

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES:

Constructive Consequences for Bullying



When dealing with bullying, it is important to assess and protect the safety of all students and to establish consequences that teach appropriate behavior and promote empathy for victims. Consequences should be linked to level of severity, and your school's hierarchy of consequences for general disciplinary problems should reinforce school philosophy. Often, a series of consequences is imposed. For example, students may have a coaching conference with a teacher, be put on a behavior contract, and also have to do a book report, checking back with the teacher when it is done. For consequences to work, adults must monitor and teach new behaviors on an ongoing basis. This involvement can take various forms.

Types of Involvement

Family involvement can include:

- Student phone call to family with school staff present
- Notification to the family of student's bullying
- Conference with the family during which consequences are identified
- Agreement with the family on the task to be done at home, such as creating a bullying-prevention poster or writing a book report (see below for other suggestions)

Teacher / Counselor involvement can include:

- Coaching conference with a student during which consequences are identified
- Providing positive leadership opportunities for a student who bullied.
- Assisting in developing a behavior contract
- One or more counseling sessions to look at the student's needs and how they are related to the bullying, the impact of the bullying on others, and steps to change the behavior
- Periodic check-in to encourage and reinforce prosocial behavior
- Referral to the school's family support team
- Assessment of the need for more intensive services than the school can provide, consultation with service providers outside the school, and referral to outside services
- Facilitating homeroom or advisory meetings to address general bullying problems (such as exclusion and harassment)

Principal involvement can include:

- Communication with the family about bullying and identification of consequences by phone, in writing, or in person
- Conference with a student during which consequences are identified.
- Coaching conference with a student
- Referral to school counselor for counseling and/or assessment for outside services
- Regular check-ins with the student and/or the student's teachers regarding progress
- Periodic positive acknowledgment of individual progress

Types of Consequences

All of the following types of consequences require the involvement one of the above adults to assign the consequence, check that it gets done, and talk with the student about the consequence to see if he or she can learn from the experience.

Loss of privileges:

- Loss of outside privileges or restricted access to school grounds areas
- Loss of bus privileges
- Loss of seating choice at lunch

A consequence can be categorized as restitution if it:

- Embodies a school value, such as respect, responsibility, kindness, or safety
- Allows the person who is bullied to see him- or herself differently and form a more positive sense of identity
- Requires effort from the student who bullies, including taking time to reflect on an appropriate restitution
- Is relevant to the specific bullying situation, where possible
- Meets needs of others (for example, the need for safety or respect)

- Deters repetition of bullying because of the effort expended to make restitution and because of the learning involved
- Makes amends to the victim and/or creates a more caring, safer, more respectful school environment (see examples below)
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Due to the power differential between a student who bullies and the student who is bullied, direct restitution may not be possible. However the restitution can be to help make the school environment safer, more caring, or more respectful for all students. It is critical that these types of consequences be supervised. Students can be encouraged to come up with the ideas on their own, but an adult must be involved in the performance of the activity.

Here are some examples of appropriate restitution. **Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation.** The goal is to help them see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:

Kindness:

- Sending a note apologizing to the student who was bullied
- making a handmade gift
- tutoring younger students
- Lead a class discussion about how to be a good friend
- Assigning the student to write a letter (with an adult's help) about what he or she learned about why the bullying was "not kind, not safe, not respectful and/or made others feel bad" and to describe how he or she will change the behavior

Safety:

- Picking up trash
- working with grounds crew on repair tasks
- Do a project about civil rights and bullying
- Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged

Respect:

- modeling and encouraging respectful and inclusive games at lunch
- removing graffiti
- Role-play a scenario or make a presentation about the importance of respecting others, the negative effects of gossip, or how to cooperate
- Student to speak to the class about one or more aspects of bullying prevention (topics could be drawn from the SECOND STEP curriculum)

Responsible

- Write a story about the effects of bullying or benefits of teamwork.
- Read a book about bullying.
- Make posters for the school about cyberbullying and being smart online
- Requiring the student to read the school rules and re-teaching him or her the behaviors that fall under each rule
- Requiring the student to read a book about bullying and then write a book report
- Requiring the student to attend individual or group social-skills instruction, such as a SECOND STEP lesson on communication skills taught by a teacher, counselor, or principal
- Requiring the student to make a poster about one aspect of bullying and how it could be changed