have an anxiety disorder. In this way, ODD is not different from any other disorders. Even though everyone argues, gets angry, or sometimes fails to follow rules, only about 3 out of 100 children meet the criteria for ODD. The following are specific symptoms of ODD:

- Often loses temper
- Often argues with others
- Often defies rules
- Often annoys others
- Often blames others for his or her own mistakes
- Is often angry or resentful
- Is often touchy or easily annoyed
- Is often spiteful or vindictive

Parents who are aware of their child having persistent and frequent problems with several of the above symptoms can request a careful assessment by a psychologist to help determine if ODD is present or if another factor might explain what is going on.

ODD is a problem because of the damage it causes to the child's interpersonal relationships, including those with parents, who typically bear the brunt of such behaviors. But ODD is not just a parenting problem. Evidence shows that children with ODD are rated less positively by their peers, experience more peer rejection, and struggle with friendships and their social environment more broadly. They suffer in their interactions in the classroom. Evidence also shows that these problems continue through adolescence, so that children with ODD have more problems in social and romantic relationships as young adults. Students with ODD are more likely to drop out before completing high school.

ODD is not caused by bad parenting. Although parenting behaviors can clearly affect children's behaviors, the behavior of children with ODD also affects parents and parenting. Parents of children with ODD experience a high level of burden and stress, and ODD contributes to an elevated risk of parents' divorcing. ODD behaviors also can negatively affect parents' disciplinary practices.

ODD is also of high concern because children with ODD—especially those who show chronically high levels of anger and irritability—are at increased risk for later depression, and in some cases for suicidal thinking or behavior. These children are also more likely to experience anxiety problems as they develop. In addition, approximately one third of children with ODD show increasing levels of antisocial behavior, including violence and delinquency, as they develop.

Finally, it is common for people to mistake ODD as intentional willfulness on the part of the child. That way of thinking is too simplistic and does not help parents address the behaviors. Instead, parents and teachers

who think of such children as being intentionally willful often end up being more frustrated, making poorer decisions, and using less effective strategies with the child. Having a more realistic understanding can help families get support and access to the well-established, scientifically validated treatment strategies that are available.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

The first step in considering supports and interventions for ODD is a good clinical assessment from a mental health professional. As noted, it is relatively rare for a child to have ODD, even though the individual behaviors of ODD are not rare. In addition to the careful application of the criteria for ODD, clinical assessment will also rule out other possible conditions that might account for the presence of the symptoms. Moreover, an assessment will identify any additional problems that could complicate interventions for ODD. Factors in four areas—biology, development, gender differences, and environment—are related to the onset and maintenance of ODD symptoms.

Biology
From a biological perspective, evidence shows that ODD is partly explained by genetic factors and by differences in how a child's brain functions. This evidence does not mean that any child is destined to have ODD, and it does not mean that ODD behaviors can never be changed. At this time no medicines have been shown to be effective in treating ODD.

Development
ODD is not a developmental phase, but instead, when it is present, it is usually stable over time and over broad developmental periods. Even though some children go through the "terrible twos," it is still unusual in early childhood for a child to often show four of the symptoms of ODD for 6 months or longer (the criteria for the disorder state). It has been shown that as early as preschool, children with ODD are different from children who show typical oppositional behavior, in which the child only occasionally shows these behaviors, shows only one or two of these behaviors at the same time, or shows the behaviors for brief periods of time. Some studies have shown that the average period of time between when a parent first becomes concerned about behavioral problems in their child and when they end up seeking help is about four years. Earlier treatment may reduce distress and improve outcomes, so it is better for parents to act sooner rather than later if they are worried about a child's behavior. Even if it turns out the child does not meet full criteria for ODD, it may still help families to reduce their distress and improve their functioning if they get help for concerns they have about a child's behavior.

Gender Differences
ODD is a problem that affects both boys and girls. In childhood, it is seen just a little more often in boys than in girls, but these small differences diminish in adolescence as rates of ODD increase among girls. When it is present, it shows up in the same ways for boys and girls, affecting their functioning and bringing a greater risk of the poor outcomes described above for both boys and girls. The treatments are the same for boys and girls.

Environment
ODD is not caused by bad parenting. However, to make positive changes for a child with ODD, parents typically need to put specific kinds of parenting strategies in place. These are discussed in the recommendations section. If parents (or teachers) are not careful, they can set up a pattern in which their disciplinary responses increase the child's ODD behaviors. Because the behavior of children with ODD can be very frustrating, getting additional help to make changes is a good decision on the part of parents, and not a sign of bad parenting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ***Figure out if specialized services are appropriate.*** If a child does have ODD, the first place to start is with an evaluation by a psychologist, particularly one who specializes in children's behavioral problems. The best treatments for ODD involve specific behavioral and emotional treatment strategies that are typically provided on an individual outpatient basis. Working with a psychologist can also help parents by coordinating with the school and advocating appropriate behavioral strategies for the child across home and school settings.
2. ***Think carefully about the child behavioral management strategies you choose.*** Whether all of the criteria for ODD are met or not, there are several good practices for parents to use if they are concerned about a child's behavior. As

you look through this list and think about your parenting strategies with your child, it may be helpful to imagine yourself in the workplace. Think in general about the behaviors your boss might use that would motivate you to show desirable behaviors, and think about the ways your boss could make you angry and resentful about your work and about those around you. Your responses will usually give you some idea of the choices you might want to make as a parent.

3. ***Be calm.*** Children with behavioral problems often experience hidden benefits for their behavior that may seem illogical, unpleasant, or even hostile to others. That is, children with ODD may find expressions of anger in others to be stimulating or rewarding. These reactions often lead to increased emotion and further undesirable behavior on the child's part. Practicing your own relaxation strategies (such as deep breathing or counting to 10) can help reduce your feelings of anger or frustration and may interrupt this cycle.
4. ***Be focused, clear, and direct.*** Using clear and direct language when you deliver commands helps to improve your child's compliance. For example, your child might try to get into an argument about whether a particular rule is fair in order to delay an unwanted activity or chore. Allowing your child to use negotiation or argument can distract you from the command you gave your child. Keeping the focus on the targeted behavior will keep you from being sidetracked or goaded into arguments or anger.
5. ***Use firm language and body cues.*** When your child is clearly exhibiting behavioral problems, you can show that you expect compliance by being direct. For example, rather than asking "Would you please find your seat?" you should say "Sit in your seat now, please." You can practice finding the right tone to be firm and commanding, without any anger or hostility.
6. ***Establish specific rules and expectations.*** It is useful to have a set of clear rules and expectations for the household. These may even be posted somewhere that everyone in the household will see them, with additional target behaviors specified for a particular child. To enhance the effectiveness of the rules, use specific, labeled (named) praise when you reinforce the behaviors that you want to see. For example, say "Thank you, Jim, for putting your dishes away quietly."
7. ***Focus on what you want the child to do, rather than not do.*** When you think of the behaviors your child displays that bother you, when possible, flip the behavior around to tell your child specifically what behavior you want to see instead. For example, "Put your toys away on the shelf" guides the child to the behavior that is in compliance, in contrast to "Don't leave your toys all over the floor."
8. ***Pick your battles.*** Enforce rules consistently, and when you do choose to issue a directive, see it through. However, mild undesirable behaviors, such as eye-rolling or a tone of voice, are not likely to be worth your time and effort and will distract you from your overall goal. Additionally, choosing to respond to such behaviors may reinforce these kinds of behaviors for a child with ODD.
9. ***Know what you are going to do beforehand.*** These goals are much easier to achieve when you have established a plan beforehand. If you know the steps you are going to take in advance, it is much easier to avoid escalations of anger, and you are less likely to fall into the trap of giving over-the-top and out-of-control punishments. Practice these techniques in your head, have clear discussions with the family about household rules and the good and bad consequences that will follow, and then be consistent.
10. ***Establish and follow through with consequences.*** By learning some behavioral strategies that match your child's stage of development, you can then be consistent with the system you set up. Earning privileges is a helpful way to increase a child's motivation. Think about things that your child likes to do each day, and use these rewards to reinforce good behavior, such as earning extra screen time. Reinforcers do not have to be material prizes, and they do not even need to be special privileges, although these can be part of an overall system. Never use access to food or other basic human needs as consequences that might be taken away.
11. ***Use shaping.*** Shaping is a strategy that recognizes how a behavior can be seen as a set of steps between current behavior and desired outcomes. For some behaviors, you may consider reinforcing closer and closer approximations of the desired behavior, rather than adopting an all-or-nothing approach. For example, the range between never complying with a command and immediately doing what a child is told includes "eventually

got it done," "did it after being told 10 times," and "needed a reminder." As another example, the ultimate goal may be "Keep your room clean!" However, between the way things are now and that end goal, a parent may engage over time on separate pieces of varying importance, such as "Always put your dirty clothes in the hamper," "Keep your school materials on your desk," and "Put toys away when you are not playing with them." It also may be easier to avoid frustration with mild or minor noncompliance or defiance when it is one of the steps along the road from total noncompliance to perfectly desirable behavior.

12. ***Set experiences up so that you are doing more praising than punishing.*** People respond best when they experience more frequent praise and positive reinforcement for the things they should be doing, rather than being punished for undesirable behaviors. Giving your child more frequent attention and reinforcement for the things you want your child to be doing, combined with clearly lower rates of undesirable consequences for things that the child should not be doing, will lead to successful behavioral change.
13. ***Catch your child being good.*** Parents often get into a habit of paying attention when children are noisy or disruptive. You can increase the times you praise your child for the things you want your child to be doing if you regularly remember to observe and give praise when she or he is following rules, playing quietly, or doing other behavior that you like to see.
14. ***Recognize that positive reinforcement is not a bribe!*** Sometimes parents, especially those frustrated by dealing with a child's ongoing noncompliant behavior, reject using positive reinforcement because they see it as bribery. Remember that a bribe is something that we give to someone when we want them to do something they are NOT supposed to do. As adults, we are not being bribed when we expect a paycheck for our work. We expect a polite wave from another driver when we let them merge in front of us. We hope our spouse will notice our helpful behaviors around the house. It is reasonable that children would respond in the same way that we would when we do the things others expect or want from us.
15. ***Do not be afraid to use time-out appropriately.*** Despite not having evidence to support their concerns, some critics say that time-out practices may be harmful to children and should be avoided. Simply put, there is no evidence to support the idea that time-out procedures cause harm. The Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology (Division 53 of the American Psychological Association) has worked to provide public education to counter these claims. The truth is that time-out is a primary component of most evidence-based treatments, and being temporarily prevented from doing something one wants to do is a very normal human experience. Time-out should be thought of as time out from reinforcement. This includes time-out from things that the child wants to do in the moment and, importantly, from interactions like arguing or getting a rise out of parents that are counterintuitively reinforcing. When done using well-established practices, use of time-out is very effective for changing behavior. Guidance on the appropriate use of time-outs may be found in the book *Your Defiant Child* (see below) or from psychologists in your community.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

http://effectivechildtherapy.org/

This website, associated with the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, provides useful guidance and information about symptoms of childhood disorders and about evidence-based treatment approaches. It also includes videos for parents, which can be found on the Parent Resources page, at http://effectivechildtherapy.fiu.edu/parents

Books and Book Chapters

Barkley, R. A., & Benton, C. M. (2013). *Your defiant child: Eight steps to better behavior*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

This book is a guide for parents that describes effective strategies for dealing with oppositional defiant disorder.

Burke, J. D., & Loeber, R. (2016). Evidence-based interventions for oppositional defiant disorder in children and adolescents. In L. Theodore (Ed.), *The handbook of evidence-based interventions for children and adolescents* (pp. 181–191). New York, NY: Springer.

This chapter provides background on ODD and a step-by-step review of evidence-based intervention strategies for oppositional defiant disorder.

Related Helping Handouts

Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home
Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for Home
Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior and Developing Self-Discipline: Helping Handout for Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home
Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for School

JEFFREY D. BURKE & ARI M. ROMANO-VERTHELYI

INTRODUCTION

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a behavioral disorder characterized by a pattern of chronic and persistent problems with oppositional behavior, interpersonal antagonism, and angry and irritable disposition. Students with ODD are likely to face significant impairment as a result of its presence, and their teachers, peers, and parents are similarly likely to face a great deal of distress and disruption. Students with ODD experience greater peer rejection; their peers typically name them as among the least liked. These social impacts persist through childhood into adolescence and young adulthood. Students with ODD are also at greater risk for having problems with school functioning and for being held back or dropping out. Furthermore, students with ODD are at higher risk for developing other emotional and behavioral problems, such as depression, anxiety, suicidality, and conduct disorder.

The following are the eight specific behaviors that are used to diagnose ODD:

- Often losing temper
- Often being angry or resentful
- Often being touchy or easily annoyed
- Often blaming others
- Often annoying others
- Often arguing
- Often defying others
- Often being spiteful or vindictive

As with all disorders, the presence of a single symptom does not mean that the disorder is present. Instead, a pattern of at least four of these symptoms must have been present during at least the past 6 months. Also, as with all other mental health disorders, the individual behaviors that make up ODD are present for everyone at some point. For instance, feeling angry and arguing are common human experiences. A diagnosis of ODD is made only when a persistent pattern of multiple and frequent behaviors is present. In fact, evidence shows that when the diagnostic rules are followed appropriately, only about 3% of children will meet the criteria. Thus, children should not be labeled as having ODD without an evaluation by a trained clinician.

Although this handout is designed primarily for teachers who have students with ODD, teachers and other school staff should find most of the recommendations useful for other students who exhibit oppositional and defiant behaviors but who do not have a diagnosed disorder.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

The selection of supports and interventions should be made with several factors in mind, including gender, development, biology, and environment. Additionally, one should consider what ODD is not.

Factors That Influence ODD

Gender

ODD affects both boys and girls, although earlier in childhood, ODD is slightly more prevalent among boys than girls. However, during development the rates for girls increase compared with boys, so that prevalence rates are about the same for boys and girls in adolescence. When ODD is present, it shows up in the same way for boys and girls: it has similar effects on social interactions, interpersonal functioning, and achievement and similar risks for other mental health problems. It would be a mistake to discount or

disregard the behaviors of ODD as having different meaning in boys versus girls.

Development

Even though the behaviors that make up ODD are present for everyone, and even though all children go through developmental periods where they may show higher rates of noncompliance, meeting full criteria for ODD is never a common or typical experience for a student. ODD can be distinguished from normal child behavior as early as preschool, and when present, it is more likely to be stable than not, persisting across development. As noted above, girls show a faster rate of increase in ODD from childhood to adolescence. Although little research has been done on ODD in adulthood, some evidence suggests that the prevalence of ODD in girls starts declining from adolescence through young adulthood, while boys continue to show overall stability in prevalence through young adulthood.

Biology

Studies show that genetic factors play a role in the development of ODD and may explain about 30%–50% of its development. Neurobiological studies indicate differences in brain function for those with ODD. Neither genetic factors nor brain function mean that a student is destined to show ODD, nor do they mean that it cannot be changed when it is present. There is evidence that genetic factors and school environment interact to influence the level of ODD, meaning that whatever a student's innate disposition toward ODD behaviors might be, the school environment can influence how much those behaviors actually arise. Relatedly, parents and teachers may express the idea that ODD is the product of intentional willfulness on the part of the student. Although this perspective is common, it is not a helpful one for making changes. In the same way that some students have liabilities that place them at risk for depression, anxiety, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, some have liabilities that place them at risk for ODD.

Environment

The evidence described above makes clear that biological factors alone do not explain why ODD is present for a particular student. Environmental factors also play an important role. So although parents or teachers should not be blamed for a student's ODD, how parents, teachers, peers, and others in a student's life react to a student's behavior plays an important role in the level of ODD behaviors that the student shows. In fact, no medicines or medical treatments currently work to reliably change ODD behaviors, which means that any change for the better will have to come from changes in the student's environment. Further, interactions between teachers and students with behavioral problems are reciprocal: the behaviors of ODD influence a teacher's behavior, and the level of these behaviors in students is in turn influenced by how teachers respond. In the home environment, parents of students with ODD experience high degrees of burden and stress, and ODD in particular raises the risk of parents divorcing.

The student's broader environment can play a role too. For example, students in lower socioeconomic areas show higher levels of ODD. Conversely, in one study, the level of ODD behaviors in a community were lower after that community experienced a relatively sudden increase in income. Beyond socioeconomic risk factors, there is little to no evidence for cultural variation in ODD; a large study of samples around the world found that the level of ODD across different countries was similar. There also is no evidence that racial differences explain ODD; in fact, racial bias on the part of some professionals may lead them to conclude that a student has a behavioral disorder, such as ODD, when in fact a different problem is present.

What Oppositional Defiant Disorder Is Not

A review of the symptoms of ODD shows that ODD does not include aggressive behavior, nor does it include impulsive or inattentive behavior. Some students will show such behaviors in addition to ODD, and some students will progress from ODD to other disorders over time. Nevertheless, teachers should be mindful of the problems that arise for students with ODD, even if they are not aggressive or impulsive. Also, students' behavioral problems once were considered just a mask for other problems, like depression, but this is not true. When the behaviors of ODD are present, they should be addressed directly and not disregarded as an indication of some deeper concern. Finally, ODD is not caused by so-called bad parenting nor by poor classroom management, yet both parenting and classroom management can influence oppositional and defiant behaviors for better or worse. ODD does consistently damage the interpersonal relationships in which the student is involved (including in the family, classroom, and social group) and presents behavior that is challenging for any parent, teacher, or peer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For students who meet criteria for ODD, the best first step is an evaluation by a psychologist and involvement in appropriate treatment. Nevertheless, teachers and school staff can do a great deal to help students with ODD and students who otherwise exhibit oppositional and defiant behaviors. Using behavioral management strategies in the classroom will help modify behaviors for all members of the class. Incorporating training and lessons in social and emotional competence may also be useful. For individual students with particular difficulties, coordinating with parents to address specific behavioral goals, or targeting specific coping strategies, may improve the likelihood for success. When the behaviors are frequent and intense and constitute ODD, additional interventions and services are needed that are provided outside of the classroom, and often outside of the school.

The recommendations below are divided into three major sections: (a) preventing and reducing oppositional and defiant behaviors, (b) responding to oppositional and defiant behaviors, and (c) using existing group-based programs.

Preventing Oppositional and Defiant Behavior

General strategies of effective classroom management can prevent most acts of opposition and defiance. Many of those strategies are covered more thoroughly in other handouts and include the following.

1. ***Establish specific classroom rules and expectations.*** It is useful for teachers to state explicit expectations about the behavior they want to see in the classroom. Posting reminders of key behaviors will help students keep the expectations in mind. Because such lists are not exhaustive, you should remind students verbally about other expected behaviors. To enhance your effectiveness, use labeled praise when you observe desired behaviors in the classroom (e.g., "Thank you, Jim, for putting your bin away quietly.").
2. ***Pick your battles.*** Enforce fundamental classroom rules consistently, and when discipline is needed, see it through. Mildly undesirable behaviors, such as eye-rolling or a tone of voice, are likely not worth your time and effort and can distract from the goal of teaching. Engaging around such behaviors can, counterintuitively, be reinforcing for a student with ODD.
3. ***Use shaping.*** Shaping is the behavioral principle that recognizes that a series of steps can be incrementally reinforced to build on current behavior and achieve desired outcomes. For some behaviors, acknowledging increasingly close approximations of the desired behavior—that is, reinforcing partial compliance that is an improvement over a student's normal response, and subsequently reinforcing more complete compliance—may be more effective than adopting an all-or-nothing approach. As noted earlier, using labeled praise will clarify what desirable behavior led to the reinforcement.
4. ***Establish and stick to contingencies.*** Use of developmentally appropriate systems for managing contingencies should be consistent with the system you have established in the classroom. Encourage generally desirable behavior among the students in the class at large by allowing them to earn desirable privileges. Other students may benefit from individually targeted reinforcement of their specific goals. Students participating in treatment for ODD should also have rating sheets for specific behaviors, so that teachers can communicate daily behaviors to parents, who can provide reinforcement for these behaviors at home. Therapists will also use this information to adjust an overall behavioral program, as necessary.
5. ***Monitor and reinforce positive alternative behaviors and coping behaviors.*** This approach is valuable in general for preventing acts of defiance and opposition among all students, but it is especially important in preventing such behaviors among students who are receiving evidence-based treatment for ODD. Teachers can enhance the speed of behavioral change for a child in treatment if they know of specific coping behaviors to look for and provide reinforcement when the child shows those behaviors. For example, when a student is working on using specific strategies to interrupt escalating anger (such as counting to 10, taking deep breaths, or using tension-and-release muscle relaxation), the teacher can give the student labeled praise or give rewards with classroom privileges or points or tokens in a behavioral management system. In such a targeted intervention, the therapist has to be communicating with the teacher about what the student is expected to be practicing during the school day.

Responding to Oppositional and Defiant Behaviors

6. ***Know what you are going to do beforehand.*** Goals are much easier to achieve when a plan has been established beforehand. When teachers consider appropriate contingencies and concrete steps in advance, they will find it is much easier to avoid the escalation of a student's anger that could result in issuing over-the-top consequences. Evidence shows such reciprocal effects between teachers and students, especially when ODD is present. Using mental rehearsal, being aware of potential escalation, and having an established plan will help teachers avoid being manipulated by a student's behavior into becoming angry or acquiescing.
7. ***Be calm.*** Students with behavioral problems often experience secondary or hidden benefits from their behavior, even though arguing or being hostile would not seem to be a positive or rewarding experience. Students with ODD may find expressions of anger in others to be stimulating. In turn, they may increase their expressions of hostility or undesirable behavior. Learn and practice relaxation strategies, such as deep breathing, to help reduce your own feelings of anger or frustration and stay focused on your goals.
8. ***Be focused, clear, and direct.*** The use of clear and direct language when delivering commands helps to improve compliance. Giving a specific, unambiguous instruction like "Put the blocks into the bin and go sit on the carpet" will be more effective than a more general "Cleanup time," because there is less room for miscommunication or negotiation. This is key, as negotiations and arguments can prevent teachers from focusing on the behavioral response they want and can allow students with ODD to avoid an unwanted activity or chore.
9. ***Use firm language and body cues.*** When behavioral problems are evident, to get the student's compliance, teachers should make firm statements rather than ask questions. Saying "Sit in your seat now, please," rather than asking "Would you please find your seat?" removes the student's opening to negotiate. Practice finding the right tone, one that is firm and commanding, without using an angry or hostile tone of voice or physical posture.
10. ***Focus on what the student should do rather than what the student should not do.*** Behavioral management systems should have, on the whole, an *imbalance* toward more frequent positive reinforcement for desirable behaviors relative to the punitive costs incurred for undesirable behaviors. In addition to giving the student much more frequent attention and reinforcement for behaving in the preferred ways, lowering the rate of undesirable consequences for things that the student should not be doing will lead to successful behavioral change.
11. ***Use time-out appropriately.*** Time-out should be thought of as time during which the student is not being reinforced for any type of behavior. When done well, using well-established practices, time-out is very effective for changing behavior. In school, time-out would include moving the student to a designated area of the classroom or to another room (including in-school suspension). It is often used in combination with strategies in which the student learns to calm down, such as by reflecting on the immediate situation and using alternative behaviors.

Using Group-Based Programs

12. ***Consider group-based programs for preventing and reducing ODD behaviors.*** Some schools have such group-based programs already available. If not, school psychologists can help identify enough students to justify setting up a program. These programs are primarily designed to be delivered to either school staff or students. For example, the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Intervention is a group-based model that trains teachers, school counselors, and school psychologists who work with children ages 3–8. A variation also exists for teachers of 1- to 5-year-olds, which includes a focus on earlier developmental concerns, such as separation anxiety, attachment, and language development. All of the teacher components of the Incredible Years programs aim to help teachers strengthen children's socially appropriate play skills, self-regulation, emotional awareness, and self-esteem; reduce defiance; and build the children's confidence to persist in the face of difficulty. Through videos, role-play, a live therapist, peer feedback, and demonstrations of behavioral principles, Incredible Years encourages self-reflection, problem solving, and working together.

    Another group-based intervention model is the Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) for Schools program. This 13-week, in-school program teaches students ages 6–11 how to recognize and regulate

their anger, problem-solve, deal with a bully, and cope when situations are unfair. The students role-play different ways they might react to a variety of situations. With the help of peer feedback, the students can discuss how their reactions could have been more or less effective and how to react and interact in more adaptive ways.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

http://www.incredibleyears.com/

Information about the Incredible Years programs, including the Teacher Classroom Management Program and the Emotional Regulation Curriculum, can be found at the Incredible Years website.

http://www.nsta.org/disabilities/behavioral.aspx

Additional information about classroom management for behavioral difficulties can be found at the National Science Teachers Association website's Books and Resources page.

Books and Articles

Barkley, R. A., & Benton, C. M. (2013). *Your defiant child: Eight steps to better behavior*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

This book is a guide to strategies for dealing with oppositional defiant disorder. Although written as a guide for parents, the concepts and strategies for reinforcement using praise or structured behavioral systems and for the use of calm and consistent methods for engaging defiant children are appropriate in multiple contexts.

Burke, J. D., & Loeber, R. (2016). Evidence-based interventions for oppositional defiant disorder in children and adolescents. In L. Theodore (Ed.), *The handbook of evidence-based interventions for children and adolescents* (pp. 181–191). New York, NY: Springer.

This chapter provides a background on oppositional defiant disorder and a step-by-step review of evidence-based intervention strategies for ODD.

Related Handouts

Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home
Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for School
Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for Home
Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for School
Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School
Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Peer Relationships: Helping Handout for School

GEORGE BEAR, LINDSEY MANTZ, & ANGELA HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

Peer relationships refer to the quality of interactions, or relations, between students. For purposes of this handout, the term includes peer acceptance and social support. Friendship, however, is covered in a separate handout (see *Friendships—Lacking a Friend and Feeling Lonely: Helping Handout for School and Home*).

When a student has problems relating with peers, it often negatively affects not only the individual student, but also the class and in some cases the school. At the *individual student level*, a sense of belonging or relatedness with peers is widely recognized as a key dimension of emotional well-being that plays a primary role in motivating behavior, including academic behavior. It also serves as a buffer for students who experience bullying, economic disadvantage, and other stressors in life—helping protect them from negative outcomes (Davidson & Demaray, 2007). Students lacking acceptance and support from peers are at greater risk than other students for experiencing a variety of negative outcomes, including loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, acting out, aggression, lack of academic engagement and achievement, bullying victimization, and dislike for school (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2009).

At the *classroom and school levels*, peer relationships affect classroom and school climate by influencing classroom norms and group behavior, both positively and negatively. For example, when most students in a class accept and respect one another, there is peer pressure for others to do the same. The converse also is true—when peer relationships are poor, misbehavior is much more likely to occur.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

In choosing among recommended intervention strategies for a student (or class) with poor peer relationships, school personnel can first identify, either informally or formally, contributing factors that might be targeted, as discussed in the following.

Individual student characteristics often associated with poor peer relationships and peer rejection include aggressive, disruptive, and noncompliant behaviors; high social withdrawal or shyness; low academic engagement; deficits and deficiencies in the social–cognitive (e.g., social understanding, social problem-solving skills, and moral reasoning) and emotional domains (e.g., emotion regulation); communication or language deficits; and difficulty with inhibitory control and delaying of gratification (Rubin, Bukowski, & Laursen, 2009).

Characteristics of classrooms and schools that are often associated with poor peer relationships include the following (Bear, 2010):

- Norms that fail to support prosocial behavior and academic engagement, oppose antisocial behavior, and lead students to believe that others do not care about them.
- An authoritarian approach to classroom management and school discipline characterized by an emphasis on structure and use of punitive techniques. This approach stands in contrast to an authoritative approach that emphasizes a balanced combination of emotional support (or responsiveness) with structure (or demandingness). Although both emotional support and structure are important in preventing behavior problems, emotional support from the

classroom teacher is of particular importance in promoting positive peer relationships.

- Teachers and staff who are not attuned and responsive to the social dynamics of the classroom and peer group affiliations. For example, they are unaware of or nonresponsive to bullying, social neglect, and peer rejection.
- Lack of ample opportunities for students to engage in positive social interactions with each other. For example, students have little access to peer-assisted learning activities, extracurricular activities, sports, and service learning.
- Teachers and staff who demonstrate that they like certain students and dislike others. Showing favorites can create nonegalitarian and hierarchical social network structures that foster poor peer relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended for teachers to review and consider for implementation in the classroom, with the recognition that some, if not most, are already being implemented. Also, some recommendations are likely to be more appropriate and feasible than others, depending on the teacher's philosophy and training, the student's age, the nature of the peer relationship problem, and the factors contributing to it (e.g., bullying, loneliness, shyness, or a specific disability). The recommendations are divided into three general categories: preventing peer relationship problems, including their reoccurrence once they appear; responding to problems of peer relationships; and helping students who experience frequent or serious problems of peer relationships.

Preventing Peer Relationship Problems in the Classroom and School

In this section, evidence-based strategies for improving peer relationships focus on preventing the occurrence of peer-related behavior problems through effective classroom management and the teaching of curriculum-based lessons.

1. ***Communicate and highlight social acceptance and related skills in multiple ways.*** For example, remind the student and classmates of the school's behavioral expectations and classroom rules by reviewing or noting them in class meetings, school-wide activities, morning announcements, pep rallies, and media.
2. ***Provide multiple models of acceptance, respect, caring, and behaviors associated with peer acceptance and liking.*** For example, highlight teachers and staff, peers, and community members who model those behaviors as well as other individuals students may admire, such as those in literature, history, film, or sports.
3. ***Use praise and other recognitions wisely and strategically to highlight and reinforce positive peer relationships on the part of the targeted student and others.*** Also, encourage students to praise and reinforce one another for prosocial behavior, such as by having students post praise notes weekly for every student.
4. ***Identify and make the class aware of the skills and talents of all students, including the targeted student.*** Help students get to know each other better and recognize each other's positive qualities and shared interests.
5. ***Arrange seating to promote opportunities for the student to engage in positive social interactions and to experience social acceptance.*** For example,
   - Where feasible, seat students in clusters instead of rows that mix groups based on (a) students' preferred seating, especially the targeted student, and (b) the need to separate certain students (e.g., bullies from victims).
   - Determine the student's friendships and lack thereof. This would be based on your observations, the student's self-reports, and/or a brief sociometric tool (e.g., by asking students to list their three close friends). Structure seating arrangements accordingly. However, avoid seating students with behavior problems together. Closely monitor and respond to the social dynamics of the classroom and school.
6. ***Avoid indicating favorites.*** Strive to develop egalitarian peer social networks in the classroom by treating all students equally and fairly.
7. ***Provide ample opportunities for the student to engage in peer-assisted learning and other activities that promote positive peer interactions.*** Organize peer tutoring, peer mentoring or coaching, and buddy systems that target the student.
8. ***Encourage the student to participate in extracurricular activities, sports, and other group-oriented activities.*** Such activities, especially when adequately supervised, provide excellent

opportunities for students to bond and develop friendships.

9. ***Implement additional strategies of general classroom management for preventing behavior problems.*** Implement close monitoring and immediate correction of any behavior problems (of the targeted student and peers). Additionally, establish and follow routines, procedures, and rules that help prevent behavior problems and negative peer relationships, and develop and maintain positive teacher–student relationships (see *Improving Teacher–Student Relationships: Helping Handout for School*).
10. ***Use the regular curriculum, class meetings, and everyday life of the classroom and school to teach lessons on peer relationships.*** Especially teach the behaviors and social–emotional skills associated with positive peer relationships, including acceptance of individual differences, tolerance, gratitude, empathy, and other prosocial behaviors. These lessons might entail the following:
    - Highlighting lessons that concern peer relations, such as in language arts (e.g., in literature and in writing assignments), social studies, and health.
    - Highlighting specific problem-related issues, such as peer rejection, bullying, and prejudice, and the importance of peer acceptance and friendships.
    - Focusing on peer relationships during teachable moments, such as when students are not getting along, as well as when they are exhibiting exemplary prosocial skills that should be highlighted.
    - Discussing issues pertaining to social relationships in current events in the media, such as examples of prosocial behavior and the consequences of peer rejection.
11. ***Adopt a packaged social–emotional learning curriculum.*** Social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum packages target responsible decision making at school, at home, and in the community; self-management of emotions and behavior; relationship skills; social awareness; and self-awareness (see CASEL.org). Look for programs that include lessons on relationship skills and that have been shown in empirical studies to improve student–student relationships. Such programs should include lessons and strategies that target specific social skills associated with prosocial behavior and the absence of antisocial behavior.

Responding to Situations Entailing Poor Peer Relationships

How educators respond to problems of poor peer relations should depend largely on the nature of the problem, the circumstances involved, and various additional factors. For example, the situation would be handled differently if bullying is involved, including its various forms (see *Bullying: Helping Handout for School*), or loneliness due to lack of a friend (*Friendships—Lacking a Friend and Feeling Lonely: Helping Handout for School and Home*). Nevertheless, similar general strategies for responding immediately to the situation often apply, especially when peers' behavior causes emotional harm (either temporary or lasting) to one or more students. Such general strategies follow.

12. ***When responding to peer-related problems, focus primarily on how the behavior affects the student and others.*** Unless behavior (such as exclusion or name calling) is a class-wide problem, where feasible, respond privately instead of publicly (e.g., discussing the problem individually with the targeted student or with the small number of students involved). Calling attention to a student's negative behaviors in front of peers can have the unintended consequence of reinforcing other students' negative peer perceptions toward the student who is being corrected.
13. ***Use guided class discussions, when appropriate.*** For example, if the problem is class-wide, use a guided class discussion, focusing especially on the impact of nonacceptance and rejection and on problem solving or solutions (rather than on blaming and making excuses). The outcome should be a plan of action that is feasible and likely to be effective.
14. ***Use punitive consequences where necessary and appropriate.*** Invoke the punitive consequences of a violation of classroom or school rules pertaining to the action, with the severity of the consequence being consistent with the severity of the violation (e.g., ranging from verbal reprimand or discussion to contact with the home or office referral). Always combine punitive consequences, when used, with more positive techniques, including praise or rewards for alternative behaviors (see *Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home*).
15. ***Use inductive discipline, which emphasizes the impact of the student's behavior on others and***

relations with others. For example, focus much less on punitive consequences and more on empathy and social perspective taking.

16. ***Where appropriate, use the situation as a teachable moment.*** Draw upon the situation to (a) teach specific skills that would help prevent behaviors associated with peer rejection from reoccurring, (b) teach coping skills, and (c) teach alternative behaviors to those who exhibit nonacceptance and rejection.
17. ***Encourage the student to talk to teachers, other school staff, friends, and family about what may be interfering with positive peer relations.*** Consider all factors at the individual, classroom, and school levels.
18. ***Work with the student's home, where appropriate.*** Depending on the situation, include assistance in helping to build peer relationship skills and reducing behaviors that contribute to poor peer relationships (see *Home–School Communication and Collaboration*: Helping Handout for School.)

Using Additional Strategies and Interventions for Students With Frequent or Chronic Peer Relationship Problems

The following recommendations are for students who are at greatest risk for poor peer relationships and those who are currently experiencing ongoing problems of nonacceptance or rejection by peers.

19. ***Apply the strategies and interventions listed above with greater frequency, intensity, and comprehensiveness.*** For example, use praise, monitoring, and supervision more frequently, and provide opportunities for peer interactions more deliberately while supervising more closely. Increased comprehensiveness of interventions would entail using multiple components, such as targeting multiple areas (e.g., the development of a range of social, emotional, and cognitive skills) and also implementing the interventions across multiple settings and providers outside of school.
20. ***Develop an individualized behavior intervention plan with assistance from specialists such as the school psychologist and school counselor.*** Base the plan on a thorough assessment of the student's needs and especially individual and environmental factors that might help explain and contribute to poor peer relationships. The plan should identify and target the following for intervention:
    - The student's strengths that may encourage peer acceptance.
    - Specific social skill deficits, such as management of emotions, social perspective taking, communication skills, and prosocial skills.
    - Academic difficulties and factors that contribute to these deficits.
    - Classroom and school social networks, that is, targeting peers who demonstrate nonacceptance toward other students and identifying peers who may be potential friends for isolated students.
    - Classroom management practices that need improvement.
    - Resources and social support systems within the school, home, and community environments that may foster positive peer relationships. When selecting these resources, the strengths and needs of the student and the student's family should be considered.
21. ***Provide social skills and SEL training that targets specific prosocial skills and antisocial behaviors related to social acceptance, friendships, and peer rejection.*** Target skills, including coping skills, to results of an individual assessment of strengths and needs. Such additional training might be provided in small groups or individually by the school psychologist or school counselor. Include the targeted student and peers who also might benefit. Be cautious about grouping students who share similar antisocial behaviors, which could result in "deviancy training," with peers modeling and reinforcing antisocial behavior.
22. ***Work closely with students' parents to target social and academic skills at home.*** When issues with peer relations and related problem behaviors are ongoing or serious, work together with the parents or caregivers to address them.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

www.casel.org

The website for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning includes reviews of programs that foster positive peer relationships and additional resources.

Books

Schneider, B. (2016). *Childhood friendships and peer relations: Friends and enemies* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

This book reviews the history and research of peer relationships and their importance, the concept of social competence and its origin, the impact of peer relationships on students' success at school, techniques for assessing peer relationships, and how best to facilitate peer relationships. Additional chapters include considerations of peer relationships for students with atypical patterns of development, cultural differences, and the impact of electronic communication.

Related Helping Handouts

Bullying: Helping Handout for School

Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School

Friendships—Lacking a Friend and Feeling Lonely: Helping Handout for School and Home

Improving Teacher–Student Relationships: Helping Handout for School

Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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National Research Council & Institute of Medicine. (2009). *Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: Progress and possibilities.* Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Rubin, H. R., Bukowski, W. M., & Laursen, B. (2009). *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

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Threats of Violence: Helping Handout for Assessing Risk at School

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INTRODUCTION

Although recent events have many concerned about school violence, schools are safer today than in years past (Zhang, Musu-Gillette, & Oudekerk, 2016). Nevertheless, one act of violence is one too many, and schools need to be ready to implement protocols and procedures, such as behavior threat assessment and management (BTAM), that prevent and mitigate school violence. In the wake of recent acts of targeted and mass violence, multiple reports and agencies have recommended that schools establish multidisciplinary BTAM teams (Amman et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

The primary purpose of a BTAM team is to ensure school safety. However, it is also important to acknowledge that failure to respond to a known or suspected threat can have legal implications. School districts have been held accountable under legal claims of foreseeability and negligence for failing to respond appropriately when a threat has been identified (*Pace v. Talley*, 2006; *Shuman v. Penn Manor SD*, 2005; *The Estate of Montana Lance et al. v. Kyer et al.*, 2011; *Witsell et al. v. School Board of Hillsborough*, 2011).

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

BTAM includes establishing a multidisciplinary threat assessment team, training students and staff to report concerns, and being prepared to conduct a risk assessment. At a minimum, an effective BTAM team should include three trained threat assessment professionals: an administrator, a school mental health professional, and for moderate to serious risk situations, a law enforcement professional, such as a school resource officer (Deisinger & Randazzo, 2017). The primary goal of a BTAM process is to prevent the immediate risk of harm to others and to implement interventions that redirect students who are judged to present threats toward more positive pathways. If school rules have been violated, consequences related to those rules may still be applied; however, supports also need to be identified concurrently for these students. Otherwise, consequences can potentially escalate a threatening situation.

Effective BTAM also includes both the assessment of risk factors and warning signs and the management of threatening behaviors to ensure safety. There is a difference between making a threat and posing a threat, thus the context of words and actions must be considered. The following discussion reviews considerations that are important to identifying a potentially threatening situation, conducting a comprehensive threat assessment, and selecting the appropriate intervention for the student who is judged a danger to others.

Risk and Threat Assessment

A *risk* assessment considers empirically derived static (or constant) and dynamic (or changing) variables in a student's life, and estimates the individual's capacity to react violently (Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, & Guldimann, 2014). A *behavioral threat* assessment determines the level of concern and also includes risk management, with the primary goal of redirecting the

student away from pathways leading to violence. Thus, a risk assessment is used for prevention and initial identification, whereas a threat assessment is activated when the concern is known and threat management is necessary.

No psychological or behavioral profile is available that predicts school violence. Further, profiles can unjustly stigmatize students, because, as noted above, there is a difference between *making* a threat and *posing* a threat. For example, a student may say or do something out of frustration, anger, or as a joke, but does not have any intention of harming others. Pathways to violence are a complex interaction of risk factors, warning signs, situational and contextual barriers, and mental states (Reeves & Brock, 2017).

Risk Factors

The presence of risk factors increases the odds of violent behavior. Although no one risk factor, or set of factors, perfectly predicts violent behavior, the greater the number of risk factors that are present, the greater the need to be vigilant. Risk factors are shown in Table 1.

Warning Signs

Warning signs are statements, actions, and appearances that suggest that a student is about to display violent behavior. Although warning signs are a critical element in initiating a threat assessment, the absence of warning signs does not necessarily mean there will not be a future act of violence. In many instances, individuals who have no history of warning signs have engaged in an act of violence. Thus, it is critical to look at both the static and the dynamic factors that are occurring in a student's life. Nevertheless, warning signs coupled with multiple risk factors do elevate concerns (see Table 2). Suicidal ideation also is a warning sign, as thoughts of violence can be paired with suicidal thoughts.

Threats typically do not occur without some kind of warning. Threats can be direct (e.g., "I am going to kill Mr. Smith"), conditional ("If you continue to mess with me I will mess with you worse"), and indirect (e.g., "You might not want to eat in the cafeteria at lunch tomorrow"). Individuals may state threats in writing or verbally, and more recently, they often post threats on a personal social media account or an Internet site. Specific threats combined with multiple warning signs are especially concerning.

Risk Assessment

Assessment of a student's risk for violence is not an exact science and requires clinical judgment. There are a number of interview acronyms designed to assist mental health professionals in conducting a risk assessment. Deisinger and Randazzo (2017) view violence as an interaction among several factors, which form the acronym STEP (subject, target, environment, and precipitating event): the individual who may pose a threat, or the *subject* of concern; vulnerabilities of the *target* individuals and group; the *environment* that facilitates, perpetuates, or does not discourage violence; and *precipitating* events that can trigger the subject's reactions. BTAM teams

Table 1. Risk Factors That Increase Odds of Violent Thinking and Behaviors

- Is socially withdrawn
- Is isolated, alienated, and/or rejected
- Has been a victim of violence and/or bullying
- Feels persecuted and picked on
- Has low school interest and performance
- Expresses intolerance and prejudice
- Has used drugs and alcohol
- Has been affiliated with gangs
- Expresses personal grievance or moral outrage
- Expresses ideological thinking (often reinforced by others, including websites or virtual sites)
- Does not affiliate with prosocial groups
- Is dependent on virtual communities
- Has occupational goals that have not been achieved or are unattainable
- Has failed in relationship(s)
- Has had a mental health disorder
- Has access to or possesses firearms
- Has a history of
  - violent expressions in writings and drawings
  - serious threats of violence
  - uncontrolled anger
  - impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, or bullying
  - disciplinary problems that involve criminal violence

Note. Adapted from Amman et al. (2017); Fein et al. (2004); Meloy, Hoffmann, Guldimann, & James (2011); Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, & Guldimann (2014); Meloy, Mohandie, Knoll, & Hoffmann (2015).

Table 2. Warning Signs That Indicate Violent Thinking and Behaviors

- Specific targets (may or may not be verbalized to others)
  - Persons
  - Places
  - Programs
  - Processes
  - Philosophies
  - Proxies of the above
- Articulated motives
  - Personal
  - Political
  - Religious
  - Racial or ethnic
  - Environmental
  - Special interest
- Increasing intensity of violence-related
  - Efforts
  - Desires
  - Planning
- Direct or indirect communications about violence
  - Words that are consistent with actions
  - Perception that violence is acceptable or the only solution
  - Postings on social media and Internet
- Access to weapons or methods of planned harm
- Emotional state
  - Hopelessness
  - Desperation
  - Despair
  - Suicidal thinking
- Increasing capacity to carry out threats
- Engagement with social media facilitating or promoting violence
- Intimate partner problems
- Interpersonal conflicts

Note. Adapted from Amman et al. (2017); de Becker (n.d.); Fein et al. (2004); Meloy et al. (2011); Meloy et al. (2014); Meloy et al. (2015).

also assess the threat more specifically for MMOP (means, method, opportunity, and proximity). It asks: Does the individual(s) of concern have the *means* to carry out violence? Does the person have a planned *method* and the *opportunity* to carry out the attack? And does the person have *proximity* to the target? De Becker and Associates (2017) use the acronym JACA to ask the following four questions: What is the *justification* for the act of violence? Can the individual see other *alternatives* to besides violence to solve problems? Does the person of concern care about the *consequences* of the planned actions? Does the person have the *ability* to carry out the act?

Interviews that use STEP, MMOP, and JACA are critical and should be done by mental health professionals who have been trained in interviewing skills (e.g., the school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor). The goals of an interview are to (a) gather information about the grievance, motivations, and plans; (b) identify additional interviews to be conducted; (c) redirect the person of concern away from known targets and the opportunity to use violence; (d) offer appropriate assistance; (e) deliver admonishments against future negative behaviors; and (f) serve as an effective deterrent by letting students know their behavior has been noticed (Amman et al., 2017). Table 3 lists additional data to be collected that are critical to understanding the context of the threat and associated stressors (Reeves & Brock, 2017).

If the result of questioning suggests that the risk of violent behavior is imminent (e.g., the student is in possession of the means and has a strong desire), law enforcement (e.g., school resource officer) should be notified immediately to ensure students' safety. If there is not an imminent risk of violence, the student's primary caregiver needs to be notified, and a safety, supervision, and/or intervention plan needs to be put in place, with resources provided to the parents. Even if the team determines that the student is low risk and

Table 3. Records Collected as Part of a BTAM Assessment

- Attendance records
- Discipline referrals: types and history
- Academic records and history
- Special education records
- Medical records
- Mental health evaluations
- Law enforcement records
- History of interventions or assessments: academic, behavioral, mental health, etc.
- History of parental involvement
- History of frequent moves
- Interviews with subject and targets
- Comments from teachers
- Knowledge of current life circumstances

that no additional formal interventions are necessary, the primary caregiver should still be contacted. Failure to notify parents has resulted in schools being held liable for negligence (e.g., *Rogers v. Christina School District*, 2013).

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION, EARLY IDENTIFICATION, AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE

A comprehensive BTAM process requires careful training of school personnel and planning for its implementation. When a student presents as being at risk for violent behavior, use the following guidelines.

1. ***Establish universal programming that focuses on a positive school climate, social–emotional learning, school connectedness, and confidential reporting.*** See Related Helping Handouts for recommendations related to school climate, social and emotional learning, and student engagement.
2. ***Provide professional development and training.*** Ensure that all staff members and students are trained to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of potentially violent behaviors, and know how to get help.
3. ***Ensure that the school or district has a confidential reporting system.*** The confidential reporting system would be for students, educators, and parents to bring forth their concerns. Provide training and information on how to report and to whom.
4. ***Ensure that at least three school staff members have training in conducting threat assessments.*** These should be school administrators, school mental health professionals, and school resource officers. That training must be done by professionals with expertise in conducting kindergarten–12 threat assessments, and should emphasize effective management of identified concerns and adequate and timely support for students.
5. ***Identify school and community resources that can be activated to support students who have academic and social–emotional needs.*** Such resources may include academic supports, social–emotional skill building, counseling or mental health services, and interventions provided by law enforcement and child protective services to ensure the safety of students. When it comes to responding to the needs of students who have thoughts of violence, collaboration is critical. Thus, schools should have a protocol that identifies the circumstances in which law enforcement needs to be engaged, when child protective services need to be involved, and when a student's primary caregivers are the appropriate resource for securing additional mental health supports. The goal is to help a student off the pathway to violence by increasing prosocial problem solving and social relationships.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Articles and Handouts

Amman, M., Bowlin, M., Buckles, L., Burton, K. C., Brunell, K. F., Gibson, K. A., … Robins, C. J. (2017). *Making prevention a reality: Identifying, assessing, and managing the threat of targeted attacks*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. http://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=804728, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=804728

This document provides guidance for current best practices in threat assessment and management. Topics covered include general awareness, barriers to successful engagement of threat assessment teams and protocols, identification and assessment of risk to determine the level of concern, effective threat management, and establishment of the threat assessment team.

Fein, R., Vossekuil, B., Pollack, W., Borum, R., Modzeleski, W., & Reddy, M. (2004). *Threat assessment in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates.* Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi_guide.pdf

This document was one of the first publications to describe a K–12 threat assessment model for schools, which was based on research and findings that originated from the Secret Service study on assassinations and attacks on public officials and public figures. It includes suggestions for developing a threat assessment team within a school or district, steps to take when information of concern comes to light, consideration about when to involve law enforcement, issues of information sharing, and ideas for creating safe school climates.

NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee. (2014). *Threat assessment for school administrators and crisis teams*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

This handout provides a brief overview of K–12 threat assessment, including the general process, types of threats, considerations for risk, the schools psychologist's role, and threat management.

Reeves, M. A., & Brock, S. B. (2017). School behavioral threat assessment and management. *Contemporary School Psychology,* 1–15. doi:10.1007/s40688-017-0158-6 http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40688-017-0158-6

This journal article addresses the critical components and training needed to establish an effective process for conducting a behavioral threat assessment and to establish an effective management and support plan. Topics include legal implications, effective teams, risk factor and warning signs that indicate potential violence, threat assessment models and tools, risk evaluation, and intervention planning.

Related Helping Handouts

Bullying: Helping Handout for School

Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for School

Improving Teacher–Student Relationships: Helping Handout for School

Peer Relationships: Helping Handout for School

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School

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de Becker, G. (n.d.). *An introduction to threat assessment and management: A confidential white paper report*. Studio City, CA: Gavin de Becker & Associates.

de Becker, G., & Associates. (2017, April). Advanced Threat Assessment and Management Academy (training materials; not publicly available), Lake Arrowhead, CA.

Deisinger, G., & Randazzo, M. (2017, May). *Integrated threat management: A collaborative approach to identifying, assessing & managing threatening behaviors*. Workshop presented to Maryland Center for School Safety, Annapolis, MD.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.

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Meloy, J. R., Hoffmann, J., Guldimann, A., & James, D. (2011). The role of warning behaviors in threat assessment: An exploration and suggested typology. *Behavior Sciences and the Law*, *30*, 256–279. doi:10.1002/bsl.999

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Witsell et al. v. School Board of Hillsborough County, Florida, No. 8:2011cv00781 – Document 18 (M.D. Fla. 2011).

Zhang, A., Musu-Gillette, L., & Oudekerk, B. A. (2016). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2015* (NCES 2016-079/NCJ 249758). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/sandyhook11212014.pdf

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Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior and Developing Self-Discipline: Helping Handout for Home

GEORGE G. BEAR

INTRODUCTION

When thinking of discipline, it is important to keep in mind that discipline has two major aims (Bear, 2005): managing or correcting a child's behavior, and developing self-discipline. The first aim is more short-term than the second aim, primarily concerning practices for preventing and correcting misbehavior. These practices include closely monitoring your child's behavior, developing and maintaining a close and supportive relationship, praising and rewarding desired behavior, and punishing undesired behavior. The second aim—developing self-discipline—is more long-term. Self-discipline refers to self-regulation or self-control: inhibiting misbehavior willingly, not grudgingly and out of fear of punishment, and taking responsibility for one's actions. Perhaps the most important measure of success as a parent is how your child acts when you are *not* present, including when he or she becomes an adult. Developing self-discipline includes many of the same practices as preventing and correcting misbehavior, but it also includes much more, such as teaching empathy, responsible decision making, and emotional regulation.

As seen in its two aims, *discipline* is not the same as *punishment*. To be sure, effective discipline often includes the use of punishment—particularly nonphysical types of punishment such as taking away privileges—when correcting misbehavior. Research clearly supports use of punishment as both a deterrent and a corrective technique (Bandura, 1986). But if one's aim is much more than simply preventing and correcting misbehavior, and includes developing self-discipline, it's important to think of discipline and punishment as not being one and the same. Unless combined with other positive techniques of discipline, punishment is insufficient for preventing misbehavior and developing self-discipline.

This handout presents a combination of strategies and techniques, both positive and punitive, for preventing and correcting general misbehavior, while also developing self-discipline. For specific behavior problems, such as lying, stealing, bullying, and defiance, please see handouts specific to those problem behaviors, listed later under Related Helping Handouts.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PREVENTING AND CORRECTING MISBEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPING SELF-DISCIPLINE

There is a lot to consider when thinking about how best to prevent and correct misbehavior and develop self-discipline. In this section, two major considerations are discussed: (a) general approaches to parenting and (b) other factors that determine misbehavior.

General Approaches to Parenting

Decades of research have identified four general approaches to parenting, or child-rearing: permissive, uninvolved or neglectful, authoritarian, and

authoritative (Baumrind, 2013). Which approach a parent uses has a profound influence on a child's behavior—both misbehavior and good behavior. The four approaches differ from one another in the extent to which each includes what is referred to as *responsiveness* and *demandingness*.

Responsiveness refers to caring, warmth, respect, and responsiveness to a child's psychological needs, especially the needs to have autonomy, to feel competent, to feel loved, and to have a sense of social belonging. Demandingness refers to having high, yet realistic, academic and behavioral expectations, and closely supervising and monitoring a child's behavior. As one might guess, the worst style of discipline is the uninvolved or neglectful style, in which parents are not responsive to their children's needs. They fail to communicate that they care, and also place few, if any, demands on their children, especially demands that they follow through with. The permissive style also lacks demandingness, but at least parents who follow this approach communicate that they care. In contrast, the authoritarian approach is high in demandingness, but low in responsiveness: Authoritarian parents are strict, placing high expectations and demands on children, and often with harsh consequences if the expectations aren't met. They also lack in demonstrating responsiveness. The authoritative approach is the best approach, as it is high in both responsiveness and demandingness. It is associated with a number of positive outcomes: Children of authoritative parents tend to have fewer behavioral and mental health problems, are more socially accepted, experience greater academic success, and are more independent and self-disciplined (Baumrind, 2013).

Other Contributing Factors

The greatest determinant of present and future behavior is what children learn at home from parenting, or child-rearing, and especially from the style of discipline used. Nevertheless, all children misbehave, including those of the best authoritative parents. Children differ greatly, however, in how often they misbehave, the severity of their misbehavior, and *why* they misbehave. For example, at one time or another nearly all children lie, steal (e.g., including from a sibling), and disobey rules. Fortunately, most do so infrequently and refrain from the most serious acts of misbehavior, such as criminal offenses.

Many factors determine the frequency and severity of misbehavior, ranging from genetics to the child's environment. In most cases of misbehavior a combination of factors is involved. For example, peer pressure might greatly influence stealing, but how a child reacts to peer pressure is also often influenced by a child's temperament (e.g., impulsivity, empathy), what the child was taught about peer pressure and stealing, who the peers are, expectations and fear of getting caught, anticipation of guilt, what is to be stolen, and so forth. To understand a child's misbehavior, it often helps to consider all likely factors. However, for purposes of doing something about the misbehavior—correcting it and preventing it from reoccurring—the most important step is to identify factors that you and the child are likely to be able to change. Such factors might lie within the child or within the child's environment. Within-child factors include the presence or lack of important social and emotional skills, such as social problem-solving skills, assumption of responsibility, impulse control, empathy, and social awareness.

Environmental factors that parents are likely to alter include monitoring and supervision, the peers with whom their child associates, where their child is, and the models of behavior and guidance provided. Often, it makes sense to try to address as many factors influencing the misbehavior as feasible. Of course, it's not always possible to identify what is contributing to the misbehavior or to change the factors you identify. Keep in mind, however, that identifying the cause of misbehavior, although often helpful, is not always necessary, because many of the strategies and techniques recommended in this handout are often effective regardless of the cause of the misbehavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are consistent with an authoritative approach to discipline. They are divided into two general sections: (a) preventing misbehavior and (b) responding to misbehavior. Recommendations within both sections emphasize both managing your child's behavior and developing self-discipline (see also Bear & Manning, 2014).

Preventing Misbehavior

The recommendations in this section are meant to be used in combination. No one recommendation used alone is likely to be sufficient for preventing misbehavior.

1. ***Be responsive to your child's needs.*** This approach includes developing social and emotional skills,

especially those associated with self-discipline, that help prevent misbehavior and promote desired behaviors. Specific recommendations for developing social and emotional skills can be found in *Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home*.

Being responsive to your child's needs also includes conveying that you care about and love your child regardless of his or her behavior—even when your child's behavior is at its worst. At those times you should communicate that you do *not* approve of your child's present behavior but you continue to love him or her. This is critical to helping children maintain a healthy self-concept and self-esteem—a feeling that someone always loves them. It's also important for promoting attachment to the parent, as well as to others—providing a secure base to which to return in times of need and for support. There are many other ways responsiveness should be communicated, such as showing a sincere interest in how your child feels, your child's interests, and the problems he or she faces, and providing emotional and social support when needed.

2. ***Be demanding.*** Authoritative parents set high standards and hold high expectations; enforce rules and standards in a firm, fair, and consistent manner; and promote autonomy by encouraging their children's active participation in decisions regarding their behavior and holding them responsible for their decisions and actions. Although authoritative parents use punishment when needed, they focus more on the use of positive and proactive techniques for increasing the likelihood that their children will exhibit appropriate behavior and do so willingly rather than grudgingly—because they want to, and not because they feel like they have to. Make sure your expectations and standards for improvement are clear, reasonable, and realistic. However, be careful not to be overdemanding, or acting like a helicopter parent who is constantly hovering over their child. Recognize that your expectations will not always be met, and that minor misbehavior is developmentally normal for children and adolescents. Do not expect perfect behavior.
3. ***Catch your child being good!*** As a general rule of thumb, try to praise or reward your child at least three to five times for every one negative correction. See *Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home* for specific recommendations on using praise and rewards to increase desired behaviors and to help develop self-discipline.
4. ***Be sure to spend quality time with your child.*** A strong parent–child relationship not only makes your child feel loved and supported, but also helps prevent many behavior problems, and especially the more serious ones.
5. ***Help structure and guide how your child should be spending his or her time.*** Many behavior problems can be prevented by providing guidance and structure, such as by keeping your child busy with planned activities, ranging from participation in sports and clubs to playing family games or watching a movie or reading together. Obviously, less guidance and structure should be given as your child grows older, and some children will need more than others, regardless of age. Nevertheless, at the very least, every parent should monitor their child's behavior and know where their children are and what they should be doing.
6. ***Be consistent and fair.*** Correcting misbehavior one time and ignoring it the next time can be as harmful as never correcting it. The same consequences should be used when the same behavior is exhibited under the same circumstances.
7. ***Don't forget that children learn by observing others.*** Children of all ages learn a lot—both good and bad—by watching others, especially their parents and siblings. Thus, expect your child to behave the same as you. If you're often angry, impulsive, impolite, and unfair, and often challenge or disobey rules and authority, expect the same of your child. Likewise, if you are patient, kind, caring, fair, and a good problem-solver, your child is likely to be the same. Thus, it is important that you model the behaviors you desire. It's also important that you provide models of others who demonstrate the behaviors you value and desire, while avoiding models of undesired behavior. This would include models observed in peers, videos, and movies, as well as those heard in music.
8. ***View disciplinary encounters as educational opportunities to teach appropriate behavior and develop self-discipline.*** Do not view them as situations in which the child necessarily has to be punished and it's your duty to do so. Clearly, some form of punishment as a consequence of

the misbehavior might be appropriate, but try to teach your child not only that the misbehavior leads to negative consequences but also, and much more importantly, why the misbehavior is being punished—why it is harmful, hurtful, or inappropriate. Also, use the occasion as an educational opportunity for your child to learn or practice skills that are likely to prevent the misbehavior from reoccurring. For example, ask your child to show you what he or she might do next time a similar situation occurs and to explain why. Emphasize the importance of those skills and of assuming responsibility for one's behavior.

9. ***Be aware of the limitations of punishment.*** The use of punishment is limited, especially when punishment is harsh or used frequently and when it is not used in combination with more positive forms of discipline. Among the limitations are the following:
   - It teaches children what *not to do*, but it doesn't teach them what they *should do* instead.
   - It often produces undesirable side effects, such as children becoming angry, retaliating, or avoiding or disliking the person who does the punishing. Typically, these effects are temporary, but when punishment is overly harsh or used too often, the effects are likely to be more lasting.
   - Children simply learn *not to get caught*. That is, the child learns that the only reason not to engage in the misbehavior is to avoid punishment *if* caught.
   - It teaches children to punish, or aggress toward, others when they don't like their behavior, including punishing those they love.
   - It fails to address the multiple factors that typically contribute to the misbehavior.
   - It creates a negative home environment—one often characterized by arguing, anger, and fear.
10. ***Recognize the advantages of punishment, when used with other positive techniques.*** As defined in psychology, punishment consists of anything that is effective in reducing undesirable behavior, especially in the short term. This would include anything from looking sternly at your child or simply stating "Stop that please," to spanking your child. At times, parents need simple techniques that result in an immediate decrease in an undesired behavior. Authoritative parents—those whose children exhibit few behavior problems and who turn out well—use punishment (Baumrind, 2013). However, it is seldom harsh or unfair. More importantly, when used, it is used in combination with more positive techniques for teaching and guiding desired behaviors. Also, when punishment is used, it tends to be mild forms such as warnings, verbal reprimands, and taking away of privileges.

Responding to Misbehavior

The following recommendations focus on responding to, or correcting, misbehavior. Keep in mind, however, that to one degree or another, each recommendation also helps prevent the misbehavior from reoccurring and develops self-discipline. This result works because the focus is on not only imposing punishment, but also being responsive to the child's needs, including teaching the child alternative behaviors while giving guidance and support in improving behavior generally.

11. ***Avoid use of corporal (physical) punishment.*** The most common form of corporal punishment is spanking. Although research is unclear as to the effects of mild and infrequent spankings, research is clear in showing that harsh or frequent spankings lead to multiple negative outcomes (Larzelere, Morris, & Harrist, 2013). Regardless of its harshness or frequency, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other mental health associations recommend against its use. This is largely in recognition of the multiple limitations of punishment, and especially corporal punishment, including those listed previously (see Recommendation 9).
12. ***Avoid or minimize arguing, yelling, and showing anger; speak calmly, firmly, and respectfully.*** Show disappointment in the student's misbehavior but try not to show anger (save it for the most serious transgressions, if then). When parents yell or show anger frequently, children become use to it and are more likely to ignore it. If you are angry, wait until later before discussing the problem (or have someone else attend to the problem, such as a spouse).
13. ***Highlight and discuss reasons why the misbehavior is unacceptable.*** Make sure that your child understands what he or she did was wrong,

why it was wrong, and what he or she should have done differently. Avoid teaching the child that the only reason not to misbehave is that you might get caught and punished. A primary reason a behavior is considered inappropriate is that the behavior affects others. Encourage the child to take the perspective of others and to experience empathy by considering how others might view the behavior and how it affects them.

14. ***Make sure the consequences "fit the crime."*** Before correcting the misbehavior, be sure that the child is actually responsible for the misbehavior, especially when punishment is used. Once this is determined, the consequences should be based on the severity of the behavior and its circumstances. This rule should be followed for the sake of fairness and to avoid many of the limitations of punishment, especially anger or retaliation over perceived unfairness. Also, fitting the consequences with the severity of the misbehavior is important because harsher consequences are not necessarily more effective than milder ones. For example, for many misbehaviors sending children to their room for 5 minutes is just as effective as doing it for an hour. And firmly stating "No" is just as effective as a 5-minute lecture.
15. ***Point out the child's strengths, positive disposition, character traits, or other personal qualities, and say how the misbehavior is not consistent with those traits.*** This often causes children to reflect on their behavior and compare it to the kind of person they want to be. For example, if your child hurts a sibling or peer, while correcting the misbehavior you might say, "You're a kind person, but hurting someone like you did is not something that is kind."
16. ***Avoid having the child feel that he or she is a bad person; instead, focus on why the specific behavior is bad.*** It is a lot easier for people to correct a specific behavior than to change themselves. They can fix the problem at the root of the behavior, accept the consequences, or learn an alternative behavior. Moreover, trying to make the child feel bad as a person, as opposed to bad about what he or she did, can trigger feelings of low self-esteem, shame, and depression, especially if repeated over time.
17. ***Emphasize what the child needs to do to fix the immediate problem and to prevent the misbehavior from reoccurring.*** Fixing the immediate problem might include repairing harm to others, such as apologizing. Preventing the reoccurrence of the misbehavior often requires that the child demonstrate a more positive behavior when in a similar future situation. For young children, that behavior might need to be taught. First ask the child what he or she should do to fix the problem and how to respond differently next time the problem situation occurs. If your child has no good answer, provide guidance, encouragement, and direct instruction if needed. Give choices or options, where appropriate, as to how the problem might be fixed and prevented from reoccurring.
18. ***Convey a sense of optimism that the child's behavior will improve.*** Convey that you trust that the child will not repeat the misbehavior (at least not in the immediate future) but will demonstrate the more appropriate behavior (as taught or discussed). For example, you might say, "I'm confident that you won't repeat what you did."
19. ***Challenge self-centered thinking.*** One of the more common thought patterns associated with misbehavior is the use of various excuses or justifications the child may use to avoid punishment: "He started it," "I didn't mean to do it," and "Others did it too." Such excuses and self-centered thinking should be challenged tactfully, but avoid interrogating the child. For example, you might state, "It really doesn't matter who started it, or if others were doing it. What you did was wrong because it was hurtful."
20. ***When punishment is used, always combine it with positive techniques for teaching and encouraging the behavior you desire.*** Make it clear what behavior should have occurred—what was expected or desired. However, also think about and plan for what *you* can do to increase the chances of preventing the behavior from reoccurring. This might include demonstrating what is expected, providing reminders, and praising the desired behavior when it is seen.
21. ***For minor behavior problems, redirect the child and warn of the consequences.*** For minor acts of misbehavior, such as arguing with parents or siblings, playing or using something when told not to (e.g., cellphone), or talking when asked to be quiet, it is often sufficient to simply redirect your child. This can be done either nonverbally or verbally. If the child doesn't respond to the

redirection, an additional warning of negative consequences might be needed. When the misbehavior stops, be sure to praise the child for stopping the misbehavior and engaging in a more desired behavior (e.g., playing cooperatively). The following are examples:

- *Nonverbally.* Simply establish eye contact, move in the child's direction, and give a stare, look, or hand signal that communicates "stop it now." There is no need to say anything (except perhaps "thank you" when the child responds correctly).
- *Verbally.* Whether or not you also use a nonverbal message, firmly state your child's name (without yelling), and say what the child should be doing instead of the undesired behavior (perhaps reminding the child of earlier success). Often, this is best done when combined with use of an "I" message, such as "It bothers me when I'm trying to read and you two are arguing with one another."). If the child doesn't respond immediately, give a warning of consequences and give a countdown (e.g., "I'm going to count to 3 and you need to do what I asked before I get to 3 or you're going to your room.").

22. ***For minor behavior problems, ignore the misbehavior, but be careful.*** Ignoring the misbehavior often works, especially with younger children and when the purpose of the behavior is to gain your attention. Recognize, however, that many actions should not be ignored, such as those that are harmful. Also, be aware that a major limitation of ignoring the misbehavior is that the misbehavior often gets a lot worse before getting better (e.g., the child screams louder to get your attention before finally deciding that no attention will be given).
23. ***For moderate behavior problems, use more restrictive techniques.*** Moderate behavior problems include continued minor acts of defiance or disobedience (e.g., when redirection fails) and first-time offenses of some more serious behavior problems, such as stealing from a sibling or parent or hitting someone. For these and similar acts of misbehavior, more restrictive techniques, such as the following, are needed, used in combination and with other recommendations, especially praise and rewards for appropriate behavior:
    - *Take away privileges.* For young children, this approach might consist of taking away a favorite toy immediately after the misbehavior occurs despite redirection or a warning. For adolescents, it might consist of taking away use of the cellphone, television or computer time, or use of the car.
    - *Use time-out.* For young children time-out might consist of having the child sit in a room with no toys, television, or interaction with others. For most all other ages, including adolescents, the child or adolescent would be sent to his or her room with restricted access to preferred activities while in the room, such as no use of a cellphone or computer and no television or music. The length of time would depend on the child's age and the seriousness of the misbehavior. For young children, time-out should not exceed 5–10 minutes. Often, only 1 minute is necessary. For specific steps on the use of time-out with young children, see *Temper Tantrums: Helping Handout for School and Home*.
    - *Develop a written contract.* Where age-appropriate, develop a written contract jointly with the child. Welcome input, where reasonable to do so. In the contract, define clearly what the behavior problem is and what behavior should replace it, state when the contract applies, and include reasonable goals and consequences. Consequences should be both positive (e.g., rewards for good behavior) and negative (punitive consequences if the behavior continues). Make sure all parts of the contract are fair and clear, and that the child agrees to it. Change the contract when needed.
    - *Include the use of self-management techniques.* For example, have the child record how often the behavior occurs (e.g., checking it on a chart on the refrigerator) and self-evaluate the behavior. Specific self-management techniques are presented in *Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home*.
24. ***For the most serious behavior problems, arrange for and provide more intensive interventions and supports.*** These behavior problems would include not only criminal acts, especially during adolescence, but also the continuation of harmful and defiant behaviors, regardless of age, after the above recommendations have been implemented consistently. Where appropriate, use a combination of the above techniques but with greater frequency and in a more planned and sustained manner.

Also, for serious behavior problems, as well as for some cases of moderate behavior problems, contact the child's school to see if the same behaviors of concern are seen there. If they are, be sure to meet and work with the child's teachers and support staff, such as a school psychologist, in developing interventions and helping to ensure consistency in how to respond to the misbehavior. If you decide to seek advice or services from a school psychologist or another mental health specialist at school or elsewhere, that person should consider the need for an evaluation. The results of the evaluation would then be the basis of an individualized and comprehensive intervention plan. The plan would include interventions, services, and supports (both at school and at home). Interventions likely would consist of counseling, social skills training, anger management training, and parent management training or family therapy. The plan might also include changes in the child's education, especially if special education is needed. The following also may help:

- *Make sure that any intervention plan is comprehensive.* It should be designed to include a network of mental health specialists and educators, as needed, working together with the family.
- *Make sure the interventions are supported by research.* Ask about their effectiveness with other children with similar behavior and read more about the interventions and supporting research.
- *Begin seeking additional help early.* As soon as it is evident that the child is not responding favorably to less intensive interventions, get referrals for professional services.
- *Stick with the intervention plan.* Far too often interventions fail because they are not implemented as planned and end too soon. Be patient and follow the intervention plan. However, if you are seeing little or no progress, don't hesitate to request changes or seek help from other mental health specialists.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

https://www.webmd.com/parenting/children-discipline-directory

This website contains a wealth of information on parenting, including tips on preventing and responding to common behavior problems. It also has blogs, videos, and slide presentations, such as "15 Alternatives to Spanking."

https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/

The Child Development Institute website offers advice and information to parents on children's health, learning, and psychology, including on discipline.

Books

Lickona, T. (2018). *How to raise kind kids*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

This is an excellent complement to *1-2-3 Magic*, listed below. It focuses much more on preventing behavior problems and developing character traits, especially kindness but also self-discipline, than on correcting misbehavior.

Phelan, T. (2016). *1-2-3 magic: 3-step discipline for calm, effective, and happy parenting*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

This popular book for parents (with almost 2 million copies sold) offers practical advice to parents for preventing and correcting common behavior problems. Guidance is presented in simple steps that are easy for parents to follow.

Related Helping Handouts

ADHD: Helping Handout for Home
Anger and Aggression: Helping Handout for Home
Bullying: Helping Handout for Home
Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for Home
Gang Involvement and Getting Out of It: Helping Handout for School and Home
Happiness and Self-Esteem: Helping Handout for School and Home
Homework, Organization, and Study Skills: Helping Handout for Home
Lying, Stealing, and Cheating: Helping Handout for Home
Oppositional Defiant Disorder: Helping Handout for Home
Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home
Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home
Tattling: Helping Handout for School and Home
Teasing: Helping Handout for School and Home

Temper Tantrums: Helping Handout for School and Home

Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

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Using Praise and Rewards Wisely: Helping Handout for School and Home

GEORGE G. BEAR, JOHANNA HOMAN, & SYDNEY MORALES

INTRODUCTION

In this handout, praise refers to both verbal (e.g., "Nice job!") and nonverbal (e.g., a warm smile, fist bump, or high five) expressions of attention and approval. Praise typically follows a desired behavior and occurs in a natural, spontaneous manner. That is, students are not told that they have to earn praise. Further, they seldom tire of being praised, especially when it is provided in a variety of ways. Rewards refer to tangible objects (e.g., sticker, toy, or snack) and to preferred activities and privileges (e.g., extra recess, free time, or screen time). Students may also earn points, tokens, or tickets that can be exchanged for these rewards. Although rewards can—and sometimes should—be given spontaneously, they are more often used in a planned or contrived manner.

Teachers, parents, and other educators use praise and rewards to help teach students new behaviors and to maintain or strengthen existing ones. There are other important reasons, however, to use praise and rewards (Bear, 2010, 2013; Brophy, 1981). In part, they help to build positive relationships between students and others using and receiving praise and rewards, whether in the classroom or at home. The most effective teachers and parents use praise often—and rewards more occasionally—to demonstrate warmth, care, and support. For example, a teacher may compliment a student for being kind to his peers, while a parent may surprise her daughter with a special treat after she completes her homework.

Often, adults focus on students' misbehaviors or mistakes and subsequently mete out punitive consequences. This is not, however, a necessarily effective way to create long-lasting behavioral change or to promote feelings of competency and self-worth. By using praise and rewards wisely and strategically, following recommendations in this handout, adults instead "catch children being good" and place the emphasis on students' use of desirable, socially important behaviors. This approach helps students understand what they *should* do and *why* (versus simply what they *shouldn't* do) and fosters more pleasant school and home environments for everyone.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN THE USE OF PRAISE AND REWARDS

A wealth of research exists on praise and rewards and the multiple factors that influence their use and effectiveness (see Brophy, 1981; Ryan & Deci, 2017). In this section, three major factors are briefly discussed: student preferences, appropriate implementation of praise and rewards, and times when rewards might be harmful.

Student Preferences

The effectiveness of praise and rewards varies from student to student, both across and within age groups, and depends on individual preferences, especially with rewards. For example, adults may assume that students like to be publicly praised. The opposite can be true, however; some students prefer more private praise, especially as they get older (e.g., they are embarrassed to stick out, or worry their peers will perceive them as too good).

In addition, whereas most students like rewards, there can be wide variation in what appeals to the

student—the same reward, no matter how exciting it may seem, will not necessarily motivate two different students. For adults, the challenge is matching the reward with the student's likes and interests. This can be difficult because reward preferences often shift over time (e.g., the novelty of the reward may diminish). In addition, the ideal rewards may not be reasonable or available (e.g., something expensive). At the classroom level, teachers need to identify a reward that every student in the class likes, at least to some degree. If a reward is of little interest to the student or class, it's unlikely to have much effect, especially on increasing a behavior among students who lack self-motivation.

Appropriate Implementation of Praise and Rewards

Adults need to consider how they use praise and rewards—not all are worthwhile. For example, most people have experienced "faint praise," such as, "You did well, compared to others," when everyone else did poorly; or "Good job," when said insincerely under someone's breath. Rewards can likewise be ineffective, such as giving a child a prize or treat regardless of his or her behavior. Worse yet, they can be harmful: When an adult responds to a tantrum by meeting a child's demands, the negative behavior is rewarded, and thus strengthened.

In addition, the use of praise and rewards can range from simple or general classroom practices to complex interventions. It is important to implement the right level of praise and rewards, so adults need to adjust their use based on situational factors. For example, when praise and rewards are part of an intervention designed to reduce serious or chronic problems—and to replace them with more appropriate behaviors—adults should consider the need for a more formalized, written plan. This might consist of a behavioral contract, a daily report card, or a behavioral intervention plan.

Times When Rewards Might Be Harmful

Most books on classroom management and parenting recommend the use of rewards. However, some popular books are critical of them, especially tangible rewards (e.g., Kohn, 1999). The case for or against rewards is complex, but in general, research shows that under *certain* conditions, rewards may harm intrinsic motivation and promote extrinsic motivation (Bear, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

With intrinsic motivation, a behavior occurs because the student enjoys it, values it, and chooses it without pressure to do so. Teachers and parents work to develop intrinsically motivated students—students who are kind to others because they value kindness; who do not bully others because it is hurtful; and who follow rules out of respect for others and an appreciation of their necessity. With extrinsic motivation, external forces (including rewards or the fear of punishment) drive a behavior. That is, the student exhibits the behavior only or primarily when a reward or punishment is expected.

One condition that affects intrinsic motivation occurs when students perceive adults as controlling or manipulating their behavior with the promise of rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Another condition is when adults compare students (e.g., "Kabir earned five points but you only earned two."). In addition to affecting intrinsic motivation, these conditions can cause harm in two other ways. First, students can develop self-centered moral reasoning, which is a belief that people only act for personal gain or to avoid punishment (e.g., "Don't steal because you could get caught and go to jail."). Second, students—especially adolescents—rebel against constant control or comparison to others. This may hurt the adult's relationship with the student or lead to more significant misbehaviors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section begins with general recommendations for the use of praise and rewards. They are followed by more specific recommendations that help avoid the development of extrinsic motivation and self-centered moral reasoning.

General Recommendations on the Use of Praise and Rewards

1. ***Use praise and rewards more than punishment.*** Focus on teaching and reinforcing desired behaviors rather than on punishing undesired ones. It's okay to do both but make sure the number of times the student is praised or rewarded greatly outweighs the number of times the student receives a negative consequence. For example, for each negative comment, such as a criticism or redirection, aim to provide the student with four positive comments.
2. ***Use praise more than rewards.*** Praise has several advantages over rewards. It occurs more naturally in most environments and is easier to use. It requires no cost and little time. In

addition, students rarely view praise as a way that adults attempt to control or manipulate their behavior (although this is more of a concern with adolescents than with younger students).

3. ***Be sincere and credible.*** Insincere or "faint" praise can do more harm than good, leading the student to think, "She said I did well but she doesn't really mean it." Credibility is also important: When the student trusts or respects an adult, the praise is more likely to be accepted and internalized. Therefore, occasional praise from someone who is valued is more effective than frequent praise from someone who is neither sincere nor respected. How a teacher or parent acts when rewarding the student is important, too—a reward is much more meaningful when given with a smile rather than with a frown.
4. ***Use frequent, immediate praise and rewards to teach a new behavior or to increase a behavior that seldom occurs.*** It is important to provide feedback to the student as soon as the desired behavior occurs—and to do so often. This helps the student recognize the importance of the behavior; it also helps the student feel successful, thus building competency. Although appropriate at all ages, frequent and immediate praise and rewards are especially important for young children and other students whose cognitive or social–emotional functioning is at the preschool or early elementary level.
5. ***Provide less praise and fewer rewards when a behavior is more established.*** Praise and rewards remain most effective if they are provided intermittently, where the length of time between them can be increased as the behavior strengthens, a process called fading. The purpose of fading is to reduce dependency on the praise or reward. Fading could include, for instance, the shift from a tangible reward to frequent praise, and then to less frequent and more random praise. Hopefully the behavior becomes driven by intrinsic factors or simply occurs out of habit.

   The rate of fading is important. Try not to fade the praise or rewards too quickly or too slowly. If it occurs too quickly, the behavior may never be truly learned or reinforced. If it occurs too slowly, the student may become too dependent on extrinsic means of motivation. In addition, even though you may not continue to use rewards, it is important to always use *some* level of praise with students.
6. ***Set appropriate and realistic goals.*** The levels at which praise or rewards are given to the student for meeting expectations should be neither too low *nor* too high. If the threshold for positive feedback is set too low, you may convey that you do not believe the student is capable of something more. However, praising or rewarding expectations that are too high can make students feel that they never reach them. Remember that goals need to be set individually—what is easily achievable for one student may be a challenge for another. Goals can also be readjusted as the student begins to display the desired behavior more frequently.
7. ***Don't praise and reward poor effort or performance.*** Praising or rewarding poor effort or performance may reinforce it. There is a misconception that a student's self-esteem will suffer if adults withhold praise or rewards because of poor effort or performance. However, the opposite is likely to occur: Praising or rewarding at these times can communicate low expectations, thus affecting a student's confidence. In addition, if students recognize that they did not do well, they may view the positive feedback as disingenuous (even if the adult's intent was good).
8. ***Mix it up! Use different types of praise and rewards.*** There are many ways to communicate "Good job!" and to show you are pleased with the student's behavior (e.g., verbally or nonverbally). Be creative—students enjoy novelty and surprise. Using the same forms of praise and rewards over and over can cause them to become stale and ineffective.
9. ***Highlight the student's specific skills or achievement—and especially the effort demonstrated.*** Use praise or rewards to affirm something concrete and avoid using only general statements (e.g., "Good job!"). For instance, instead of saying, "I like your essay," be more specific and recognize the student's effort: "Wow, you worked really hard on this and improved your grade by 20 points. I really like how you capitalized the first letter of each sentence and how you used commas." The student thus understands what he or she did well, which helps develop more accurate self-awareness and self-assessment skills and increases the student's ability to replicate success. That is, the student recognizes the personal effort that resulted in a better essay. In addition, the student may be less dismissive of praise or rewards when adults give specific feedback, because they are offering evidence to

back up their words (versus a trite remark such as "Nice work," which the student hears often and therefore may discount more readily).

10. ***Encourage others to praise and reward the behavior.*** Receiving praise or rewards from different people can help the student to internalize and generalize behavior more quickly. In school, peers and other staff—from custodians to secretaries to specialists—can praise and reward the student or class. For instance, the principal may drop in to praise a class for a targeted behavior. When working with an individual student, think of adults in school with whom the student has close relationships and enlist their support.

    Teachers should communicate the student's behavioral success to the student's parents; they can praise or reward the behavior as well. Other people at home who can encourage the student include siblings, relatives, and neighbors.

11. ***Provide praise and rewards across settings, when appropriate.*** If you expect a behavior to occur in multiple settings, make sure feedback is provided in all of them to the extent possible. Let's say that the student is learning to raise his or her hand before talking. If the student has five classes with five different teachers, every teacher should praise the student for the correct behavior. If not, it will be more difficult to prevent the student from calling out in any class. Likewise, if parents expect their teenager to put the cell phone away at dinner, the behavior should be reinforced during meals at home *and* in restaurants.

12. ***Encourage students to praise and reward themselves.*** This technique fosters a student's self-management skills and a sense of pride in his or her own behavior. For example, a teacher or parent could say, "If I were you right now, I would be thinking, 'Great job, Marcus, you should feel proud of yourself!'" When appropriate for the student's age, self-reinforcement can be taught (see *Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home*). For example, a student who completes an assignment early can learn to self-reward with free time to read, draw, or work on some other preferred activity.

13. ***Use rewards that the student desires.*** Teachers and parents should ensure that the reward is something the student likes, values, and wants to earn. The reward needs to help motivate the student. Make an effort to identify and design rewards based on individual preferences. A reward menu, which lists a number of different items the student can earn, may help. Adding choice increases the chance of finding an effective reward and allows the student to feel more in control. Schools also can work with parents to identify possibilities. The home typically has greater control over rewards, especially tangible ones, and may be able to provide something highly motivating.

    Individualization is obviously more difficult at the classroom level. However, almost all students like rewards such as extra recess, free time, homework passes, bonus points on assignments, pizza parties, screen time, or getting to do schoolwork outside.

Specific Recommendations to Help Avoid Extrinsic Motivation

As discussed earlier, it is important to balance the use of rewards with their potentially harmful effects on intrinsic motivation and moral development. Teachers and parents need to help students understand that the promise of a reward is not the only reason to behave appropriately. The following recommendations are designed for that purpose.

14. ***Use rewards to provide positive feedback, not to control student behavior.*** Rewards should be used as a way to provide students with recognition in a positive and supportive manner. Students thus understand and appreciate the importance of their behavior, which helps avoid external motivation. A reward—or the withholding of one—should not be used as a way to bribe, threaten, or control students. Be sure to communicate to the student that this is not your intent. Also, remember that some students, especially older ones, can view a public reward as more controlling than a private reward. Do not say:
    - "I will give you a sticker if you finish your work."
    - "If you behave, you will get a ____."
    - "You get a token because I caught you being good."

    Instead, say:
    - "I'm going to call your parents to tell them how much your behavior has improved. You completed all assignments this week without arguing."

- "Wow, every one of you was responsible and turned in homework this week—so there's no homework tonight!"
- "You were very respectful to your brother, so we are going to the movies on Friday."

15. ***Use the fewest rewards necessary to maintain the desired behavior.*** If the student is already displaying a behavior, then using rewards too often—especially in a controlling manner—may decrease intrinsic motivation and promote self-centered moral reasoning. For example, if the student is choosing to read at night, then paying the student for each completed chapter could undermine intrinsic motivation and promote moral reasoning guided by rewards (i.e., "It's important to read so that you earn rewards or avoid punishment.").
16. ***Use rewards in surprising ways.*** Students who are not expecting a reward for meeting expectations—they are not told beforehand that it will happen—will not be focused solely on earning a reward. This condition in turn decreases the perception of potentially being controlled and discourages extrinsic motivation. For instance, if the student likes Legos, surprise the student with a new set after he or she has studied diligently for a test in a challenging subject.
17. ***Emphasize the value or usefulness of the behavior, both presently and in the future.*** This helps the student understand how one's behavior positively affects oneself and others, whether academically or socially. In addition, when the student recognizes the natural benefits of a particular behavior, it promotes higher levels of intrinsic motivation and moral development. It also helps the student develop confidence to continue to act appropriately.

    For example:

    - "That's terrific that you controlled your anger when Jerome teased you. That's an important skill that will help you keep friends."
    - "Great! You must have stopped and thought about how your behavior might affect others."
18. ***Do not teach the student that the most important reason for the behavior is to get a reward (or to avoid punishment).*** This helps avoid the lowest level of moral reasoning. Instead, focus on other reasons for the behavior and recognize the thoughts, emotions, and dispositions that underlie good behavior, such as feelings of pride, empathy, responsibility, caring, and kindness. For example, do not say: "You get a ticket because you did not hit or tease Jackie, even though she called you a name." Instead, say: "I noticed that you were able to control your anger—you clearly care about not hurting others. You should feel good about yourself. Thanks for being a kind person."

    Consider some other good examples:

    - "Great! You should feel really proud of yourself for working so hard."
    - "Nice job thinking about others. The class really appreciates what you did."
    - "That was a kind gesture. I imagine you would want others to do the same for you."
    - "I'm giving you a reward. But I also know that you care about others and would help Felipa even if you did not get a prize."
    - "Because you all behaved so well with the substitute yesterday, I'm giving the class 15 minutes of free time for your responsible actions."

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Websites

http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-intervention-modification

Intervention Central has practical strategies, including forms and checklists, for teachers regarding the use of rewards.

https://www.pbisrewards.com/pbis-incentives/

http://www.chalkable.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/100-Unique-and-Free-Rewards.pdf

https://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org/assets/files/resources/Free%20or%20Inexpensive%20Rewards.pdf

These three websites provide lists of rewards that can be used in school for students in elementary, middle, and high school.

https://habyts.com/51-reward-ideas-to-motivate-and-inspire-kids/

This website provides a list of rewards that can be used at home.

https://i.pinimg.com/originals/10/5f/31/105f31d35c95bc843af137c0c79b5bf0.jpg

This website provides a number of ways to replace the phrase "good job."

Related Helping Handouts

Self-Management: Helping Handout for School and Home

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for Home

Social and Emotional Learning: Helping Handout for School

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