



Bullying – How each one of us can help tackle it

by Anders Wulff Kristiansen
& Rupert Friederichsen

It is one of our most important responsibilities in CISV to make our programmes a safe environment for children and youth. Over the last few years we have improved a lot on how we prevent and reduce risks for everybody in CISV. Part of this effort is the Child Protection Policy¹ in which we commit, amongst others, to prevent bullying and to tackle it when it happens. This article will give you some practical ideas on how to do that in our programmes.

Bullying is not simply a matter of one bully and one person being bullied. Usually, there are a number of people who actively or passively encourage the behaviour, or who could, but fail to, prevent bullying from happening.

The Bullying Circle²

The Bullying Circle is an activity to show the many roles that people play when bullying happens. The central point is that too many people who could stop the bullying don't do so. By understanding how bullying happens we can change our behaviour.

We present the bullying circle as an educational activity here. We encourage you to use it in any programme that you may be involved in.

We have explained how to use it both for children and for youth and adults below. It can be a very emotional activity, so please take great care when doing this activity.

The activity explores eight different ways of being involved in bullying. The key point of this activity is to recognise the importance of actively intervening to stop bullying. If we don't act to stop it, we are directly or indirectly responsible for the bullying, even if we are not the bully ourselves.

Here is a short description of the eight different roles we can play when bullying happens.

1. **Bully** (or bullies) plans and/or starts the bullying and takes a leading part in it.
2. **Followers** take active part in the bullying, but they don't start it.
3. **Supporters** encourage the bullying, but they don't take active part.
4. **Passive supporters** enjoy the bullying but do not show open support.
5. **Disengaged onlookers** observe the bullying but think and act as if it's none of their business.
6. **Possible defenders** dislikes the bullying and know they should help but they don't act.
7. **Defenders** actively resist the bullying and try to stop it.
8. **Target**. This is the victim of abuse, they often have some characteristic that bullies choose to exploit, and they don't feel they can stop the bullying by themselves.

Statistics demonstrate how few act as "Defenders": "Adult intervention is often 4%, peer or classmate intervention is 11%, and no intervention is 85%. This means that it is more common for these incidents to be ignored." In other words, adults only intervene in 1 of 20 cases of bullying and peers only in 1 of 10. Almost 9 out of 10 times, no one does anything to stop the bullying!³ The conclusion to draw is simple: Let's be a "defender" and stand up to the bully!

Instructions for adults and youth: How to use the bullying circle in your programme

How to use the activity will depend on the age of your participants. It will also depend on the specific group or camp. It is very important that a good group feeling and level of trust has been established before this activity is done.

For all ages and groups, it is important to start by making sure that everybody understands the word bullying.

Be aware that there may not be a direct translation into all languages, so give language groups sufficient time to discuss what bullying means to them. The various experiences and thoughts that come out from

¹ The CISV Child Protection Policy which includes a definition of bullying is available at http://www.cisv.org/assets/Child_Protection_Policy

² We borrow and adapt the idea of the "bullying circle" initially developed by Dan Olweus and now widely used in bullying prevention programmes; see for example at <http://www.clemson.edu/olweus/index.html> and www.bullyingprevention.org

³ Source: <http://nobullying.com/bullying-statistics-2014/>

different language and country groups may reveal interesting differences. When the group has a shared understanding of what bullying is, the activity should be explained.

The activity uses the Bullying Circle for a role play. Those who perform the role play stand in a circle (with the target in the middle) to play out a bullying situation.

Each person in the role play is given a card to explain their role (see the end of the document), and a scenario is presented, that they should act out. The planning group should prepare the scenarios beforehand, and make sure that they are relevant and appropriate to the participants.

In the beginning, and with younger groups, the scenarios should not be very dramatic or severe. More serious scenarios can be used later in the activity based on what the group is ready to handle. The scenarios should still let participants feel safe and open to discussion.

For example, a scenario could have the bully picking on a boy or girl with freckles, saying repeatedly that they are dirty. The target is visibly upset and unable to stop the bullying. The followers repeat what the bully has said and in a way that the target hears them. The supporters make sure the bully hears it when they deride the target for being freckled. And so on, continuing until the defender steps in to end the bullying.

There are two ways of doing this activity:

1. In groups with young participants (11-13 years old) OR in situations where there is not a strong level of trust in the group OR if the development of the group is at an early stage (groups with weak group dynamics).
2. Groups where all participants are 13 or older AND in which a strong level of trust has been developed AND if individuals have come together and act confidently within the group (established groups).

Young participants or groups with weak group dynamics

You should have the adult group perform the bullying situation as a role play so that the activity will avoid distressing anyone. The participants will act as audience, so groups can be big or small depending on

number of available adults, and on what is appropriate for the group.

You could have the participants tell the adults how to change their behaviour and try out other ways of doing the scenario – so the kids would in effect be directing the role play. The adults should then try to improvise based on these directions.

Based on the performance of the adult group various debriefings can be used. It can be a good idea to have the kids do something creative to express their feelings about what they witnessed – have them draw, make a song or create a story or cartoon based on the experience. Then create comfortable small groups to discuss how they felt and share stories of bullying. Conclude the activity with a discussion of how the children could apply the lesson of the activity by becoming defenders, and what they would see as challenges in becoming defenders.

Older Participants or established groups

The role play can involve the participants themselves. It is very important that this is not done until trust has been established, and that the activity is very well-planned and considered by the facilitators.

Groups should have 8 participants, one for each role in the Bullying Circle, and each group should have a facilitator present. Give each small group participating in the role play a description of their role (see appendix), and allow enough time so that groups can prepare and decide on how they want to play out their role.

To deepen the learning experience, you can have people try several different roles to experience and feel the same situation from more than one perspectives.

Debrief the activity so that all participants a) can express the feelings they experienced during the activity and b) discuss how they can apply the lesson of the activity by becoming defenders.

Make sure to consider carefully how to run this activity based on the age of the participants and how strongly the group has already bonded.

It is very important in this activity to spend adequate time working with the emotions of participants. Make sure that everyone feels comfortable, that no one is pressured into sharing, and that all emotions and experiences are listened to and treated with respect.



Appendix: Role cards for the Bullying Circle

These role cards are for printing off and cutting so you can hand one out to each of the eight groups who will play act the role play.

1. Bully (or bullies)

You are the bully or a group of bullies. This means that you initiate and drive or lead the bullying.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

You will start the bullying.

2. Followers

You take part actively in the bullying but you don't initiate it. You take your lead from the bully or bullies.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

3. Supporters

You cheer the bully on and support what the bully and his/her followers do, but you don't bully the target.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

4. Passive supporters

You enjoy the bullying but do not show open support. Perhaps you hang back a bit to be the audience.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

5. Disengaged onlookers

You observe the bullying but think and act as if it's none of your business. You will probably keep a little more distance, and try to talk with others. You don't find the bullying very interesting, and you don't want to get involved.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

6. Possible defenders

You oppose the bullying and know you should help but you don't act. You are probably scared that the bully might start bullying you, and a little ashamed that you don't help.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

7. Defenders of the bullied person

You actively resist the bully and speak out against him/her. You try your best to stop the bully.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?

8. Target

You are the victim of abuse, you have some characteristic that bullies chose to ridicule, and you don't feel you can stop the bullying by yourself.

Consider the following: What body language will you use? What facial expressions will you make? Will you say anything?