

Workshop: “Bullying”

Date, Time: Thursday, 30.09.2010, 10:00 - 13:00 and 14:30 - 17:15

Trainer: Mag.^a DSA Esther Maria Kürmayr, Black Women Community Austria

Workshop content/theme

Bullying

Aims

Raising awareness of bullying

Method(s)/Approach

We started with a warm- up that gave us the opportunity to have a short look at the diversity in the room. Imagining every single person in the group as a wonderful garden, first the students and teachers were invited to guess what is in my garden, write it on post-its and put it on a flip chart. When we looked together through my garden, many answers about me were given by verifying the guessed plants etc. in my garden. In the next step all the participants were invited to share two things with us, out of their gardens; in a movement game everyone had to connect to one of the other participant’s items in their garden.

After knowing each other a little better and having laughed together we jumped right into the very sensitive topic of bullying.

In two groups the participants worked out the difference between bullying and conflict. When each group presented their results it became very clear what the main difference between bullying and conflict is. In conflict there are two parties who disagree about something and bullying describes the act of terrorizing of one person or a group of people against another person or minority in the group with the sole aim of putting the other one(s) down, frightening them, doing them physical or psychical harm.

The next exercise was a carousel brainstorming about what the participants knew about “typical” characteristics of victims, perpetrators, observers and allies. Volunteers presented the results. The discussion that followed was very interesting because the dominant thought that the victim is usually weak, helpless, less talented, etc. presented a clear opposite to the fact that victims are in most cases the very capable, talented, bright students and frequently even the best ones in the group. The reasons for that were discussed.

Already at that point two victims of bullying shared their experience and how they overcame it. (One victim who still experiences bullying was very moved and couldn’t speak about her experience but everyone in the group could feel the serious effect of bullying).

Then we sat in a circle and had little “letters” of victims in the middle of the circle who expressed their feelings, ranging from the feeling of being left alone to the wish to commit suicide. One by one the “letters” were read loud, then there was a pause; without any comment the next “letter was read”. One group was very moved during that exercise, and the discussion that followed the last “letter” was very intense.

For the other group whose participants did not discuss very much (many seemed very exhausted after the week) there was still time to do another activity. During this activity every participant got three cards in different colours. On one they were asked to write an experience in their life that had hurt their feelings. On the second card they wrote if that experience still affects their present day life and if yes, in which way. On the third card they wrote what they would like to tell the

person who harmed, if they could reverse the situation, or what they would have liked an ally to say to the perpetrator in that situation in order to support them. The cards were not shared with anyone; after the closing the participants could take them with them. Nevertheless some left them in the room, among them one victim who did not talk about her experience in the group but described it on the card.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

Rosenberg, Marshall: Nonviolent Communication. A Language of Life. Puddledancer Press, 2003.

The Anti Defamation League has material in English as well and offers trainings for teachers and students: <http://www.adl.org/>

<http://www.saferinternet.at/themen/cyber-mobbing>

Questions for workshop reflection

Students: Where in my class/school am I aware of bullying? What am I doing against it?

Teachers: What am I doing to create a safe environment in class and school? Is there more behind that bad word, that humiliation, that kick,.. which I don't dare to perceive?

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

In these three hours a very intense process took place in one group. Most of the participants were very involved and touched. In the other group the process was not as intense but in the end of the workshop also in that group there was a very clear sense in the group of how terrible bullying is and how important one's own role of is to do something about it. For two participants it was difficult that there was not more time for the topic in order to bring in theory and to work on their particular case.

The most important outcome for me was the clear picture the participants had of what bullying is and that their effort and initiative are needed to prevent or stop it.

