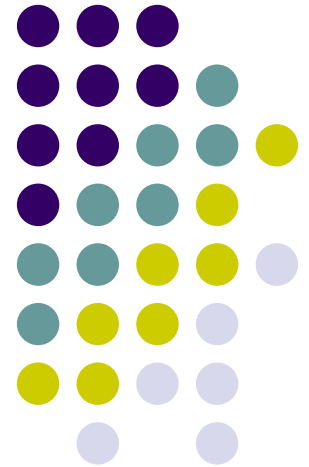


# School Violence: Helping Student Victims

Rebecca P. Ang, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, NTU

Trauma Conference, CGH  
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# School Violence: Singapore Context



- In the Singapore context, bullying is the most common form of school violence.
- Bullying occurs in schools whether we formally acknowledge it or not.
- Bullying behaviors range on a continuum of severity, from mild to serious.





# Types of Bullying I

- Bullying can come in several forms:
  - **Physical** bullying
    - E.g., black eye, bloody nose, punch in the stomach
  - **Verbal** bullying
    - E.g., name-calling, put downs, insults, racial slurs, socially embarrassed/humiliated
  - **Emotional/psychological** bullying
    - E.g., spreading gossip, organizing a group to ostracize a classmate



# Types of Bullying II

- Physical and verbal bullying can be classified as **direct** forms of bullying
- Emotional/psychological bullying can be classified as an **indirect** form of bullying

# Possible Gender Differences



- **Boys**
  - More physically aggressive compared to girls
- **Girls**
  - May exhibit more relational or indirect aggression, although some research indicates that physical aggression is also on the high among girls

# Characteristics of Victims I

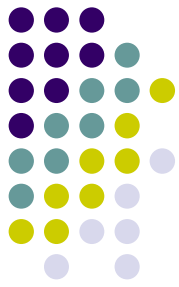


- Two main subgroups
  - **Passive** Victims
    - Physically weaker; avoids violence
    - Somewhat more anxious than peers
    - Lacks friends; poor social skills
  - **Provocative** victims
    - Both anxious and aggressive
    - Poor social skills; tends to irritate or alienate classmates by what they do or say
    - May also lack friends

# Characteristics of Victims II



- One important, consistent indicator:
  - The presence or absence of friends in a child's life
- Children who are socially isolated are easier targets for bullies.



# How Do Victims React? I

- Become self-destructive
  - E.g., self-mutilation; substance/drug use
- Become depressed or even suicidal
- School avoidance/withdrawal behavior
  - E.g., feigning illness and not wanting to go to school; avoiding PE classes etc
- **May become bullies themselves**



# How Do Victims React? II

- **Victims may become bullies themselves**
  - Victims can become bullies
  - Bullies may, at one point in the past, have been victims themselves
  - Therefore:
    - Any effective anti-bullying school intervention must include comprehensive schoolwide programs that address the **entire school community** including parents, teachers, as well as the needs and deficits of both victims and bullies.

# Principles of Prevention & Intervention



- Prevention and intervention should occur at 3 levels:
  - (A) **Schoolwide** Interventions
  - (B) **Classroom-level** interventions and **early** interventions
  - (C) Intensive, **individual-level** interventions

# Goals of Prevention & Intervention



- To create a school culture whereby adults stop all bullying immediately
- All students learn positive behaviors and be part of the anti-bullying solution
- The needs of all individual students must be met

# Schoolwide Interventions I



- 1) Develop a code of conduct
  - Must involve the entire school community including students and their parents, teachers, school counselors, and other school personnel
  - Must involve values of empathy, respect, fairness and personal responsibility
  - Must **clearly** define
    - Unacceptable behavior
    - Expected behavior
    - Consequences for violations

# Schoolwide Interventions II



- 2) Establish and **consistently enforce** consequences for bullying
  - Consequences must be understood by all students
  - Punishment must be combined with supportive interventions that build and teach alternative positive behaviors

# Schoolwide Interventions III



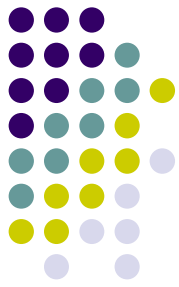
- 3) Establish **confidentiality** for reporting bullying behavior
  - Adolescents generally do not want to get their classmates into trouble
  - Ensure confidentiality and establish a confidential way to report instances of bullying

# Schoolwide Interventions IV



- 4) Train all school personnel
  - Teachers and full-time school counselors (FTSCs) to know how to identify and respond to bullying
  - Teachers and FTSCs must also know the symptoms of victimization and how to reach out to victims

# Schoolwide Interventions V



- 5) Increase adult supervision
  - Adults **must be visible and vigilant** in common areas such as corridors, stairwells, and school canteens
  - This is very important as bullies as opportunists; they pick and choose their victims and will bully when they have the chance

# Schoolwide Interventions VI



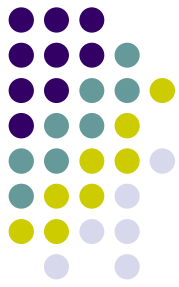
- 6) Conduct schoolwide bullying prevention activities
  - School should convey the consistent message that bullying is wrong and that everyone has a role in prevention
  - This can be done during assembly talks or through organized activities conducted by the school

# Classroom Interventions and Early Interventions I

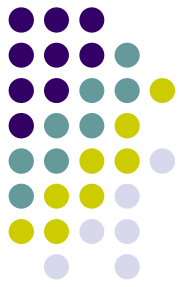


- 1) Teach **specific skills and values** in the classroom
  - Anger management programs that teach skills such as perspective taking, building empathy, social problem-solving etc
  - Current emphasis on SEL in schools
- These efforts will go a long way in creating a positive school climate

# Classroom Interventions and Early Interventions II



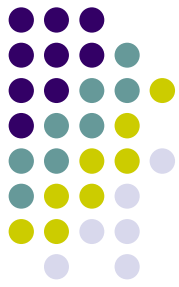
- 2) Parent meetings
  - **Parent involvement** is crucial
  - Parent-teacher communications on what the school is doing and what can be reinforced at home is helpful



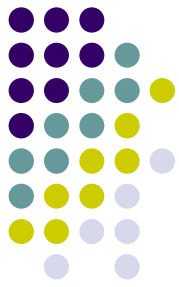
# Individual Interventions I

- 1) Establish a **protocol** for investigating a bullying incident
  - Adults should separate the victim and bully
  - Have an individual meeting with the victim
  - Have an individual meeting with the bully
  - Have an individual meeting with bystanders (if any)
  - Meet parents of children involved

# Individual Interventions II



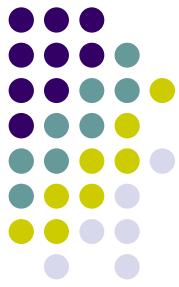
- 2) Determine **impetus for behavior**
  - Interventions must address underlying causes
  - Bullies and victims may need different types of additional social skills training and how to apply these respective skill sets



# Individual Interventions III

- 3) Reinforce alternate behaviors
  - For **victims**
    - May need to help with strategies to read cues accurately or avoid provoking a bully
  - For **bullies**
    - May need help in identifying thinking errors and anger control strategies
  - For **bystanders**
    - May need to reach out to vulnerable peers and to diffuse bullying when they see it

# Individual Interventions IV



- 4) Work with parents
  - Sometimes certain family issues or problems may be contributing to either victim or bully behaviors
  - It may be helpful to work with parents as well