

Terminology, top tips & resources - Anne Margaret Smith and Varinder Unlu

This regular section provides a brief explanation of some of the terminology used in the field of Inclusive Practices and Special Educational Needs – if you have a term you would like us to look into then please contact us at ipsensig@iatefl.org.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviours that may occur anywhere – in the classroom, in the staffroom or in public places outside of work. The information here comes from a range of sources and may be useful in various contexts.

Bullying or Harassment?

These two terms are often used as if they are interchangeable, but actually there are subtle differences in their meanings, according to www.bullyonline.org.

Harassment is usually physical in nature, and often consists of sexist or racist behaviour. It could be an isolated incident, or just occur on a few occasions, but it should be very obvious to anybody who witnesses it that it is not part of normal interaction between two people.

Bullying, on the other hand, is often (but not always) based on psychological attacks, targeting a person's self-esteem by criticising competence, appearance or social status. It is often aimed at people who seem 'different' from the majority, for example because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. It tends to be built up over a period of time, out of many small interactions, which individually may not seem very significant. However, the accumulation of constant jibes or slights may be extremely damaging.

Bullying takes many forms and can include:

- physical assault
- teasing or name calling
- making threats
- cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

Bullying isn't exclusive to children in the playground or classroom. It's very common amongst adults and often goes unreported. Reporting bullying can be a very difficult thing to do, but it is very important to

ensure there are reporting procedures in place and everyone knows what they are.

Top tips & resources

In this section we take a look at easy-to-implement ideas. If you're looking for solutions for a specific issue, then please get in touch at ipsensig@iatefl.org.

If you're being bullied, there are a lot of things you can do. The first thing to remember is that bullies are human. They act in the way they do because they lack attention and nurturing. They are insecure and want to feel powerful. It's often better to try and work it out yourself and the more empowered you are, the more you can help yourself. Bullies want a reaction from you by scaring you and if you show them that their actions haven't affected you, you are taking that power away, so don't get angry or upset.

- Stay calm, say nothing and walk away.
- Be assertive, not aggressive. Fighting back can make things worse.
- Focus on something else.
- Tell them to stop.
- If the bullying is online, block and report the person.
- Get off the internet and avoid checking (even though you may want to).
- Don't respond to online bullies. Take a screen shot so that you can share it with others for evidence and support and delete accounts where you are bullied.
- Speak up. Tell someone you trust. It will make you feel less alone.

Make sure that you seek help to deal with the physical and mental fallout. Find ways to reduce stress, as this will help you think more clearly.

Spotting a student who is being bullied is not always easy, but teachers need to be on the look-out for members of the class who are often isolated in the group, who become more withdrawn and disengaged during the course. There may even be signs that their possessions are being taken from them, damaged or destroyed. Remember that **the person or people doing the bullying** may also need some help. Bullying or aggressive behaviour may be an outward sign of a person experiencing difficult situations in their personal life. They may have learnt that domineering behaviour will keep them safe,

or they may be compensating for feelings of low self-worth.

Classroom discussions of diversity can be a good way to open up channels of communication, and allow learners a space to say how they feel different from others. Role plays and 'hot-seating' are other valuable techniques for exploring the issues around discrimination and bullying.

It can be difficult – even dangerous – **to intervene in situations where somebody is being harassed** and should not be done if it puts you in danger. However, if you see somebody being harassed in a public place, and seeming to need support, one way of diffusing the situation is just to go over and speak to them as if they are expecting you. For example, if you see someone on the receiving end of obviously unwanted attention in a bar, you could go over and say “Hi – there you are! Sorry I’m late. Shall we go?” and then steer the person to another part of the room.

Resources

Online resources

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/curations/lifebabble-guide-to-bullying>

<http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/adult-bullying.html>

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/index.html>

“Ask for Angela”

<https://www.met.police.uk/AskforAngela>

In many bars and pubs in the UK, staff are trained to offer discreet support to any customer who needs help to get out of a difficult situation. If they ask to speak to 'Angela', they will be helped to leave the establishment and get home safely.

#ELTtoo

<https://elttoo.wordpress.com/>

#ELTtoo is a movement set up to raise awareness of harassment and bullying in the ELT profession. If anyone is being harassed or bullied, they can send their story to ELTtoo anonymously and ask for it to be published. No names are disclosed but by sharing their story it empowers the victim to speak up and gives them their voice back.