

*Peace is not the absence of conflict  
but the presence of creative alternatives  
for responding to conflict ...  
alternatives to passive or aggressive responses,  
alternatives to violence.–*

*Dorothy Thompson*



## THE VANCOUVER WALDORF SCHOOL **SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAM**

What is your response to conflict? What do you do when someone says or does something that crosses the line for you? Do you speak up or choose to keep the conflict private, internal? If you speak up, are you fighting back or are you seeking to understand? How we meet conflict today, affects our tomorrow. If conflict is met with consciousness, and wisdom, peace can emerge.

Are we choosing to live in a world that is loving and friendly, or one that is full of strife and fear? What we do with conflict determines whether we grow in our understanding of self and other, bringing light to our world, or whether we continue to remain where we are, conflicted and in the dark.

Conflict is a fact of life. It will find us everywhere; at home, at work, in the classroom, and on the playground. How can we as a school, address conflict in a way that benefits our playground, our classroom, our community, our world? In 2005, The Vancouver Waldorf School chose to adopt The Social Inclusion Approach as our way to meet conflict with consciousness and wisdom.

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## **THE SOCIAL INCLUSION APPROACH**

### **A No-Blame Approach to Conflict**

In the summer of 2005, Kim John Payne, creator of the Social Inclusion Approach, came to the Vancouver Waldorf School and introduced the faculty to his response to bullying, teasing and anti social behaviour in schools; the Social Inclusion Approach. Kim Payne developed this approach through his work as a counselor, researcher and educator. He has been helping children, adolescents and families with social and emotional issues for over twenty years. The Social Inclusion Approach emerged out of this work and he has implemented this approach in many communities.

The Social Inclusion Approach is based on these principles:

- conflict is an essential part of social interaction, and necessary for our growth.
- conflict, in the form of bullying and teasing, if addressed, discourages it elsewhere.
- bullying and teasing, if unchecked, creates long term damage. (for both the perpetrator and the target)
- a no blame approach creates an atmosphere of acceptance, (not of the behaviour, but of the players) and prevents bullying and teasing from going underground.
- it is necessary that children be shepherded through conflict by consciousness and wisdom in order for there to be learning and peace.

The Social Inclusion approach adopts a similar process to that of Restorative Justice in Canada, or of the renowned Truth and Reconciliation commission in South Africa.

The premise is to intervene and mediate in bullying and teasing situations without bringing blame or punishment into the process. This encourages honesty of all those involved. Each person's story gets told, and heard, including all the missteps, and like a restorative process, the aggressing student experiences the impact his or her behaviour has on others and is held accountable for his/her actions. Resolutions are decided upon collectively, in order to improve the situation and restore harmony. The process fosters tolerance, understanding, compassion and Peace.

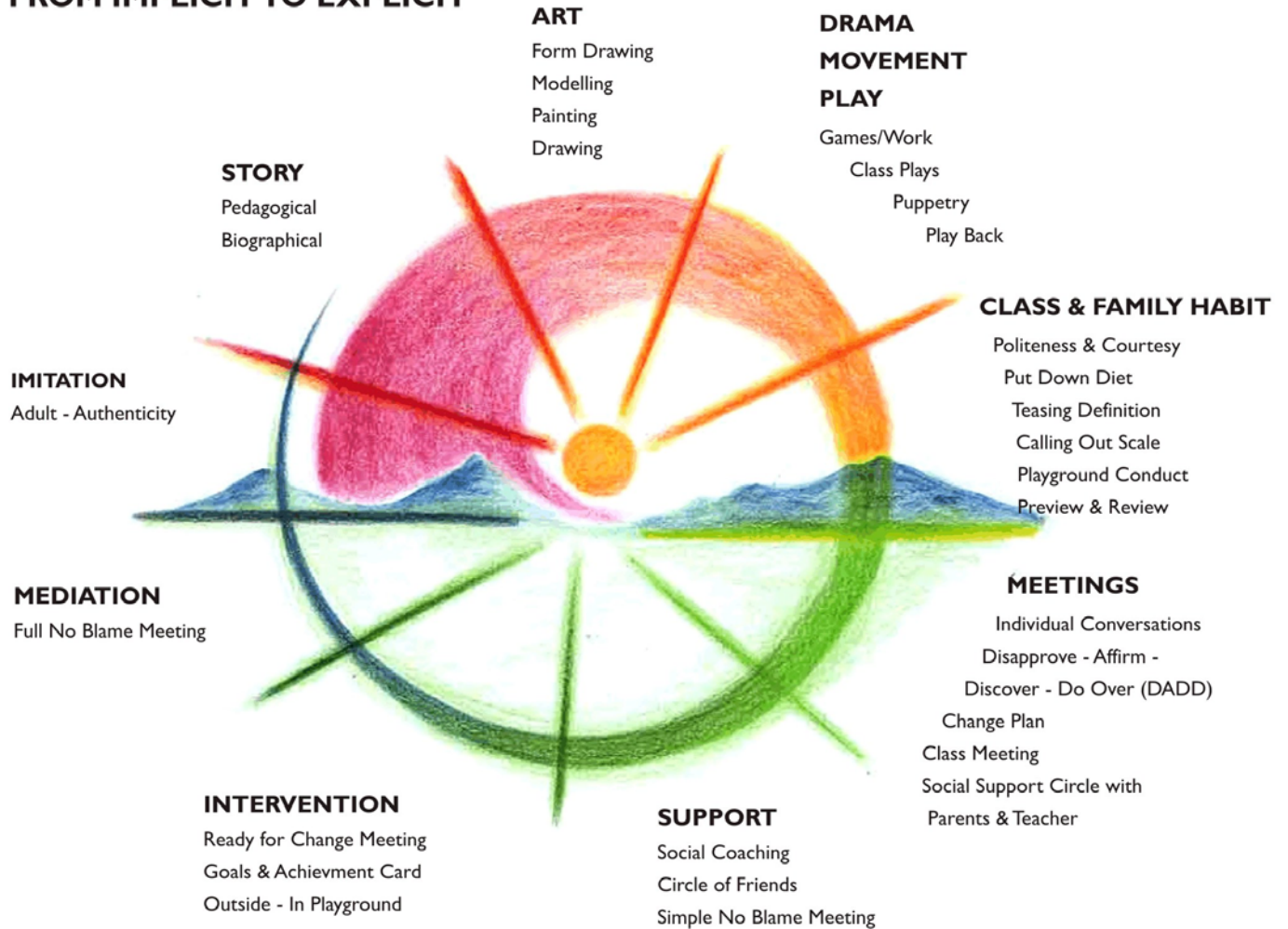
### **Implicit and Explicit Teaching**

There is a lot of attention paid today to social and emotional learning. It is now recognized through research as a prerequisite for academic success. Social and emotional learning has been at the core of Waldorf Education since the first school was founded in 1919. The Waldorf pedagogy addresses this learning through lessons that teach on an implicit level, and the explicit comes into play when necessary. The Social Inclusion Approach is an explicit teaching. This approach is used when it is determined to be appropriate by the teacher. The figure on the next page, from Kim John Payne, illustrates the movement from the implicit to the explicit teaching within the Waldorf School.

The implicit lessons are a part of the everyday fabric of school life. These messages might be taken up through story, games or art exercises. For example, the story of St. Francis might be used to teach the value of compassion to those in need. Eurythmy, on the other hand, might emphasize the value of team work and of each individual contribution to the success of the whole.

Explicit teaching also plays an important role in the social health of the students. By directly addressing conflicts that arise, students learn to be a part of making things better in their lives and in the community. They also learn that addressing conflict bears gifts; that on the other side of conflict lies acceptance, understanding and peace.

## FROM IMPLICIT TO EXPLICIT



*Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage.*

*The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict.*

*William Ellery Channing*

## **The Social Inclusion Interventions**

The Social Inclusion Approach addresses conflict among students with clear and compassionate processes. The work is guided by adults from the Facilitation Team, supported by trained students from the student action committees and monitored by the Social Inclusion Coordinating Group. The intention of these processes is to shift behaviours from unfriendly exclusionary interactions (e.g. gossiping, teasing, bullying) to friendlier, inclusive and positive interrelating

### **The Circle of Friends**

This process aims to support a student vulnerable to social exclusion.

This intervention is effective for students who are:

- isolated
- new to class
- being teased
- teasing

A group of 3-5 peers are nominated by the class to be the designated Circle of Friends.

The circle is completed by the facilitator and an older student (who is trained, from the *Student Action Committee*). The circle meets regularly with the student for about six weeks.

### **The Ready for Change Meeting**

This meeting is usually the first of any formal meeting, and it is used to deal with incidents of teasing and bullying. The students involved are met with individually in order to understand the students, the situation and to promote a resolution.

**The aim of the Ready for Change meeting is:**

- to understand the points of view from each student involved
- to listen without judgment
- to explore possible solutions
- to create safety in the short term

**The following individuals are present at the Ready for Change Meeting:**

- the Social Inclusion Facilitator
- the student(s) involved
- a student helper (who is trained, from the "Student Action Committee")
- sometimes, the Class Teacher

The situation, if resolved, is followed up for the next 3-4 weeks (as determined by the facilitator and members of the Social Inclusion Carrying Group). If accountability and reconciliation are not achieved, then a No-Blame Meeting is scheduled for the students.

### **The No-Blame Meeting**

The following individuals are present at the No-Blame Meeting:

- 1-2 Social Inclusion Facilitators
- the students involved
- students (who are trained, from the "Student Action Committee"), particularly those that have already supported the process
- the Class Teacher and other teacher(s)
- a neutral student from the class

## **The steps of a No Blame Meeting**

### **The Issue**

no one is in trouble ... issue is outlined ... what happened?

### **Gathering Stories**

personal stories of bullying are shared by the student helpers

### **Opening and Going Deeper**

the issue is now open for discussion

### **Foundations for Agreement**

this is a brainstorming phase

### **Building Toward Agreement**

find areas of agreement

### **Make an Action Plan**

confirm who will do what and when will they do it;

a check in date is made for the following week;

action plans (not details of the meeting) are communicated to classrooms, to parents and to faculty

## **The Social Inclusion Teams**

In 2005, the VWS chose to adopt the Social Inclusion (SI) Approach as a way to address conflict (i.e. bullying, teasing and exclusion) in our school. This approach is implemented by three teams and is overseen by the SI Coordinator.

### **Social Inclusion Coordinating Group (SICG)**

comprised of the SI Coordinator and representatives from the ECE, Grade School, High School, Parent Council, and the Admissions Office.

meets weekly

ensures SI implementation within our community

creates SI policy for the school

creates timelines for SI training and practices

monitors SI interventions in school

oversees SI Coordinator's work

reports regularly with Pedagogical Carrying Group

reports to Kim John Payne

### **Facilitation Team**

comprised of teachers and skilled parents

meets monthly

practices tools of Social Inclusion (i.e. mediation)

facilitates SI interventions within the school

reports to SICG and/or the SI Coordinator

### **The Student Action Committee (SAC)**

one team of students from Grades 6, 7 and 8; second team made up from high school students trained by SI coordinator to assist in Ready for Change and No-Blame Meetings

assists in other SI interventions

creates VWS Code of Compassion

supports respectful communication in the classroom and on the playground

## **Vancouver Waldorf School Code of Compassion**

This code was created by the 2006-07 Student Action Committee (SAC) members with help from the facilitation team. The ideas in the code were developed from the responses to two questions asked of classes 4 to 8 by the SAC members.

### **The questions:**

What kind of school would you like to attend?

How do we create that school?

### **Our Code of Compassion for 2007-2008 is:**

Respect

Everyone,

Support

Politeness,

Extend

Compassion

To all.

It is our intention that students, parents, and teachers of the VWS take up this Code as a guide for their thoughts, words and actions in 2007-2008.

## **Our Definition of Bullying**

The student action committee (SAC) worked with classes 4 to 8 to come up with a definition of bullying.

The SAC team also asked the students in classes 4 to 8 to finish the phrase:

### **Bullying is persistent, prolonged and deliberate and includes ...**

Responses included:

verbal and physical abuse

gossiping or spreading rumours

ignoring, shunning and excluding others

threats; misusing power

put downs

mean and hurtful behaviours

stealing, disrespecting or damaging other people's property

### **Joking around becomes teasing when ...**

Responses included:

someone doesn't think it's funny

you say stop and they don't

it hurts emotionally or physically

it's disrespectful

it becomes personal, racial or cultural

someone cries

someone gets defensive and/or fights back

**How and why is a 'telling culture' created?**

Bullying is an underground issue. In order to be able to resolve the problem those involved need to feel free to tell the truth. Truth telling is different from tattletaling.

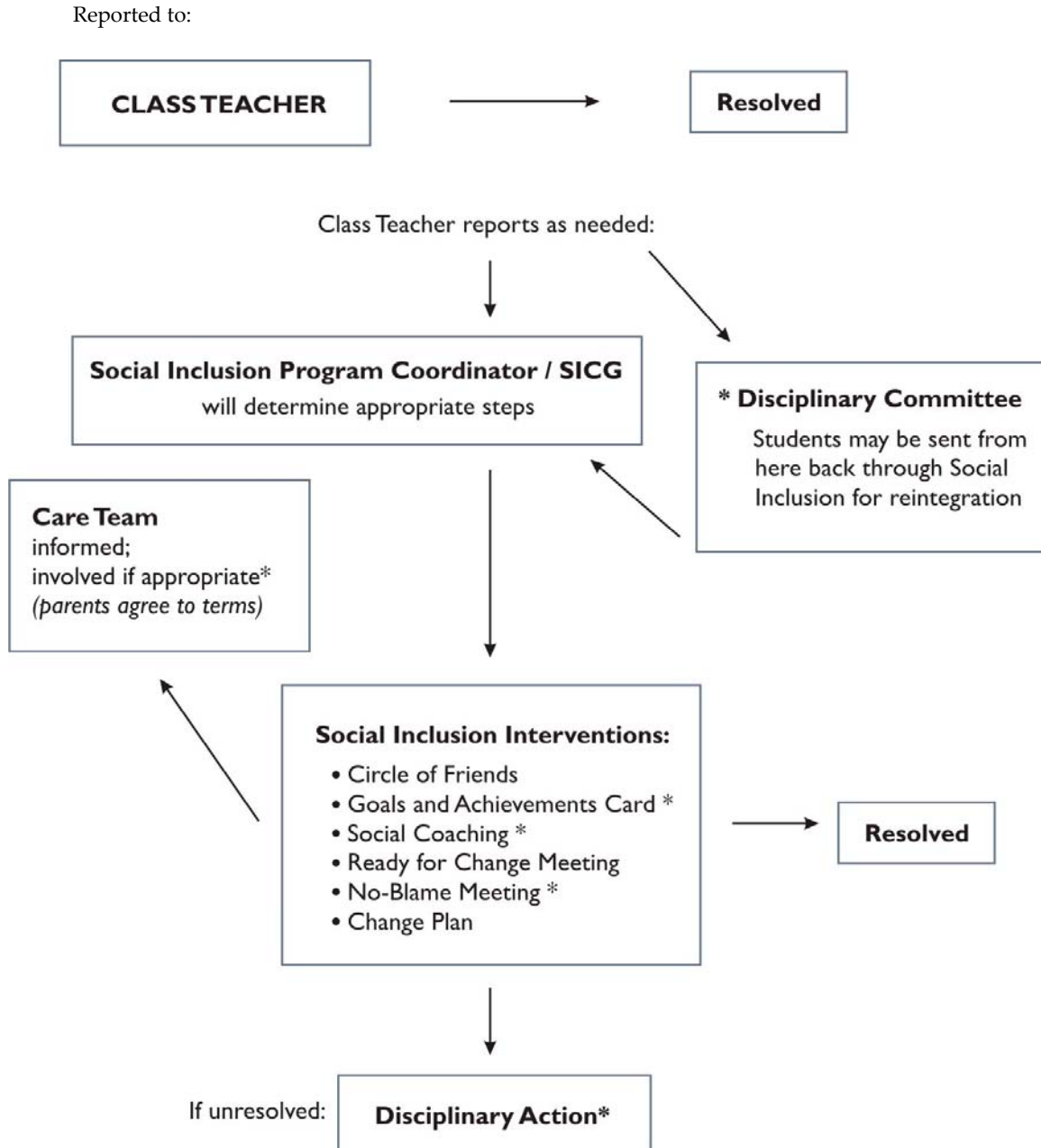
Tattletaling gets someone into trouble while truth-telling gets to the heart of the issue. Creating a telling culture can only be done if the person displaying bullying behaviour is confronted and reintegrated, not punished or blamed.

**By not blaming ...**

- the child who is bullying does not gain prestige amongst his/her peers
- bystanders and the child who is targeted feel free to 'tell' about the incident
- the child who is targeted is not put under extra pressure for telling
- our community is creating a positive, caring and inclusive environment

## Bullying and Teasing Situations

### Response Pathways



\* Parents are informed at this stage

Source: The Blame/Shame and Put-Down Diet, by Kim Payne

## SOCIAL INCLUSION PRACTISES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

### The Blame, Shame and Put-Down Diet

If you were to ask a child or teen, “Where does bullying really begin?”, many will tell you that it is with verbal and body language put downs. These are mostly not disapproved of and corrected by other children and parents. They may say that the child doing such put-downs sees this as permission to keep going or to do worse things.

Interrupting anti-social action and language is the key to preventing an escalation into bullying. If we are to ask the children and teens around us to change their way of acting or speaking we must be willing to explore and shift our own social behaviour. As Gandhi put it....

*‘We must become the change we want to see.’*

The diet has three steps. Each step involves an aspect of the Eight-fold Path (a meditative Buddhist practice recommended by Rudolf Steiner).

These steps should be done over a consecutive three-week period without a break. Perhaps the most important of the Paths in seeking to make change is **Right Endeavor**, which asks us, in essence, to ‘do what is doable’. Changing the way we think, feel and act is only achieved in small steps and the *Blame, Shame and Put-Down Diet* is arranged to make this possible.

#### Right Endeavor

*Do not attempt what is beyond your powers, but also omit nothing for which they seem adequate. Set before yourself ideas which coincide with the highest ideals of a human being; for example, the aim of practicing such exercises as these in order to be better able to help and advise one’s fellow human beings, if not immediately, then later in life.*

#### The Steps

##### Week One

For one week become very conscious of the put-downs you use. This includes both verbal and non-verbal/body language put downs.

**Right speaking** *In speech with others, say only what has sense and meaning. Make your conversation thoughtful. Do not be afraid to be silent often. Try not to use too many or too few words. (Try to withhold words that may be hurtful and if they are spoken, don’t be afraid to apologize and reframe your words to be more considerate.)*

Reflect on your progress nightly. Try to do this in a self-forgiving way that explores what it was that was bothering you at the time and emphasizes how you might do it differently next time.

**Right remembrance** *Reflect on your words and actions each night. When opportunity offers one should handle a situation more wisely than previously. Experience is a rich treasure, and one should consult it before doing anything. Watch the actions of others and compare them with the ideal – but lovingly, not critically. One can learn much from observing others, including children.*

##### Week Two

For the second week, become very conscious of the put-downs that form in your feelings and thinking. Of course, also stay conscious of the verbal and non-verbal put downs. Continue to reflect each night.

**Right thinking** *This involves being able to refrain from approving or disapproving judgment and from criticism. (In this way one arrives at the habit of forming opinions that humanize rather than dehumanize.)*

### Week Three

For one week become very conscious of the put-downs you hear around you and try to intercede and shift the conversation. You may use any common sense strategy to attempt this but, in particular, you may wish to try the 'Three D' approach (see next page). Continue to reflect at night.

**Right action** *Make your actions as far as possible harmonious with your surroundings. Weigh all actions carefully so that the eternal may speak through them, so that they may be good for the whole and for the lasting welfare of others.*

As one person who went on the Diet observed, "This is not a yo-yo diet, it really goes deep and, if taken seriously, makes real shifts in the way in which you interact."

Therefore, the final Path that helps us in this ideal involves steadfastness of intent to make non-violent communication a part of one's daily life. Only then are we able to become the change we seek.

**Right resolve** Cultivate steadfastness. Make resolutions only after full consideration of even the most insignificant points. Avoid thoughtless acts and meaningless ones. For every act have sufficient reasons. Do no needless thing. When convinced of the rightness of a resolve, abide by it unfalteringly.

*Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words.*

*Keep your words positive, because your words become your behaviours.*

*Keep your behaviours positive, because your behaviours become your habits*

*Keep your habits positive, because your habits become your values.*

*Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny.*

*Mohandas K Gandhi*

## **The Three D Approach, Or DADD Disapprove – Affirm – Discover – Do Over**

*(A Key Tool in Interrupting Put-Downs)*

This tool can be used to deal with a simple clash between children, or it can be used over the space of days when the issue is more complex. Here's how it works: when a parent or teacher notices a put-down or misdeed, they can intervene in a way that stops the behaviour, but leaves the child's dignity intact. Because only about one out of every ten put-downs is witnessed by adults, it's important to speak up when the opportunity presents itself. *When we are silent, we are implicitly condoning the behaviours we witness.*

### **Disapprove**

We begin by expressing disapproval for the action: "It is hurtful to behave as you just did," or, "We don't speak that way in our class/family".

### **Affirm**

In order to separate a child's actions from his/her whole being, the disapproval needs to be followed up right away by an affirmation. "You hardly ever speak like that," or, "So often you say helpful things."

### **Discover**

At this point the adult works to discover and understand the subtle issues. "Why was it that way?" or, "Something must be bothering you."

### **Do Over**

When the issue is clarified, the adult can help the child to do it over in a better way. "Let's work out a way to say what you need to say without being hurtful," or, "You'll need to apologize for the words you used and then say what you really needed to say."

In this way, we honour everyone's needs while acknowledging our responsibilities toward others.

## **Considering the Temperaments**

Considering the child's temperament is an important component to addressing their behaviours. Timing is also a key in practicing the DADD approach and there are few better ways to get this right than to know the temperament of the child. If it is tricky to determine the child's temperament, try asking 'which temperament is my child least?'

**The Choleric** needs to be spoken to away from friends and usually after he/she has calmed down. Key words: Defer, Deflect, until you can be Direct.

**The Melancholic** needs to be spoken to with an understanding of the vulnerability they often experience. Key words: Safety, Empathy with quiet accountability.

**The Phlegmatic** can become very stubborn if he/she feels their side has not been heard. Don't take him/her by surprise. Let him/her know, for example, that when you are home you will want to understand why.

**The Sanguine** needs to be tackled right there and then. If you don't he/she will wonder what you are bothering about ten minutes later. Key words: Implications of actions

## **Cultivating the Qualities that Discourage Bullying**

In studies carried out on Australian school children (Rigby & Slee), it was found that children who bully were significantly lacking in:

**Empathy** unable to put themselves in the other person's shoes; unable to 'feel' for another

**Impulse Control** unable to refrain from reacting quickly

**Perspective** unable to see another person's point of view

**Imagination and Fantasy** unable to imagine a different way they could have reacted.

If these four foundational emotional qualities are deeply cultivated, then a situation of social difficulty stands a very good chance of being resolved before it escalates.

A significant way to nurture these qualities is to create an atmosphere of politeness and courtesy.

### **Politeness and Courtesy**

#### **What are some benefits of being polite and courteous?**

- creates good feelings, good will
- slows things down; reduces impulsivity
- brings predictability into life; reduces anxiety
- considers others; builds empathy
- creates space and time to do and see things differently

#### **Here are some ways that we can build politeness and courtesy in our homes and at school:**

- take time to greet each other
- offer assistance to others
- hold doors open for others; 'elders go first' rule
- share
- use good manners – please, thank you, you're welcome, excuse me
- don't interrupt
- play by the rules
- practise gratitude: say a blessing before meals
- speak respectfully even about hard things

## What Can I Do If My Child is Being Teased or Is Bullying?

### Steps I can take if my child is being teased or bullied

- Still my heart, breathe. Neither overreact, nor underreact. A deep breath helps.
- Listen to the story without judgment, without blame.
- Hold all accountable.
- Speak respectfully with other adults.
- Speak respectfully about hard things.
- Separate my issues from my child's.
- Reduce extra activities if my child is anxious; draw them close.
- Create safe places for my child.
- Request Circle of Friends from the Class Teacher.
- Provide fallbacks for my child: a book or a game.
- Explore what more can be done.
- Provide daily one-minute 'check-ins'.
- Water the successes; "how can you do more of that?"
- Celebrate success.
- Ensure I am getting the support I need around this.

### Steps to take if your child is bullying

**Take the problem seriously.** The first step in helping your child is to acknowledge that your child has a problem. Listen carefully to the reports of other parents and school personnel. Try not to react impulsively or defensively. Instead, listen without judgment (or blame) to their concerns.

**Set limits and consequences for your child to help him/her understand the impact he or she has on others.** Make it clear to your child that bullying is not tolerated. Impose a consequence when bullying is observed by you or by others. For instance, you may decide to separate your child from others until he/she can demonstrate appropriate social interaction.

**Try to avoid having long, drawn-out conversations with your child about why he or she bullies.** Long conversations may give your child the opportunity to rationalize his/her behaviour or weaken your position with him/her. Instead, focus entirely on the behaviour itself and appropriate alternatives to it. You might want to role-play with your child different ways to interact with other children in a give-and-take manner.

**Supervise your child more closely.** Initially, you might want to supervise *all* interactions between your child and other children. For instance, you may need to drive him/her to the bus stop, ask teachers to supervise him/her in the lunchroom or at recess, and allow him/her to interact with others only in your own home while you are present.

**Teach your child good problem-solving methods.** Many children who bully respond to problems instinctively. They choose the actions that first come into their heads. These are usually the impulsive, aggressive behaviours that get them into trouble. One of the challenges of solving problems appropriately is to help your child slow down and think before he/she reacts. It takes considerable effort to generate many possible solutions to a given problem. But it's the thoughtful solutions that are more effective and long lasting. Role-playing solutions will help your child slow down and think of the consequences of his actions.

**Acknowledge and praise positive social behaviour whenever you witness it.** Make sure your praise is genuine, and praise your child immediately following a positive interaction with another child.

**Provide your child with opportunities to help others.** Connect your child with other children who need help in academic areas where he/she excels. Join organizations that encourage community services, like your church youth group.

**Look for problems that may be underlying your child's behaviour.** Is your child being bullied himself/herself? Are there other areas of your child's life where he/she feels helpless and insecure? If so, he/she may be seeking feelings of power by making other children feel helpless. If you can make changes to his/her life to alter these feelings, do so. How is your child's sleep and diet? Has your child been exposed to a high level of stimulation and media?

**Take a very close look at your own family relationships.** Are there open lines of communication among family members? Don't use the "boys will be boys" explanation and praise your child for being tough. Instead, encourage appropriate expression of feelings and the development of good listening skills. These skills must be demonstrated at home first. If you, as parents, are unable to use healthy conflict-resolution skills yourselves, you may want to consider professional help in learning these skills.

**Give your child alternative outlets to channel aggression.** For instance, try carefully supervised contact sports, if age-appropriate. Include outdoor play in your child's routine.

**Consider seeking professional help to aid your child in building healthy give-and-take relationships with other children.** You might want to suggest that a social skills program be offered at your school to help children learn conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills. There are also active PTA organizations that can help parents with resources and support.

If you feel unsuccessful at coping effectively with your child's bullying behaviour, he or she may need more individualized attention. Consult with your child's teacher first. If your child still has difficulties, consider seeking counselling, either individually or in a group with other children. With the right combination of counselling, practice of newly learned skills, and support from you, your child can give up his/her bullying ways, feel more connected to other children, and lead a happy life.

This section by *Cathi Cohen, LCSW*

*The truth is, our finest moments are most likely to occur  
when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy or unfulfilled.  
For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort,  
that we are likely to step out of our ruts  
and start searching for different ways or truer answers.*

*M. Scott Peck*

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The Calgary Waldorf School SI Policy

The Sebastopol Waldorf School

We would also like to thank Kim John Payne for his transformative work, and for his ongoing support and guidance in bringing the Social Inclusion Approach to our school.

There are CD's of his lectures available in the library for parents or teachers to borrow.

For further information on Kim John Payne's work, visit his website: <http://www.thechildtoday.com>