

S.A.A.S.H
Students Acting Against
Sexual Harassment

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE KIT
On Peer Sexual Harassment

Produced by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
with the guidance of young women from our community.

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Introduction

This package is intended to provide both adult and peer educators with the information necessary to address sexual harassment between peers at the elementary, junior and high school levels.

Unlike sexual harassment between adults; behavior which operates in a way that *maintains* inequality, peer sexual harassment is one of the routes by which inequality is *created*.¹ For this reason education about behaviors associated with peer sexual harassment *must* include a discussion of **gender** and sexuality, as primary categories of inequality.²

The construction of gender in western society informs and instigates sexual harassment at all age levels. Students need a rudimentary understanding of the issues of gender roles, power dynamics, and **discrimination** in order to understand and reduce peer sexual harassment. As well, students need the skills to recognize and name harassing behaviors. These tools will empower young people to report sexual harassment.

This resource kit provides background information for educators, as well as activities and learning tools for classrooms or workshops. It offers approaches to the issue of peer sexual harassment that put the concerns of young people first.

¹ In conversation with Lucille Harper, November, 2000.

² Words in **bold** text are explained in the glossary, p.38.

Component One

Defining Peer Sexual Harassment (PSH)

PSH is a form of bullying. It is also a form of discrimination because it creates a **hostile environment**. This means that when young people are sexually harassed their **access** to the opportunities available to everyone else becomes limited.

Limited access includes:

- difficulty concentrating on school work
- physical symptoms of stress
- avoiding or skipping school
- taking a longer, or less convenient route to get to school
- avoiding certain areas of the school or school grounds, etc.

PSH can have serious effects on young people.

What PSH is *not*: Friendly hugs, and other **mutual** exchanges of affection, or attraction. In other words, any welcome behavior, such as **flirting**, is not sexual harassment. It is important to remember that people feel differently from one another, and a behavior that might not seem harmful, may hurt someone's feelings.

Who Harasses?

Boys Harass Girls, Girls Harass Girls, Girls Harass Boys, Boys Harass Boys

However, girls are harassed more often than boys,

and girls are harassed more often by boys.

- 1. Staring, leering, unwanted looking**
- 2. Comments about bodies, 'rating' games**
- 3. Displaying sexual messages, or graffiti**
- 4. Displaying sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages or notes (includes computer screens)**
- 5. Spreading sexual rumors**
- 6. Calling you gay, lesbian or bisexual**
- 7. Spying**
- 8. Flashing or mooning**
- 9. Touching, grabbing, pinching or intentionally brushing against**
- 10. 'Pollution' games (girl germs etc.)**
- 11. Pulling clothing off, up or down (skirt flipping, bra-snapping, pantsing)**
- 12. Blocking or cornering**
- 13. Forced kisses, or embraces**
- 14. Talking about sexual exploits in an inappropriate way, or situation**
- 15. Hooting, sucking, lip-smacking, whistles and animal noises**
- 16. Sexually explicit gestures**
- 17. Exaggerated or mocking 'courtesy'**
- 18. Obscene phone calls**
- 19. Demanding comments "Hey Baby, give me a smile"**
- 20. Stalking ('Following')**

BEHAVIORS

Asking young people to reveal their own experiences with PSH is one of the ways to find out which harassing behaviors are problems at your school. However, not everyone will feel comfortable sharing in front of others. By discussing each of the behaviors on the overhead, students will have the opportunity to consider which types of peer sexual harassment they are familiar with, and to learn about other behaviors.

Questions for discussion:

Which of these behaviors happen at your school?

What makes these behaviors sexual harassment?

- they are unwanted
- they impede the ability to participate in school
- they are **degrading** and discriminatory (define this vocabulary as a group activity)
- they are repeated (this is not always a necessary determinant - one incident that makes someone very uncomfortable is sufficient)

Older students may wish to work together on a definition of peer sexual harassment using the above criteria.

The Behaviors: Overhead Guide

This list is in no way intended to be comprehensive. You may wish to add to this list, or to delete items that do not seem to be relevant to your group. However, the behaviors listed here have been drawn from numerous reports and local and international research projects on sexual harassment. Taking the time to go through each item on the list will reveal the familiarity of your group with sexually harassing behaviors.

1. Staring, leering, unwanted looking.

This behavior often requires further explanation and may meet with disbelief “How can just looking hurt someone?” Remind young people that leering, or staring is often used in a threatening way, and that the feeling of a threat is a central part of sexual harassment. While there may be no actual physical danger, the leer is a reminder that danger is a possibility.

2. Comments about bodies and ‘rating’ games.

Students report both public ‘ratings’ where a group (usually boys) calls out numerical ratings of girls as they walk by in school corridors. In other cases, assessments are written in notebooks that get passed from friend to friend. As a young person begins to develop sexually their self-confidence depends upon the approval of peers. The damage done by cruel comments can be devastating.

Secondly, it is an unfortunate feature of our society that girls are often judged solely on their physical appearance. Insisting that girls meet with societal expectations regarding beauty and femininity is harmful in that it is one more way in which women are ‘controlled’. If we do not demand that girls and women be appreciated for qualities beyond appearance we are failing them.

3. Displaying inappropriate sexual messages, or graffiti.

(see below)

4. Displaying sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages or notes (includes computer screens).

Censorship is a hotly contested issue that can take up as much or as little of your group’s time as you feel is warranted. However, young people need not be exposed to materials that embarrass or anger them. A discussion of negative or degrading images will focus on the ‘roles’ given to individuals by such materials. What are positive alternatives to these negative images?

5. Spreading sexual rumors.

Like many types of harassment, it is very difficult to control rumors and gossip. Discussing this behavior provides a good opportunity for students to think about their role as peers. Is listening just a passive form of participating in harassment? How can someone stop a cruel rumor? What does it feel like to be ‘talked about’?

6. Calling you gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual.

Questioning another person's sexual preference is sexual harassment because homosexuals and bisexuals, though equal under Human Rights Legislation, are not treated equally in our society. Therefore, the person who is 'accused' of being gay (as if it is a crime) is placed in a position of reduced power. In school, where students often feel pressure to be the same as everyone else, a rumor or an accusation of homosexuality can be a painful, even devastating experience. Educating young people about the relevance and normalcy of alternative sexuality will have to become a priority if we hope to end this form of harassment and discrimination.

7. Spying on you as you dress or shower at school.

Although less common than some of the other behaviors, spying is a particularly repellent form of harassment. Current issues around security cameras are relevant to this discussion, and could be used to get to issues concerning privacy and freedom.

8. Flashing or mooning.

One way to highlight the seriousness of this behavior is to remind the students of how our society responds to adults caught exposing themselves. Rarely is it considered a joke. Usually it is punishable as a crime.

9. Touching, grabbing, pinching or intentionally brushing against you.

Physical harassment needs to be addressed most strongly with younger kids. As young people mature, forms of harassment become subtle, and are less likely to be physical. Spend some time watching children in an elementary school playground (ask for permission first!). You will see that physical communication is constant. However, kids are not always sure where the boundaries of safety and comfort lie. Remind your group that 'roughhousing', even when it is meant to be fun, can cause accidents. Physical sexual harassment is the same. Touching someone may seem like a good joke – but may actually cause embarrassment, sadness, anger or fear.

10. 'Pollution' games (girl germs etc.).

The notion that women/girls are somehow 'carriers' of noxious germs, toxins, or spiritual dangers is an ancient one. This would be a good avenue of research for a history-minded group. Have your group discover cultures that believe in segregating menstruating women from the rest of the community. Are there other games that we play that mimic larger societal traditions? (A classic example is Ring Around the Rosy, which is a game about children dying from Plague) Are there some traditions that it might be better to leave in the past? Why or why not? How would we feel about this game if it targeted Native students, or African-Canadian students?

11. Pulling clothing off, up or down (skirt flipping, bra-snapping, 'pantsing').

An attack on a young woman's clothes is an attack on her sense of self. When that attack is focused directly on a symbol of physical maturity – such as her bra – it creates self-doubt and insecurity, not to mention embarrassment and annoyance. This kind of behavior sends the message that the victim's person is public property. Also, a message is sent that demonstrating femininity, by wearing a skirt for example, is dangerous. This reinforces the expectation of danger that so many

young women live with on a daily basis. ‘Pantsing’ – a curiously male-to-male behavior, is a form of control. Usually a group of boys demonstrate their superiority over an individual by pulling down his pants in a public place. Again, the example of adults can be useful. Ask the kids who their role models are. Now ask them to imagine their role model pulling someone’s pants down, or flipping up a skirt.

12. Blocking or cornering you.

Like so many harassing behaviors, blocking or cornering someone is effective because it is a behavior that implies a threat without physical contact.

13. Forced kisses, or embraces.

See #9.

14. Talking about sexual exploits in an inappropriate way.

It is never appropriate to talk about someone’s sexuality in public. It is also inappropriate to talk about one’s own sexual exploits – if that talk makes someone else feel uncomfortable. Save discussions about sex for private times with close friends. Talking is important for developing understanding, and it is one of the best ways to share information. However, there is a difference between communicating concerns, and gossiping or joking about someone.

15. Hooting, sucking, lip-smacking, whistles and animal noises.

In June Larkin’s compelling book Sexual Harassment: High School Girls Speak Out, Larkin notes: “One reason young women don’t report this behavior is because they can’t bear to repeat it.” Teaching students to articulate their experiences is a difficult but necessary aspect of dealing with PSH. Students need to feel that they have permission to report exactly what has been said or done to them. Students who have difficulty speaking about an incident involving rude noises might try describing their feelings in a written statement.

16. Sexually explicit gestures.

See #12 & #15

17. Exaggerated or mocking ‘courtesy’.

Taunting of this sort is often an expression of resentment. Sometimes, a student who is perceived as one who receives ‘special privileges’ (eg: Teacher’s Pet) might be teased in this sarcastic form. This is a verbal, and sometimes physical form of harassment that makes light of kindness to others.

18. Obscene phone calls.

*Sexually harassing phone calls are annoying, frightening, and invasive. If the calls are anonymous they should be reported to the police and to the phone company. Technology has provided ways for discovering the location of obscene callers (dial *69). However, as with other types of harassment, obscene phone calls may lead to more physically dangerous attacks. Do not engage in conversation*

or approach your harasser alone. If the harasser is someone known to you, follow the same procedures you would for any type of harassment. Tell someone you trust.

19. Demanding comments “Hey Baby, give me a smile”.

This type of harassment signals an expectation that girls are beholden to boys for their entertainment and pleasure. Remember that for girls experiencing this type of harassment their danger is twofold. Firstly, girls that refuse to respond might be accused of being uptight, and secondly, girls who give in to this kind of demand with a smile (no matter how sheepish) are giving the harassers the control they seek.

20. Stalking (‘Following’).

There are two types of stalking that concern us. The first is the playground game of ‘following’. Usually a group (often of girls) will follow an individual or another group around, spying on them, whispering conspiratorially, and seeming to make fun of the ‘followee’. This type of harassment can be effectively reduced by educating playground supervisors to its seriousness, and making rules against this kind of ‘play’.

When one person stalks another, following them home after school, calling incessantly, showing up at the persons work or extracurricular activities, there is a possibility of serious physical danger. Often stalking is the result of a relationship break-up in which one partner is unsatisfied with the resolution. Students need to know that stalking is sexual harassment, and that serious stalking incidents can be reported to the police.

C-1 Activities

Journals

Keeping a journal is an excellent way to begin the process of understanding and coping with Peer Sexual Harassment. Writing down your personal experiences is useful in the following ways:

1. Journals keep a detailed record of your experiences, and help you to remember the details of each incident of harassment. This may be important if you decide to report harassment.
2. Journals provide you with a way to begin healing some of the hurt that is caused by harassment. Writing about your feelings gives them substance, and will help you to see that your concerns and feelings are **legitimate** and deserve to be addressed.

Write a practice journal entry. Share your journal entry with one other person. Ask that person to repeat back to you the incident you described in the entry. This is a good way to discover if you are recording your thoughts clearly.

C-1 Activities

Emotion Art

For young children (7-12) making drawings of feelings can open up a discussion of PSH. Ask each student to make an 'emotion card'. (Index cards work well for this activity). First, each student must write an emotion on one side of the card (sad, proud, angry etc.). Secondly, have each student draw what he or she thinks the feelings might look like.

C-1 Activities

Surveys

A questionnaire can be a useful tool for finding out what types of sexual harassment are happening at your school. An anonymous survey allows students to express feelings without fearing embarrassment. For many young people the issue of confidentiality is crucial to their decision whether or not to report harassment.

You may wish to ask young people about specific behaviors. Where do they happen? How often do they happen?

School handling of harassment is another revealing subject to ask students about. Who do your students trust to speak with when they are harassed or bullied? What changes do your students want to see at school that will make it easier for them to report and/or reduce peer sexual harassment?

C-1 Activities

Role Playing and Music Appreciation

Young people are excellent role players. Ask your group to write and perform their own skits about PSH. You may provide them with a location (the gym) and a behavior (name-calling) to get them started. Encourage discussions of different possible endings to each scenario, both negative and positive. Have students perform each skit twice, reversing the gender of the harasser and victim each time. This will demonstrate that harassment can look quite different depending

upon the sex of the harasser/s and victim.

Everyone loves music. Ask individuals to bring in song lyrics (and tapes or CDs if you like) that either deal with or demonstrate sexual harassment. Read them out loud. Ask the kids how the songs make them feel.

C-1 Activities

Harassment Hotspots

Dangerous areas, either inside or outside of school, where students may not feel free to walk, play, or hang out, are often well-known to young people.

Ask the students to do a quick overhead sketch of their school, including the yard, parking lots, and bus stops, and then mark the places on each map where students have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment.

Post the maps for everyone to look at together.

Questions for discussion:

What is it about these spaces that makes them unsafe or uncomfortable?

How could we change these spaces, or the way they are used, to make them accessible and safe for everyone?

Component Two

Understanding the 'Sex' part of 'Peer Sexual Harassment'

As noted in the introduction to this manual, peer sexual harassment is informed by our ideas about the meaning of being male or female. Young people will benefit from gaining an understanding of how the sexes acquire meaning through culture. This discussion may be as complex or rudimentary as your group can handle. However, the most important message to deliver is that children need to respect one another regardless of how they fit into our society's arbitrary categories of gender.

GENDER

culture

society

masculine/feminine/transgendered

behavior

identity

achieved status

choice

SEX

nature

biology

male/female/other

xx/xy chromosomes

anatomy

ascribed status

choice?

Gender and Sex: Overhead Guide

This is probably the most difficult component of understanding PSH. Students need to know that there is a difference between sex and gender, but that in Western culture the sex that you are **ascribed** largely determines the gender roles that you will be expected to fulfill. These roles are reinforced through rewards and punishments. For example, peer sexual harassment may be used as a punishment against boys who do not conform to traditional male roles. Peer sexual harassment may be targeted at girls either because they do not fit stereotypical roles *or* because they fit them too well. Some girls are harassed just for being girls.

Some examples: Boys will often harass other boys by implying that they are not 'masculine' in some way. This might involve calling them gay, or calling them a 'girl'. Girls who do not conform, either in dress or behavior, are harassed in similar ways, both by boys and girls. Although girls frequently harass other girls, studies show that girls are unlikely to harass boys. That doesn't mean that it never happens, only that girls are more likely to be victims of PSH. One reason that girls are less likely to harass boys is that such harassment may be viewed as an invitation, in which case the threat of retaliation, or other unwanted behavior, is increased.

Reminder: A lack of self-esteem is *not the problem*. Rather, it's the *result* of the problem. Constant and public evaluation of the appearance and behavior of girls is dehumanizing. Similarly, unreasonable demands upon boys to demonstrate 'masculine' behavior and appearance is equally damaging. When the harassment is challenged, and stopped, self-esteem will have a chance to develop.

The overhead for this component outlines some of the ways we can begin to understand Gender and Sex. Compare each column asking for examples from the group. Stress that although we present two categories it is the sometimes complex connections between these categories that we are interested in. Also, it is important to remember that in our culture these concepts are often used interchangeably.

Include a discussion on adolescence and development in this component. The discussion might emphasize that as young people grow and change physically, they are most vulnerable to abuses of their self-esteem. When young people are teased and taunted about changing bodies and developing sexualities, self-doubts are planted and can seriously affect how they perceive themselves. Young people who are harassed can become very depressed, and sometimes blame themselves for their harassment. This can affect not only their ability to succeed in school, but also their future relationships and careers.

Socialization is:

How we learn what we are supposed to be and do.

- from our parents
- from our friends
- from the media
- from watching, listening to, and absorbing the *culture* around us.

Stereotypes are:

Ideas about what we are supposed to be and do that are unrealistic or based only on physical

characteristics.

Stereotypes in our *culture*:

Girls are _____.

Boys are _____.

Questions for discussion:

1. What do stereotypes have to do with sexual harassment?
2. Is there anything we can do to remove stereotypes from the process of socialization?

OH/template/6

Socialization and Stereotypes Overhead Guide

The socialization of youth in our culture, and the perpetuation of stereotypes, contributes to peer sexual harassment. In fact, harassing behaviors, like most social behaviors, are learned from the people and behaviors around us. When young people are repeatedly exposed to negative stereotypes they learn that some people are less important (less smart, pretty, talented etc.) than others. This lesson is practiced on the playground and in the hallways.

Discuss all forms of stereotyping with the group. Culture, gender, ability and class are all categories used to stereotype individuals. This form of discrimination is often an underlying cause of peer sexual harassment.

C-2 Activities

Socialization

This component teaches young people how and why stereotypes exist. Discuss the ways in which stereotypes are created and sustained. Areas to cover include upbringing, our environment, the media etc.

Blackboard Activity

Create two columns on the board:

Be a man & Be ladylike

Ask students to come up with characteristics that fit into each category. Where does 'fighting' fit? How about 'crying'. Where would you put 'cleanliness' or 'bravery'. When the students have filled in as many characteristics as possible, draw a box around each column. Explain that stereotypes are a way of boxing people, individuals, in. When we use stereotypes it is like putting someone in a cage.

C-2 Activities

Cage Art Project

This project is appropriate for any age group.

Ask the students to draw a picture of themselves and then use stereotypes to draw a cage around themselves. For example, the students may use words and concepts like 'girl', 'blonde', 'jock', or 'geek', to create the cage.

Have the students list words that really describe themselves. These are the words that will set them free from the cage of stereotypes.

Media Project

Using popular magazines, ask the students to identify stereotypes (advertising is particularly revealing). The students may want to create poster 'collections' of specific stereotypes to display around their school.

Stereotypes Q&A

If stereotypes are so bad, why do they exist?

It is important to address this question with concrete examples. Explain to the students that stereotypes maintain existing power imbalances. Illustrate this by showing how certain stereotypes (girls are no good at sports) have benefits for some people (boys teams have better access to 'ice time' at the local rink) and not for others (girls rarely have access to the basketball hoop at lunch hour).

Agency and Identity

Now that we understand the messages that we receive from the media and the culture around us, we need to talk about what we can do to overcome the stereotypes.

WE are in charge of who WE are. Being an authentic person means being true to your real feelings, thoughts and desires.

That means we must learn to accept and love ourselves and to respect others regardless of gender, culture, religion, sexuality, ability, physical appearance or class.

Acceptance Activity

Ask each student to visit the library and for the following session to read one non-fiction or fiction book about someone who they see as vastly different from themselves (this reveals how much all people are at least a little bit the same - the students may surprise themselves with the difficulty in selecting someone truly 'different') Have each student summarize the story they read and describe - in writing or out loud - what characteristics make that person different. How do the students feel about the character's differences? Do differences create problems sometimes? Why? What would the world be like if we were all the same?

Use this activity to offer the students an opportunity to do some creative writing on the subject of difference.

Component Three

Why Do I Feel So Bad?

This component is designed to reveal to students some of the hurtful effects of harassment. It provides a good opportunity to talk about some of the realities of dealing with peer sexual harassment in a school or group situation. Students may express a feeling of futility regarding solutions to the problem. A discussion of your school's policy regarding harassment may be appropriate here.

If your school or group does not yet have a **policy** specifically dealing with peer sexual harassment, one might be developed as a part of your group's work.

Effects of Peer Sexual Harassment

depression
physical illness or discomfort
fear
anger
reduced self-esteem
inability to concentrate
poor attendance
tardiness

If a harasser is permitted to continue victimizing others, his or her behavior may escalate to a point where it is considered criminal.

Both the harassed youth and the harasser/s may have difficulty managing relationships later in life.

OH/template/3

Responses to Peer Sexual Harassment

Which of the following responses are effective in dealing with harassment: (Discuss each option)

1. Ignoring the harassment.
2. Telling the harasser to stop.
3. Discussing the harassment with a friend.
4. Reporting the harassment to a teacher, guidance counselor, principal or parent.

Sometimes it might not feel safe to confront a harasser because Peer Sexual Harassment is a kind of bullying that **makes you feel afraid**.

Sometimes it might not feel OK to tell someone about Peer Sexual Harassment because **it is embarrassing**, or because bad language is involved.

Remember: **You Have a Right to be Happy and Safe**

If you are being harassed, but are too afraid to talk about it, try writing about it. Give your letter or journal entry to someone you trust.

OH/template/4

Myths about Peer Sexual Harassment

1. *It is normal.*
2. *It doesn't hurt anyone.*
3. *It is the fault of the person being harassed.*
4. *Saying 'stop' will end harassment.*
5. *It is just a joke.*

Discuss each of these myths.
Is there any truth to them?
How can we change these myths?

OH/template/5

Myths Overhead Guide

1. Peer Sexual Harassment is normal.
This myth claims that it is normal for young people to harass each other, either because they are driven by hormones, or because they are learning to socialize by 'practicing' on each other. Neither of these excuses justify peer sexual harassment.
2. Peer Sexual Harassment doesn't hurt anyone.
There is harm to both harasser/s and victim.
3. Peer Sexual Harassment is the fault of the person being harassed.
This myth blames the victim for something he or she did or said to cause harassment. Clothing choice is sometimes viewed as partly to blame. However, peer sexual harassment is never the victim's fault.
4. Saying 'stop' will end harassment.
This myth implies that it is somehow the harassed person's responsibility to bring an end

to the behavior. However, it may not be safe, or even possible, for the victim to attempt to end the harassment alone.

5. It's just a joke.

This frequently used myth implies that the harassed person can't take a joke, or doesn't have a sense of humour. Impress upon your group that behavior which causes fear and pain is not funny under any circumstances. This argument becomes complicated by gender when similar behavior is evaluated differently. Girls will either 'get the joke' and therefore be 'sexually aware', which might lead to a 'reputation', or not 'get it' and therefore be considered prudish.

C-3 Activities

Self Esteem Activities

Although low self esteem is often a result of harassment, remember that it is not a *cause* of harassment. However, enhancing the self esteem of young people is a useful tool of empowerment. The following activities encourage young people to discover their strengths, and to develop a positive outlook on their potential as individuals.

Sentence Completion Activity

Have each student complete the following sentences and share the results.

1. The one thing that I feel most proud of is...
2. I am happiest when...
3. Others like me because...
4. I like myself because...
5. If I could change something about myself it would be...

Using the students answers to the last sentence, have them answer the following questions:

1. Is this change reasonable, and can it realistically be accomplished?
2. What can you do today to begin making a positive change in yourself?

C-3 Activities

Poetry Activity

Young people will find it challenging to write an 'autobiographical' poem.

Give the following instructions:

- does not have to rhyme, or follow poetic 'rules'.
- must be about yourself.
- must contain positive statements and demonstrate self-esteem - but does not have to be totally upbeat.
- use creativity, imagination, and explore new ways of using words and language.

Component Four

Strategies for Change

It may seem sensible to counsel a victim of harassment to attempt to put an end to the behavior themselves - by asking the harasser to stop for example. In reality, approaching a harasser directly might not always be a safe strategy. That is why it is important to suggest that help from a peer, parent, or teacher should be sought to assist in any confrontation.

However, telling an adult about harassment might not always feel safe either. Placing an emphasis on the following points will assist students who are reluctant to report.

1. Youth are *not* responsible for the bad behavior of others, and have a *right* to be helped.
2. A supportive peer stands up for those who might not be able to stand up for themselves. This may include reporting an incident for someone who is too afraid to do it themselves.

C-4 Activities

Helping Others

In small groups, students will develop a scenario where someone is being harassed. You may provide scenarios for younger groups.

Have each group answer the following questions for each scenario:

1. Is this person being harassed?
(This may be answered through a direct question, or by observation of mannerisms, body language and verbal cues.)
2. Does the person deserve to be helped?
(In cases of sexual harassment, it is extremely rare for someone to be the cause of their own victimization.)
3. Can I help?
(Do I have skills and knowledge that might assist in this situation?)
4. Do the benefits of helping outweigh the costs?²
(A 'benefits vs. costs' list will reveal that this question is complex for most young people.)

Harassment Scenarios

1. A girl is sitting at her desk. Two boys in desk behind her are whispering cruel and

Special thanks to Ken Rigby for his development of these questions. *Bullying in Schools and What to do about it*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers. 1998.

dehumanizing names, and directing rude comments to her. You can hear the boys and you notice that the girl's face is getting red.

2. You are playing basketball with three friends. One of the boys calls the other a 'fag' and gives him a shove. The boy responds by saying 'shut-up' and shoving back.

3. You notice the name of a person you know written on the wall of the girls bathroom. The writing says something sexual and cruel about the person.

4. As you board the school bus you see that the girl in front of you is being grabbed by boys on both sides of the bus. She is giggling, but trying to push her way to the back. The boys are laughing too, and making comments about her body.

5. Your friend has been receiving anonymous notes that contain explicit and threatening language. Your friend is angry. You think you know who is sending the notes.

Or...

have students develop scenarios from their own experiences.

How to Help when someone is being harassed:

Refuse to be an 'audience' for a harasser. When an audience forms around an incident of harassment negative behavior is reinforced. In other words, harassers like the attention of others. Ignoring them is one strategy to make the behavior stop.

Acknowledge students who provide help. The stigma attached to 'ratting' makes helping a peer who is being harassed seem too great a risk. We can turn this mentality around by rewarding students who have the courage and self-esteem necessary to step-in. Special privileges or public acknowledgment of the outstanding 'citizens' at your school can make students aware of the positive side of getting involved.

How would you like to be acknowledged?

If someone helps you, let a teacher or principal know so that person can be acknowledged.

Create a PSH awareness program at your school. Design posters, make announcements, and get your parents and teachers involved by asking them about their experiences and sharing yours.

Other Solutions

Personal Issues Advocate

This is a person who works in the school, but is not a teacher, or guidance counsellor. Their role is to be available to students to discuss personal issues, and to work with school staff, administration, and parents to resolve personal issues.

Incident book

The incident book is an anonymous reporting system that permits students to submit written complaints about bullying or harassment, without fearing escalation or reprisals. The book

should be available to students at all times, and should be reviewed daily by an advocate or counselor.

Girls-only space

Young women seem to benefit greatly from having space (a room or office) where they can meet, work, play, and access information, free from the harassment of young men. Certainly, establishing a girls-only space is a politically contentious issue. However, the benefits to young women, including freedom from fear, and a sense of personal ownership, are well worth the struggle.

Clearly defined limits on language and behavior

The most effective way to control bullying and harassment is to develop and enforce strict codes of behavior that protect all students from bullying and harassment. This means having a policy in place that deals with all of the issues and behaviors dealt with in this handbook. Tolerance of harassing behaviors is one of the most significant reasons for its perpetuation.

GLOSSARY

access: the right or opportunity of reaching or using

ascribed: attributed

culture: way of life

degrading : shaming, humiliating

discrimination: unfair treatment based on prejudice

flirting: to behave in an amorous manner

gender: social, cultural, and psychological components suggested by a person's ascribed status as male/female/other.

Hostile Environment: an environment in which it is unpleasant, frightening, or impossible to carry on with normal activities

legitimate: logical, justifiable

mutual: feeling or action done by each toward the other, common to two or more people

policy: plan of action adopted by a person or organization

sex: reproductive structures and characteristics existing along a continuum made up of biological constructs of maleness and femaleness

stereotypes: preconceived notions, positive or negative, used to explain behavior or characteristics, often based on superficial observations

A *Promise* from your school:

Upon completion of the Students Acting Against Sexual Harassment program, this school will endeavor to abolish all forms of harassment, and guarantee the security and safety of all students regardless of, in particular, gender and sexual orientation.