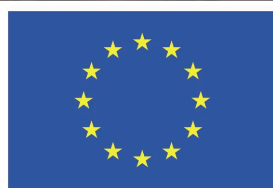



# Module 10. Supporting Victims of Bullying and Building Resilience

This module provides educators with essential tools and strategies to support students who have experienced bullying. The document addresses the emotional, social, and academic needs of bullying victims. Through practical examples, evidence-based interventions, and a detailed case study, teachers will gain insights into creating safer school environments and helping affected students rebuild their confidence and sense of safety.



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# Identifying the Emotional and Psychological Needs of Bullying Victims

Children who experience bullying have fundamental emotional and psychological needs that must be addressed. Wilson (2004) highlights that belongingness is a critical need, as bullied children are less likely to feel connected to their school environment. This disconnection often leads them to withdraw from social activities and interactions, creating a cycle of isolation.

## Need for Belongingness

Bullied students often feel disconnected from peers and the school community. They tend to avoid social interactions and activities, further isolating themselves.

- Facilitate peer support programs like buddy systems
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities

## Need for Safety

Victims no longer perceive school as a safe learning environment but rather as a place that induces anxiety and fear (Brockenbrough et al., 2002; O'Brennan et al., 2009).

- Conduct regular classroom safety checks
- Establish clear anti-bullying policies with anonymous reporting options

## Need for Emotional Expression

Victims need opportunities to express their feelings and have them acknowledged to prevent internalized shame, frustration, or sadness from developing into depression or anxiety (Wang et al., 2013).

- Create safe spaces for sharing experiences without judgment
- Incorporate classroom discussions or journaling activities

## Need for Self-Worth

Bullying erodes students' confidence and self-image through repeated humiliation (Rigby, 2003).

- Highlight and celebrate students' strengths and achievements
- Use positive reinforcement to build confidence

# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

## Approaches for Supporting Bullying Victims

Muslim et al. (2019) note that CBT is particularly effective because it is flexible (suitable for both short-term and long-term intervention), well-studied, and easy to understand and apply.

### Key CBT Techniques

**Cognitive Restructuring:** This technique helps students identify unhealthy thoughts (e.g., "I'm worthless because I'm bullied") and transform them into more realistic perspectives. Working with a counselor, students learn to recognize distorted cognitions and make them more flexible and helpful.

**Behavioral Activation:** This approach encourages students to engage in positive, safe activities designed to improve mood and rebuild confidence. By participating in activities that bring a sense of accomplishment or joy, students can gradually overcome negative emotional patterns.

### Problem-Solving Skills Development

Problem-solving is a structured, solution-focused approach that helps students address specific challenges. The process includes:

1. Identifying the problem clearly
2. Brainstorming potential solutions without judgment
3. Evaluating options by analyzing pros and cons
4. Choosing the most promising solution
5. Implementing the chosen approach
6. Reviewing results and making adjustments as needed

### Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)

Another effective individual psychological intervention is Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), which encourages victims to focus on past successes, existing skills, and their preferred future rather than dwelling on problems (Young & Holdorf, 2003).



#### The Miracle Question

"If the problem disappeared overnight, what would be different?" This question helps students envision solutions and anticipate success.



#### Scaling Technique

Students rate their confidence or progress on a scale from 1 to 10, helping them visualize improvement and recognize incremental changes.



#### Non-Problem Talks

The counselor asks questions to help students recall moments when the issue was managed well or when things went better than expected.



#### Strengths Exploration

"What qualities do you have that will help you overcome this challenge?" Questions that identify personal resources and support systems.

# Group Counseling and Peer Support Programs

An essential component of comprehensive bullying prevention and management is the implementation of group counseling and fostering positive peer environments. These approaches utilize social skills training and peer support programs to build conflict resolution skills and interpersonal abilities (Ohrt et al., 2016). Group settings can significantly reduce the feelings of isolation and helplessness that often accompany bullying experiences.

## The Matadors Counseling Group Example

The Matadors Counseling Group at CCH, as described by Tiger (2016), provides an excellent model for anti-bullying intervention. This program, grounded in the Leisure Ability Model (LAM), operated in a residential setting for youth aged 8 to 20 who had often experienced significant trauma, including abuse and neglect.

### Session Structure

Weekly meetings of 30-45 minutes with 2-4 participants per session to allow focused interactions. Sessions were facilitated by qualified mental health professionals or certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

### Session Components

Each session included an introductory activity (icebreakers or brief discussions), a main activity focused on specific topics like types of bullying or emotional regulation, and a concluding activity for reflection and reinforcement of learning outcomes.

### Program Goals

Participants learned to identify feelings, take responsibility for actions, develop appropriate boundaries, practice conflict resolution skills, and improve interactions with peers and adults.

### Measured Outcomes

Assessments at the beginning and end of the program showed that 61% of participants demonstrated progress, 32% maintained consistent levels, and only 7% regressed slightly.

Group counseling provides a safe space where participants can learn and practice various strategies, including cognitive reframing and emotional expression. The peer support aspect is particularly valuable as it helps students understand they are not alone in their experiences and can learn from others who have faced similar challenges.

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating these group dynamics by creating classroom environments that promote respect, empathy, and positive social interactions. By incorporating structured group activities and encouraging supportive peer relationships, educators can help bullying victims rebuild their social connections and develop the skills needed to navigate future interpersonal challenges.

# Helping Victims Re-integrate Socially and Rebuild Confidence

Social reintegration is a critical component of supporting bullying victims. The process may be easier for some students than others, with some requiring long-term, sustained efforts. The following case study of Jenny, a 16-year-old high school student, illustrates a comprehensive approach to social reintegration after bullying.

## Jenny's Bullying Experience

Jenny endured six months of escalating bullying that began with subtle remarks about her weight and clothing choices. The situation worsened when classmates created a group chat to post hurtful memes and messages about her, deliberately excluding her from the conversation that included most of her peers. The bullying extended to in-person exclusion from group activities and projects, with peers labeling her as "difficult," "bossy," or "not cool enough."

The emotional impact was severe. Jenny developed physical manifestations of stress, including headaches and stomachaches. Her academic performance declined, she withdrew from activities she previously enjoyed (including the school choir), and she began exhibiting avoidance behaviors such as sitting at the back of the classroom and avoiding eye contact.



After confiding in her parents, Jenny agreed to speak with the school counselor, marking the first step toward intervention. The school conducted a thorough investigation, gathering evidence from Jenny, the bullies, and witnesses, including screenshots from the chat group provided by a concerned classmate.

The school administration took decisive action by organizing a group discussion with all students involved in the chat group and their parents. Many agreed that such behavior warranted consequences, and some participated in a restorative circle activity where Jenny and her family could share their perspective and pain. The chat group was closed, and the entire class was mandated to participate in ten group counseling sessions focused on reconnecting, developing social-emotional skills, and learning proper online conduct.

<b>Individual Support</b> Jenny participated in 10 individual counseling sessions to address trauma and rebuild confidence.	<b>Peer Connection</b> A buddy system paired Jenny with a supportive classmate, and she was encouraged to rejoin the choir by colleagues and her music teacher.	<b>Daily Support</b> A designated "go-to person" was available during the school day to provide immediate support when needed.
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<b>Group Cohesion</b> The head-teacher organized a class trip to enhance group cohesion through extracurricular activities.
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# Creating a Supportive School Environment

A comprehensive approach to supporting bullying victims extends beyond individual interventions to include creating a supportive school-wide environment. This systemic approach addresses the broader context in which bullying occurs and establishes a culture of respect, empathy, and inclusion.

## Clear Policies

Develop and communicate comprehensive anti-bullying policies with specific procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing incidents. Ensure all stakeholders understand these policies.

## Community Engagement

Involve parents, community members, and local organizations in anti-bullying efforts to create a consistent message across all environments.



## Staff Training

Provide regular professional development for all school staff on recognizing bullying, understanding its impact, and implementing effective interventions.

## Awareness Campaigns

Implement school-wide awareness initiatives that promote respect, empathy, and positive social interactions among students.

## Supervision

Enhance monitoring in high-risk areas such as hallways, cafeterias, and playgrounds, particularly during transition times when bullying is more likely to occur.

## Physical and Emotional Safety Measures

Creating physically and emotionally safe spaces is essential for bullying victims. Schools can designate "safe zones" where students can go when feeling threatened or overwhelmed. These areas should be supervised by trained staff who can provide immediate support and intervention when needed.

Additionally, implementing anonymous reporting systems allows students to report bullying incidents without fear of retaliation. These systems might include digital platforms, suggestion boxes, or designated staff members who maintain confidentiality.

# Monitoring Progress and Adjusting Interventions

Supporting bullying victims is not a one-time intervention but an ongoing process that requires careful monitoring and adjustment. Effective support systems include mechanisms for tracking progress, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, and making necessary modifications to ensure optimal outcomes for affected students.

## Establishing Baseline Assessments

Before implementing interventions, it's important to establish a baseline understanding of the student's current functioning. This might include assessments of:

### Emotional Well-being

Using age-appropriate screening tools to assess levels of anxiety, depression, and overall emotional health.

### Social Functioning

Evaluating the student's social connections, isolation levels, and participation in peer activities.

### Academic Performance

Reviewing attendance records, grades, and classroom participation to identify areas affected by bullying.

### Self-perception

Assessing the student's self-esteem, confidence, and beliefs about their abilities and worth.

## Regular Check-ins and Progress Monitoring

Once interventions are in place, regular check-ins with the student are essential for monitoring progress. These check-ins should be structured yet flexible, allowing the student to share their experiences and providing opportunities for educators to assess improvements or ongoing challenges.

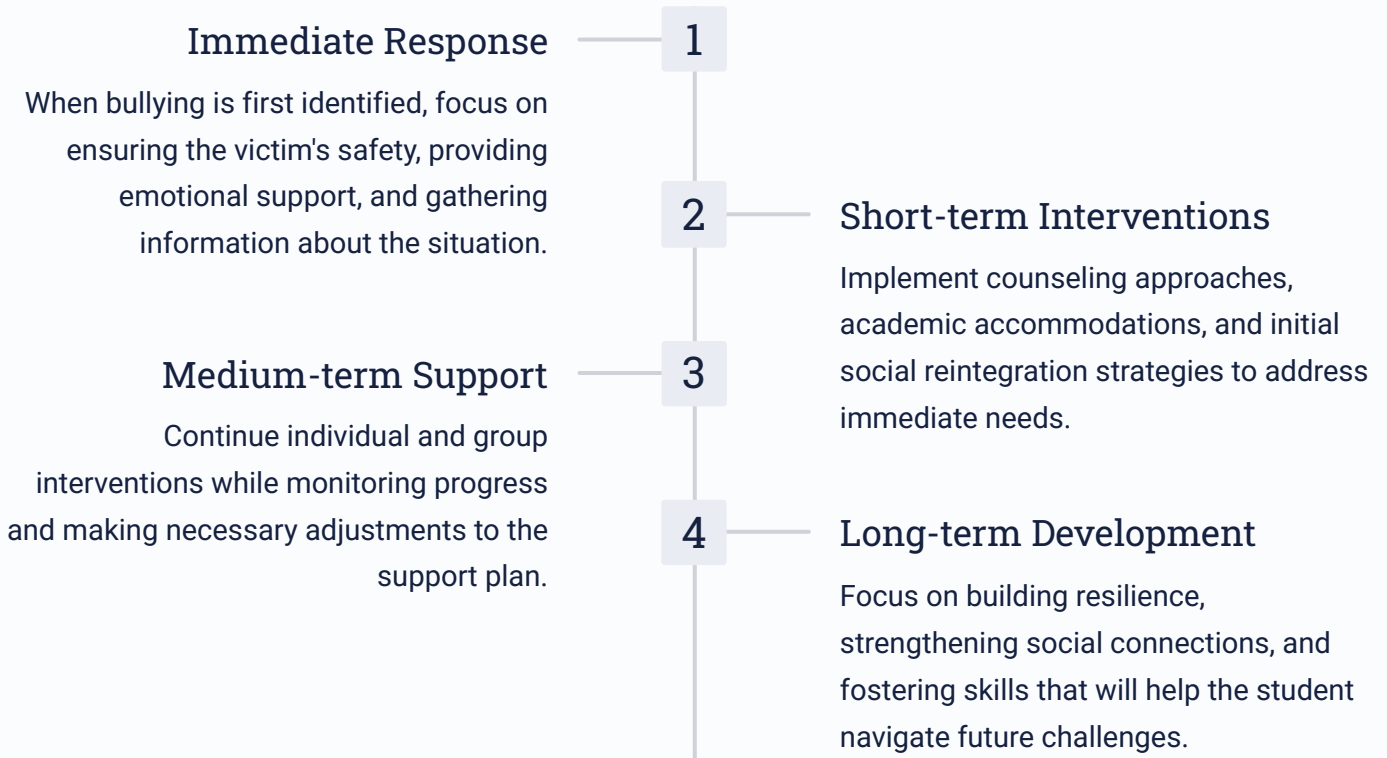
Progress monitoring might include:

- Weekly meetings with a designated support person (counselor, teacher, or administrator)
- Periodic reassessment using the same tools used for baseline measurements
- Feedback from teachers regarding classroom behavior and academic performance
- Input from parents about the student's functioning at home
- Self-reports from the student about their experiences and feelings



# Conclusion and Implementation Considerations

Supporting victims of bullying and building resilience requires a multifaceted approach that addresses emotional, social, and academic needs. Throughout this document, we have explored various strategies and interventions that can help educators create safer school environments and provide effective support to students who have experienced bullying.



## Reflection for Educators

As suggested in the original module, educators should reflect on their own school environments and consider which elements from the case study of Jenny could be implemented in their contexts. Additionally, they should brainstorm other potential ways to support bullying victims based on the unique characteristics and resources of their schools.

The most effective anti-bullying approaches combine responsive interventions for victims with proactive prevention efforts that address the underlying causes of bullying behavior. By creating school cultures that value respect, empathy, and inclusion, educators can reduce the incidence of bullying while also providing robust support systems for students who experience it.

By implementing the strategies and approaches outlined in this document, educators can help bullying victims not only recover from their experiences but also develop the resilience and skills they need to thrive in school and beyond. Through these efforts, schools can become safer, more supportive environments where all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.