

College Guild
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

CAPTIVITIES

Unit 2 of 5

PART 1: BULLIES

Society likes to think of children as innocent and unbiased. The truth is that children can be downright cruel.

It begins in elementary school -- bullies and victims. We now know that children who commit violence tend to be the ones who were teased and bullied earlier in their lives. These children are also more likely to start fires and abuse animals.

- 1. List 3 causes for children being bullied in elementary school.**
List 3 causes for children being bullied in junior high school.

An expert who studies this problem has developed a plan to prevent it.

- 1) Set and enforce standards. Aggression is clearly defined so that bullying is quickly recognized by teachers and students and the consequences are always the same. Every act of bullying is interrupted and the aggressor faces predictable consequences.
- 2) Support changes in the bully's behavior. Not only should the bully be punished, but rewards should be in place, so there are also positive consequences to encourage changing the behavior.
- 3) Help bullies understand why there are punishments and rewards for different behaviors. Often they don't recognize their aggression, or they think it was justified.
- 4) Support the victims of bullying. Assure victims it was not their fault. Educate all students that victims are not "cry-babies", and that other students should report aggression.
- 5) Educate all parents about the school's policy on bullying. If possible, teach parents their role in preventing the development of aggression in their children.

- 2. In your opinion, will this program work?**

What aspects are most likely to be successful or at least have an effect on bullying?

- 3. Will a successful elementary school program carry over into junior high school?**

Why or why not?

One group of children who may be laughed at or bullied by their classmates are the "learning disabled." LD children may be intelligent and creative, but their brains have a problem in the area of understanding and using language, spoken and/or written. Communication skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking or spelling can be affected. You can see how other children might not understand and think of kids with LD as "retards" – and as easy targets for bullying.

There is a larger percentage of prisoners with a learning disability than in the population as a whole.

- 4. Why do you think this is?**

5. How could you help an illiterate friend participate in College Guild?

PART 2: JUVENILE CRIME

Read Appendix A – it is a 1960's article about vandalism, written by journalist John Gaffney.

6. What is your response to this article?

7. What is the best way to approach and help a teenager who is vandalizing property?

"Juvenile justice" is one of the most controversial issues in corrections. Many prisoners say that youth detention centers turn young offenders into adult criminals because there is only punishment, not rehabilitation. The following issues are associated with juvenile justice:

- childhood experiences
- family
- elementary school experiences
- junior high school experiences
- juvenile crime
- juvenile detention facilities
- personal experiences as a juvenile offender
- current approaches to decreasing juvenile crime
- research or suggestions on the most effective approaches

8. Pick one of these topics and write an (in depth) essay or fictional story about it.

The poems in Appendix B were written by two boys who describe their feelings about a juvenile correctional center.

9. Pick another one of the topics from the list above and write a poem about it.

At the bottom of this page is a box containing lots of ways to give someone a compliment.

10. Which of these examples would make you feel the best?

11. Which did you need/want to hear when you were a child?

~ Well Done ~ Remarkable ~ I Knew You Could Do It ~ I'm Proud of You ~ Fantastic ~ Nice Work ~ Looking Good ~
 ~ You're On Top of It ~ Beautiful ~ Now You're Flying ~ Now You've Got It ~ You're Incredible ~ Bravo ~ You're
 Fantastic ~ Hurray for You ~ You're On Target ~ You're On Your Way ~ How Nice ~ How Smart ~ Good Job ~ That's
 Incredible ~ Hot Dog ~ Dynamite ~ You're Beautiful ~ You're Unique ~ Nothing Can Stop You ~ Beautiful Sharing ~
 Good For You ~ I Like You ~ You're A Winner ~ You Are A Good Friend ~ I Trust You ~ Remarkable Job ~ Beautiful
 Work ~ Spectacular ~ You Mean A Lot To Me ~ You're Darling ~ You're Precious ~ Great ~ You Belong ~ Great
 Discovery ~ You've Discovered the Secret ~ You Figured It Out ~ You Make Me Laugh ~ Fantastic Job ~ Hip Hip
 Hooray ~ I Respect You ~ You Mean The World ~ Bingo ~ Magnificent ~ Marvelous ~ Terrific ~ That's Correct ~ You're
 A Joy ~ You're A Treasure ~ You're Wonderful ~ You're Perfect ~ You're Sensational ~ Super Work ~ Creative Job ~
 Super Job ~ Awesome ~ A+ Job ~ Fantastic Job ~ Exceptional Performance ~ You're A-OK, My Buddy ~ You Made My
 Day ~ You're A Real Trooper ~ You Are Responsible ~ Well Done ~ You Rock ~ Excellent Work ~ Way To Go ~ Wow!

In responding to the section on juvenile offenders, one CG student had a thought-provoking answer about helping girls who are housed separately from the adult women prisoners. Common thinking is that juveniles are put at risk in being housed with adult prisoners. Carrie has a different view:

Girls are in more danger of becoming adult criminals if they are kept with their peers than put in general-adult population. They take these children and surround them only with other children with the same mind frame. As much as one of these girls might want to change, that would mean being different from her peers, facing ridicule and rejection, no longer being considered "cool."

She suggests that the majority of women in her prison want to help these girls, to talk to, teach, and show them a better, permanent, positive alternative so that they don't end up like the adults in the end. This helps the women, too who say, "In a way, we succeed through them."

12. What do you think about what Carrie says?

PART 3: PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Metal bars hold the prisoner captive. But some locks can't be opened.

Spina Bifida

*I watch my sister
and her friends:
run
jump
skip
hop
chase the dog.
This wheelchair takes me
a lot of places
but it never gets me
where I want to go.*

John Yarbrough from Boiled White, 2002

Prisoners understand the nature of their captivity, but there are all kinds of other issues where the cage surrounds a child.

13. How do you explain to a child why s/he is different from other kids?

14. Draw or describe what could be added to or changed on a wheelchair to make it more fun and less medically scary to other children.

15. Plan an afternoon for this child that would be fun and safe, too.

Diane is in prison in Delaware. She has a neuromuscular condition which causes severe pain and even makes it difficult to walk at times. In other words, Diane is twice captive.

...I'm fighting despair every day, and despair is winning more often than not. Between the hopelessness of this life sentence and the constant pain I fight from my medical condition, my quality of life is pretty shabby.....The helplessness and frustration of dealing with the breakdown of my physical self -- what I'd give for good health again!

16. What is the best way to help a friend who is in pain?

You have a cousin who has normal use of his arms, but cannot sit due to back and hip injuries. You want to take Jacob out to Burger King and a movie. He is nervous about leaving home, so you want to have everything figured out.

17. Exactly how would the two of you physically manage this trip?

Progressive diseases or conditions have another huge component to them. For some, it means that the adaptations worked out have to be revised over and over as independence is slowly lost. For others, progressive conditions are life threatening – cancer, AIDS, muscular dystrophy.

18. What kinds of practical help could you supply to a friend with a progressive condition or terminal disease?

PART 4: FAMILIES

In a household with a handicapped child, there can be another victim. The brother or sister of this child can also be trapped. Because so much time is spent in helping the disabled child, siblings may be expected to be good, obedient, successful in school, and to keep out of trouble. They get less attention. If healthy children are picked on by their disabled siblings, they really can't fight back. They may have responsibilities in helping their siblings beyond what is appropriate for their age. On top of all this, they may feel guilty for having a normal body.

19. What should a physically able child be expected to do to help her older wheelchair-bound sister?

20. What effects (good or bad) could growing up with a disabled brother or sister have for an adult?

Other family members can be trapped by someone else's physical disability too.

21. What are the problems faced by a woman with a disabled husband?

22. What would an adult child do when his mother has had a stroke and it is no longer safe for her to live at home?

23. Write a fictional story about a family with one member who has any kind of physical handicap. You can tell it from the viewpoint of any member of the family.

24. How is incarceration similar to and how is it different from a physical handicap?

PART 5: GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS & HEALTH

Different countries have different ways of providing for the health needs of their citizens.

25. When it comes to treating health problems, should patients be getting help from the government?

26. Since tax payers fund health care, how can the country balance the need with the cost?

27. Health insurance rates are sky-rocketing. What specific medical conditions should not be covered by a policy (in order to keep it affordable)?

All kinds of physical disabilities (from a sore throat to AIDS) are treated with medications. The most effective drugs prescribed by doctors can be so expensive, the patient can't afford them. However, drug companies also do the research to discover new and better drugs.

28. Write a justification for the high cost from the point of view of drug companies.

29. What effects do all those TV ads for drugs have?

30. Have TV ads actually changed the way this society thinks about health issues?

Getting free of all physical chains and complaints would make us feel like Superman – he could leap tall buildings at a single bound, saving everyone and solving every problem. Ironically, the man movie-goers associate with this hero became unable to help even himself. Actor Christopher Reeve, who played Superman in the movies, was permanently paralyzed below the neck in a riding accident. The man who portrayed the strongest man in the world couldn't even breathe independently.

31. If you were chosen by Hollywood to produce an updated version of Superman, what would the title of the movie be? Who would star in it?

32. Who or what would Superman rescue?

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

APPENDIX A

Open Letter

Casting about for a timely On the Record subject this week, we kept coming back to one of the day's major topics—vandalism, how it happens and who's to blame.

Then we thought of writing an open letter to a vandal—a typical young person who for some reason unknown to the rest of us feels compelled to break things, to tear down and destroy. At first we wondered what we should say, how we could make ourselves understood. We couldn't even be sure to whom we should address our letter.

Finally we decided to plunge in, hoping at least a few young people, confused by a society they can't understand, might hear of what we had to say and try to understand. (On the Record does have some young readers, we are told, but we don't know how many of them are causing trouble.)

We hardly need to start our letter by defining vandalism. Everyone knows what it is. Its chief ingredient is destruction. Property is the first casualty, but when vandalism goes unchecked it also destroys ideals and reputations, even lives.

The victims of vandalism are legion. Those who do the destroying probably think no harm comes to them, but the reverse is true of course. The man who returns to his car to find his windshield smashed, the woman frightened by a fire in a mail box, or the child nearly run down by a racing auto suffers immediately. But eventually, one way or another, the wrongdoer is hurt, too.

Mothers and fathers are casualties, first because they are the parents of vandals and secondly because the rest of society keeps reminding them that they are to blame. And in a way they are, especially those who give their children cars and money and time before they have lived long enough to possess a sense of responsibility and reasonable judgment as well.

Taxpayers suffer, too, and so does the community's good name. The agents of law enforcement suffer, because they are burdened beyond their means and must abide public indignation.

A youngster who has spent his evening causing injury to others (for that is what vandalism is) must not think very highly of himself as he drops off to sleep. Is he proud of what he has done? Does he fancy he has righted some wrong by destroying the recreation facilities the community has built for him? Is he convinced that he can only establish his place in society by tearing down what others have set up? Or is he merely caught up in a pack of misguided young people, half-hysterical with the "power" that flows from a fast car and a can of beer?

Does the young vandal imagine that he is alone against society, that there is no one around who understands or will listen to his problems? Is he so out of touch with the substance of his community that he believes his only chance for a place in the sun is through the violation of accepted standards?

From this corner, we would like to make one fact clear above all others: for every young person in the community who is beset by devils he cannot comprehend there are several adults ready to help and to understand. And this is not chit-chat. There are, after all, many ways to work off steam, to establish one's skills and win recognition that are constructive, not destructive, and it is the job of the adults of the community to show the way.

The aim of this open letter was not to preach, to talk in high-sounding phrases and fill space. In a word, what we hoped to do was to let any young people who happen to be listening know that they are not alone, that there are adults ready and willing to help them if they will meet us half way. At the same time, however, the point must be made, and firmly, that lawlessness cannot be tolerated, whatever its cause, and must be stopped.

Our own hope in thinking out loud about vandalism leans toward prevention, through understanding and a revived human spirit. For that's where the root of the seemingly senseless destruction lies, we feel—in a sense of inadequacy, coupled as it almost invariably is with aimlessness and an almost total lack of supervision.

APPENDIX B

DAYDREAMS

Daydreams are exciting - I'm a basketball star!
 Daydreams are peaceful - I'm sitting in a field,
 there's no noise.

I'm rich, I have money,
 I have power,
 I have freedom.

If I had freedom I would go home.
 If I had money I would buy a car,
 a house,
 eat lobster, fetticini, McDonalds.

I would travel
 to Florida,
 to California,
 sunshine, beaches...

If I had freedom, I would go home.

NIGHTMARES

Being in the Maine Youth Center is a nightmare!

What scares me?
 dying
 going to prison someday
 UFOs!
 really bright lights.

The most scared I ever was
 was when I got shot,
 was a really bad acid trip.

What makes me angry?
 staying here
 being separated from family and friends.

The Maine Youth Center is a nightmare.

*Freedom Minds (a poetry and art club)
 Maine Youth Center, Maine*

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