

'Undercover Teams'

A Restorative and
Re-Storying anti-bullying
intervention

Presented to
**Youth Violence and Anger: What can be Done
Seminar**

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The Three Undercover Team Members



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Traditional approaches to bullying

- ▶ Most common approach is punitive and usually involve the identification of a perpetrator(s) and a victim, isolating the perpetrator and applying punishment
- ▶ Implication (hidden curriculum) is that the right to bully is reserved for those in authority
- ▶ Relationships are not transformed or restored
- ▶ Resentment of authority a more likely outcome, revenge likely
- ▶ Punishment of bullies has limited effect

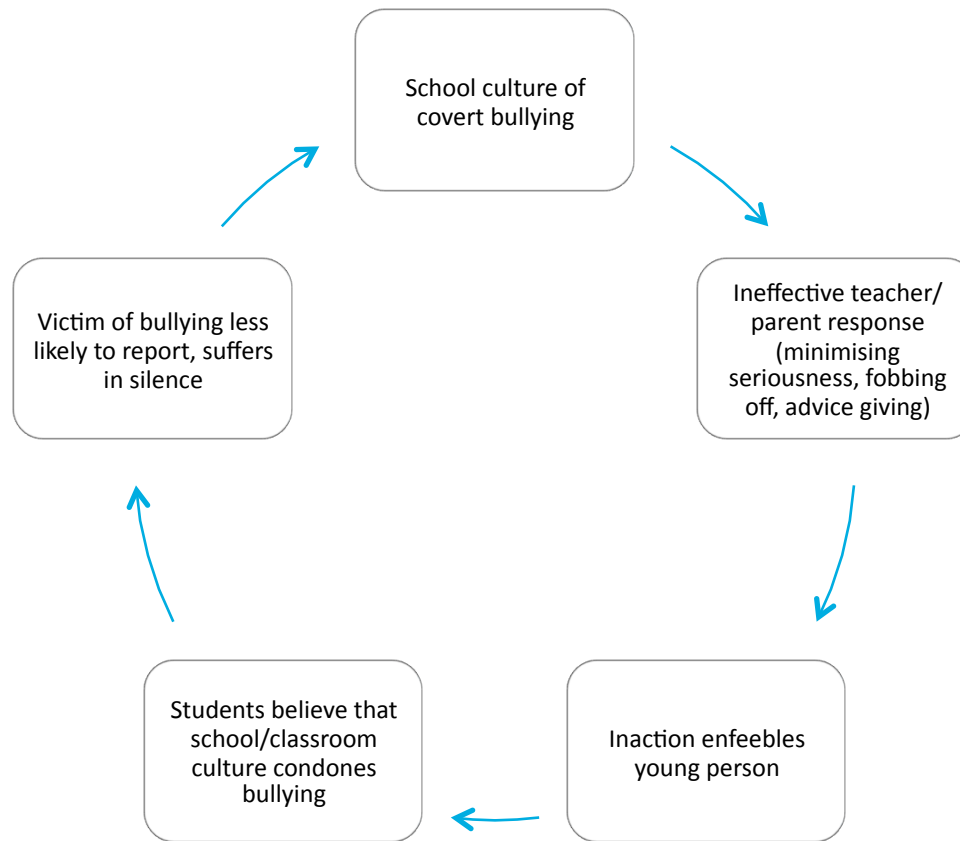


Covert bullying

A recent Australian study found that covert bullying has the potential to result in more severe psychological, social and mental health problems than overt bullying and is more difficult to detect and eliminate.



Secrecy Cycle of Bullying



The Bullies Suffer Too

- Many of those bullying are locked into an identity trajectory that they cant escape from
- Interferes with their learning, relationships
- More likely to have difficulty maintaining relationships
- More likely to abuse partners and children, alcohol and drugs in later years
- More likely to have a criminal conviction by age 24



The “Story” in the story

- Our lives are “multi-storied’
- No single story defines a person
- A range of stories are available to people
- Stories are shaped by history and culture (family)
- Stories are events, in a sequence, across time and have plots, themes and trajectories
- Stories shape our lives
- Our stories have effects and impacts on the world
- Stories are supported by audiences, and by telling's and re-tellings
- Stories have stock story lines e.g. the schoolbully

What are Undercover Teams?

- 6 students recruited by the victim of bullying including 2 “worst” bullies
- Best if combination of ethnicities and equal gender mix
- 4 students with prestige and influence in the class and 2 “bullies”
- Formed for the sole purpose of eliminating bullying then disbanded when task is completed

What are Under Cover Teams not?

- Not group counselling
- Not mediation
- Not group work
- Not conflict coaching
- Not community circle
- Not about blame
- Not about deficit
- Not about the counsellor as expert
- Not about finding the causes

Undercover Teams address the limitations of punishment

- Enhance the classroom and school community
- Honour the young peoples' ability to solve their own problems in their own way
- Accept include and encourage diversity
- Provide young people with an opportunity to act (capacity building)
- Restore relationships damaged by bullying



Undercover Teams: How Do They Work?

- Victim , counsellor and teachers together recruit a group of influential students who will support the victim of bullying and simultaneously influence the class by co-authoring an alternative story and restore relationships



Undercover Teams: How Do They Work?

Bullying students are offered:

- a new pro-social 'identity'
- support to develop that identity
- anonymity to gain confidence with that identity.
- a new understanding of the impact of their actions
- Assertive students (bystanders) are given a framework in which to act.



The Steps - A Calendar

- Day 1. Interview the victim by him/herself (20 min) Complete the form together if appropriate for UT approach
- Day 2. Assemble the Undercover team - let them begin their plan (40 min). Teachers of core class informed of existence and purpose of team
- Day 5. Check in with the victim to establish progress (10 min)
Check with the teachers
- Day 7. Meet the Undercover team to check their progress and give encouragement (10 min)
- Day 9. Check in with victim to monitor progress
- Day 14. Meet the Undercover team again to plan for the long-term (10 min)

Day 1: Interview the Victim

- Outline the Undercover Team approach as an option for the victim - explain that punishment is not involved and if it is appropriate....
- Establish what has happened (the story)
- Work with the victim to fill out the Undercover Team sheet, including the selection of the support group
- Include the teachers in the plan (and parents if young person gives permission)



Selecting the Undercover Team

- (Select children who can keep a secret)
- 6 students chosen by the victim of bullying including 2 “worst” bullies
- Best if combination of ethnicities and equal gender mix
- 4 students with prestige and influence in the class together with the 2 “bullies”
- Formed for the sole purpose of eliminating bullying then disbanded when task is completed
- ▣ “Victim” helps select the team together with counsellor
- ▣ Teachers consulted about the composition of the team



Guiding the “Victim”

- Victim of bullying usually will have little confidence that others will want to help and whether or not it will work
- Can use archives to reassure student
- Student informed that teachers of core classes consulted about the composition of team and included in the process
- Victim of bullying must keep the Undercover Team a secret
- Student told that UT members will receive a voucher and Principals' certificate when the bullying has gone

UNDERCOVER TEAM MEETING FORM**TEAM NUMBER:****Name of student to be supported:****Date of incident / concern:** 1/9/09**Tutor Group****Core Group****Year Level:** 9.**Brief outline of incident / concern (where, when and what happened):**

It happens in nearly every class. He just thinks it's a joke and sometimes I take those jokes, sometimes it makes me sad and angry. It's only started this year and I first took it as a joke then he started to be more mean. Like he teases me, like he says I'm ugly and I'm fat. He calls me names like "corn beefy" and I take it to mean that I look like corned beef. Sometimes the other kids laugh and he mocks my family like he says that my sister, she's got scabby legs and he mocks my friends. He says that I've got a big forehead. Sometimes he's kind but most of the times he's not. A couple of months later he's mean again. He makes fun of my height. Sometimes he says it out of no where, he starts teasing me when I've done nothing.

How did the incident invite you to feel / think?

It makes me feel upset and angry and want to hurt him back and say stuff back. I have tried this and sometimes he says sorry but then he goes back to getting smart. Sometimes its a big problem because sometimes nearly all the boys join in and I feel embarrassed and shy because of the way they are treating me. I dont think its fair because I dont deserve to be teased like this. now all his friends are getting in on it. Like it makes me think its true what he says. It makes me feel ashamed and I feel like I dont want to go to class and sometimes I wish he doesnt come to school. I dont really belong in this school.

Ideally, how would you like things to be?

I want him to stop teasing me and say some nice things to me. It would make me feel like I fit in, be a part of the class. I'm getting sick of the bullying. Sometimes I punch him and that makes it better, sort of, but it still carries on.

Names of six classmates:

1. Jamieson
2. Filimoni
3. Ekong
4. Elyah
5. Adrian
6. Alwyn

Day 2: The First UT Meeting

- Young people will be confused and often worried
- Facilitator's tone is one of consultation and helplessness rather than anger and blame
- Facilitator suggests working together to co-author a new story
- No individual is “outed” or blamed



The First UT Meeting

- Both bullies and ‘observers’ will be probably be ashamed (provided the school ‘culture’ does not support bullying)
- Some confessions may be heard
- Perpetrators of bullying will often look for a ‘way out’ and try to blame others
- ‘Bystanders’ will see an opportunity to act
- All students will probably be unsure what to do next

The 5 point plan

- Magic question:
“If you were going through the same thing, what would make a difference for you?”
- Simple, practical, achievable ideas best
- Different people can do different tasks
- Plan for the reaction of those not included in the support group
- Plan for secrecy
- ‘Friendly rather than ‘friends’



UNDERCOVER TEAM TO COMPLETE

Agreements reached at meeting: 5 pt. plan	Team members participating:
1. Tell her to stick up for herself, tell her to ignore them.	whole team to all these things
2. Tell those mocking her to stop	
3. make her feel welcome, others will follow	whole class
4. Gives her compliments	Always
5. Start conversations with her, just talk to her	George

Monitoring

- Dominant story line of bullying dislodged and subverted through the actions of the UT
- New story line is grown throughout the life of the Undercover Teams and documented through this monitoring process
- New frameworks of meaning created about bullying and supportive behaviours



Day 5: Checking in with the Victim

A chance to check that:

- The support group is sticking to the plan
- The victim is open to the group's efforts
- Feedback from support team
- The victim is maintaining secrecy
- Check also with teachers of any positive changes in class relationships



Checking in with the Team: first progress report (Day 7)

- An opportunity to check on progress
- Review the plan and enquire how the team has been doing
- Check commitment to the plan
- Plan for long term strategies
- Ask for suggestions they might pass on to the target of the bullying



Days 7 and 14: UT Follow-Up Process

- Give acclaim where possible
- Nurture the group for future interventions
- Feedback teachers observations
- Feedback



Checking in with the victim (Day 9)

- Give feedback from UT to “victim”
- Plan for future actions
- Find out if bullying has gone
- Discuss what still needs to be done if more work is needed by the team
- Evaluation form completed if bullying eliminated
- “Victim” encouraged to tell parents of UT work



MONITORING: dates and student comments

- 8/9 (U.T.) Team met for first time. Bully admitted it was him! A lot of male posturing going on. Said they had a reputation to maintain all happy with plan, I asked how they could keep it a secret.
- 10/9. (L) They are being kind to me now, a lot kind. and they come up to me and say hi. They stick up for me when people joke around in a bullying way. They haven't bullied any one else, they are starting to not go back to their bad self. I am much happier, happy that I don't have to be teased. I am not embarrassed any more because they don't tease me. They have stuck up for me. Sometimes they tell me to ignore bullying and they sometimes start conversations with me. The classroom atmosphere is better. Teachers have noticed that the boys have gone good, especially Jamieson. He's gone gooder. They hardly be naughty to the teacher now. I would like to meet them and thank them.
- 12/9. (U.T) Its definitely good now cause we stopped (Jamieson) we've been greeting her more and talking. The class has changed, everyone is more civilised and they socialise more. She laughs and smiles, she's happy now.
- 19/9. Called the UT together with L. She gave out certificates and vouchers. All happier now. She thanked UT for helping her get rid of her bullying.

Definitional Ceremony

- Future actions discussed
- New storylines revised
- Retelling of new story of transformed relationships by students
- Planning for long term change
- Principal's Certificates given out
- Tuck-shop vouchers given out
- Evaluation forms completed by UT



Hallmarks of Undercover Teams

- The privileging of stories over facts
- The hearing of students stories as they are produced in discourse
- The clear separation of stories of humiliation and torment from stories and plans of cooperation, respect and understanding
- The use of externalizing conversations to help students extract themselves from bullying and lack of support that have captured them

Undercover Teams

- The deliberate creation of a relational context of change and the production of a personalized plan of action
- The recruitment of an expanded Team of people including teachers to support the production of an alternative set of classroom behaviours
- Production of a counter story of support and cooperation

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