

Safe & Emotionally Supportive, Empathic School Climates: Creating Healthy Connections

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Getting Behind the Mask: Breaking The “Code of Silence” **CONNECTION, CONNECTION, CONNECTION**

Encouraging Students’ Voices

- Give each student regular periods of undivided attention and listening space.
- Each Student should have a genuine connection with at least one significant adult at school
- Encourage the expression of a full and wide range of emotions.
- Let him know that “real boys,” and “real girls” do speak their voice, as well as listen.
- Express your caring openly
- When you see aggressive, bullying, teasing, or angry behavior, don’t look away; But do look for the pain behind it.

Overcoming Bullying

- Educate yourself, your school and your community about the reality of bullying.
- Learn the warning signs of bullying.
- Show students that you take the problem seriously but avoid shaming them.
- Create safe, “shame-free” zones to which the student can connect.
- Solve the problem together with students: collaboratively
- Help students to find a positive posse or “clique”.
- At least one adult must be connected with each child or student.
- Be cautious in any process involving contacting the bully’s parents. But do reach out.
- Advocate for change at school.
- Get support for your self too.

What if A Child is Bullying

- Look behind the mask and try to understand the bully’s perspective.
- Watch for the signs of depression.
- Teach the bully alternative ways of expressing his/her pain.
- Do not tolerate the violence, but show appropriate empathy for the student behind it.
- Give the bully opportunities to succeed at something.
- Set firm guidelines and if a bully persists in breaking them, place them in a new environment.

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What Should Students Who Are Bullied Should Know

- There is nothing wrong with the student who is targeted.
- Help the students to understand the psychology of the bully.
- Avoid the bully but stay connected to peers.
- Give the “bystander” a sense of power to become proactive: an “upstander”

Ho Do You Tell if a Boy/Young Male is Depressed

- Increased withdrawal from relationships and problems in friendships.
- Depleted mood or increased impulsiveness.
- Irritability or an increase in intensity or frequency of angry outbursts.
- Increased risk taking, bravado, or acting out.
- New or renewed interest in alcohol or drugs.
- Discussion of death, dying, or suicide.
- Increased aggression.
- Concentration, sleep, or weight changes, or other unusual physical changes or symptoms.
- Low self-esteem, harsh self-criticism, or perfectionism.
- School or academic difficulties.
- Denial of pain, denying others’ help, or inability to cry.
- Shift in sexual activity or interest level.
- Inappropriate silliness or “clowning.”
- Obsessive overworking in school or sports.

15 Step Program to Mentor/Connect to: Students

- Create many highly accessible safe, “shame-free” zones.
- Identify at least one reliable mentor upon whom a student can rely for guidance, love and support.
- Develop your sensitivity to children’s/adolescents unique communication styles.
- Talk candidly about the Gender Code and gender straightjacket.
- Teach students that there are many different ways to become a “real adult”.
- Create trusting bridges.
- Mentors should connect with students through actions as well as words.
- Empower students: train them to be mentors too.
- Encourage creative expression
- Educate students about homophobia.
- Bully-proof your neighborhood and schools. Look toward larger systems changes
- Seek appropriate chances to share your own feelings and experiences.
- Encourage spiritual connections.
- Validate authenticity instead of traditional educational/societal values of “success.”

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LEARNING FROM BOYS

Action Talk: Connection, Connection, Connection

- Honor a boy's need for "Timed Silence" – to choose when to talk.
- Find a safe place, a "shame-free zone."
- Connect through activity or play (an activity the boy likes).
- Avoid shaming – boys are shame-phobic.
- Make brief statements and wait – do not lecture.
- Share your own experiences (if relevant). It lets your boy know he is not alone.
- Be quiet and listen.
- Convey how much you admire and care about and love the boy—at all ages

NEW MODELS OF RESILIENCE FOR YOUNG MALES

- **FRIENDSHIPS**
- **PLATONIC & RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH GIRLS, YOUNG WOMEN & ADULT WOMEN**
- **BOYS EMPATHY & LOVE**
- **FAMILY, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ROLE MODELS**
- **MENTORS; BEING MENTORED /MENTORING**
- **YEARNING FOR, SEARCHING FOR, FINDING EMOTIONAL GLUE OF CONNECTION**
- **"SPIRITUALITY"**