

The Bully's Face: Using Art to Understand Bullying in Gifted Children

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The Goals for this session

- ▶ Article in *Gifted Child Today*, December, 2018.
- ▶ Review themes from the literature on bullying and the gifted
 - ▶ New Knowledge from the literature
 - ▶ Archetypes, Image, and Metaphor
 - ▶ Rage, Wisdom, and the Gifted Child
- ▶ Procedures of “The Bully’s Face” activity





“New” knowledge

The Gifted Student AS the bully?

A bully is a person who uses any approach at his or her disposal including, but not limited to, intimidation (physical, emotional, verbal), positional authority, relational authority, or societal authority to create limiting effects on another's behaviors, thoughts, or feelings.

Bullying behaviors based on established gifted traits

- ▶ Ability to notice discrepancies
- ▶ Attacking small errors
- ▶ Advanced verbal ability
- ▶ Sophisticated verbal humor
- ▶ Know-it-all attitude
- ▶ Impulsivity
- ▶ Tendency to want to dominate others
- ▶ Intuitive awareness of the proximity and acuity of the teacher

Rage, Wisdom, and the Gifted Child

“I am destructive, absent minded. I feel misunderstood.” ~ Randy, writing as a bully

- ▶ Rage in gifted students (Cross, 2001b)
- ▶ The goals of gifted education (Freeman, 1998) to instill wisdom and compassion

Bullying behaviors I was seeing

- ▶ The Seat Saving Game
- ▶ The Hand Game
- ▶ The Scapegoat

Archetypes, Image, and Metaphor

“The arts are largely forms that generate emotion” (Eisner, 2008, p. 3).

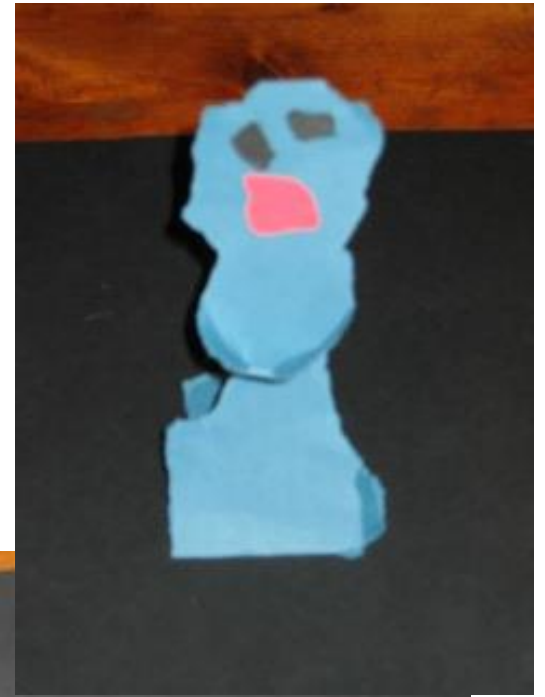
- ▶ Use simple artwork to create an image of the archetypal Bully and Victim
- ▶ Group dialogue discussions are based in Jean Peterson’s work *The Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens* (2008)
 - ▶ Share feelings
 - ▶ Introspection
 - ▶ No need to “fix”
- ▶ Providing compassionate presence and a safe environment

“He is quiet, mean to others, cries because of feelings that were hurt, scared, frightened, hurt, ashamed, unliked, feels like no one likes him.”

~Mary, writing as a victim.

“I’m nice, I try hard, find the good things about something. I try my hardest, but someone always tells me that it’s wrong, or it should be better.”

~Susan (who used her own name) writing as a victim.



“I sometimes feel like I am the strongest and best person, but other times I feel left out and lonely. I want people to know I exist and it seems like the only way to get their attention is to make them cry” ~Julie, writing as a bully

“He deceived people. He helps to make everyone feel good and then turns around and stabs them in the back. He feels misunderstood because everyone knows what he has done in the past.”

~Annette, writing as a bully



The activity: Using art to give voice to the bully and victim

- ▶ Discussion about bullying in the sixth grade.
- ▶ The Bully: Meditate on his/her inner feelings and motivations (stepping into the experience of the other – “climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Atticus Finch, *To Kill A Mockingbird*).
 - ▶ On half the paper create him/her from torn paper and glue (no scissors).
 - ▶ Journal in first person, name him/her, give him/her a voice.
- ▶ The Victim: Meditate on his/her inner feelings and motivations.
 - ▶ On the other half of the paper create him/her from torn paper and glue.
 - ▶ Journal in first person, name him/her, give him/her a voice.

In retrospect, I think including a meditation and artwork on the Bystander might give insight, too.

Feeding back and dialogue

- ▶ Four of the bully/victim images are placed on the table.
- ▶ The group feeds back first, one artist at a time – what they see, reminds them of, what that bully/victim might say
- ▶ The artist shares their bully/victims words
- ▶ We continue this way until every image/artist has been “fed back”
- ▶ The facilitator:
 - Establish safety;
 - Note Red Flags;
 - Note themes and recurring ideas.

Feeding back and dialogue: What I learned

- ▶ In my group, the surprise was that many of the students identified with the bully.
- ▶ The bully was once a victim who “had enough.”
- ▶ We used this to talk about the shape/cycle of this behavior.

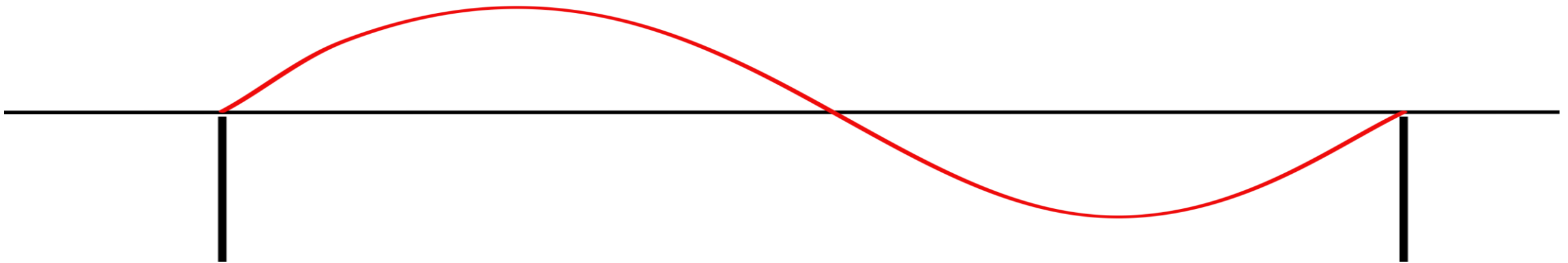


Table 1: Bullying Causes and Effects

These things hurt and cause anger / confrontation:

Name calling, insults, mocking, pushing, hitting, body threats, broken promises, something taken the wrong way, bragging, rumors, taking things, friendship issues like exclusion, shunning, backstabbing, lying, secrets

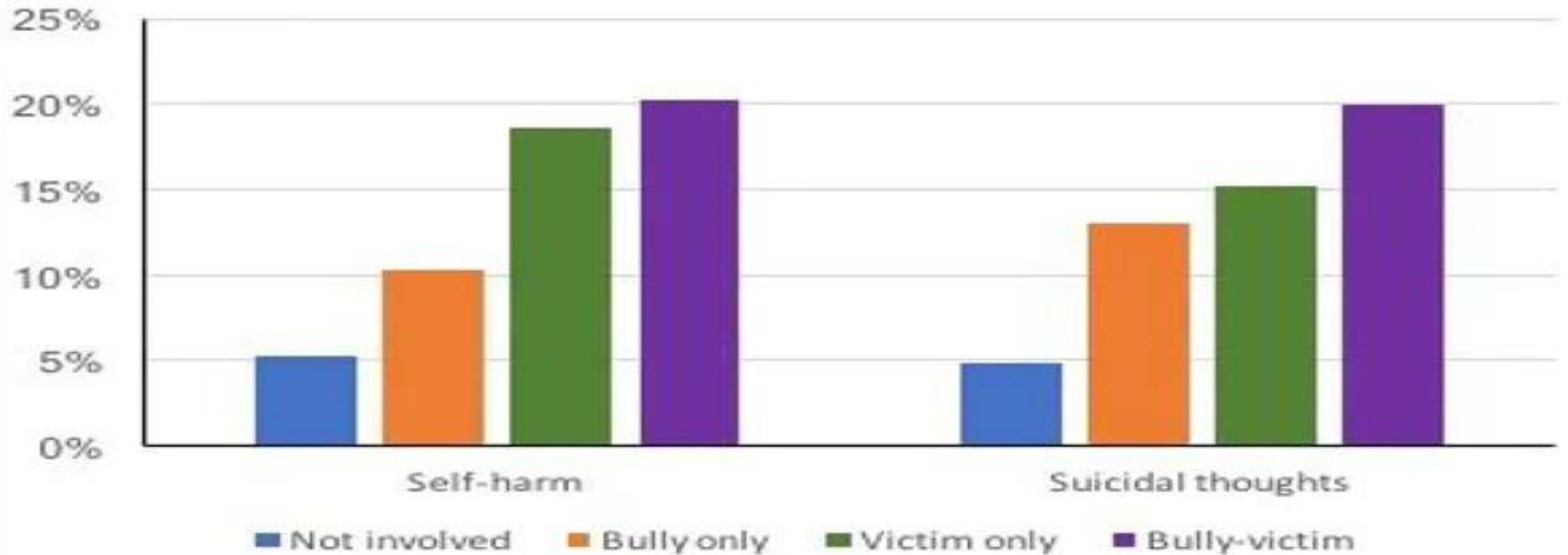
Name of this stage	Description of this stage	Anger management techniques for this stage
The Kitchen	Everything is fine, just going about your business. If you are stressed or bothered by something, your metabolism will be raised to begin with, and make your reaction to difficult events even stronger!	Do yoga, karate, boxing Listen to music Get plenty of sleep Sports Dancing Set a personal goal of managing your anger Meditation Paint, draw, color Write in a journal/diary
The Oven	Something hurts you and causes you to get angry or have a confrontation. It's hot in here!	Take 10 deep breaths, Think about something you like Use a stress ball Take a ten minute rest/break Squeeze your fists
The Freezer	After the confrontation, you feel a bit drained, cold.	Make a rubric to see how you handled your 'blow up' Think about good things that make you happy or laugh Playing a drum Play with your pets Do some of your favorite things Take a long bath Talk to a friend Play a game

Let's try it!

- ▶ In your baggy you will find either “Bully” or “Victim,” colored paper and glue dots.
- ▶ Meditate for at least a minute in silence to see into that person’s motivations, inner dialogue, purpose for their role in the bullying cycle. Use your own experience in any capacity for insight.
- ▶ Use your glue dots and paper to create that person – a mini-Bully or mini-Victim.
- ▶ Jot down some ideas and insights on the back or in your notes.
- ▶ 5 minutes.

Working Time

Prevalence of suicide behaviour according to bullying role



“Reading” the images Individually

1) My process was to read/discuss them in groups of four. The group feeds back one of the images, no questions to the artist yet.

- ▶ This image makes me think of _____.
- ▶ This image reminds me of _____.
- ▶ To me this image _____.
- ▶ This image makes me feel _____ because _____.
- ▶ I think this Bully/Victim is saying _____.

2) Then the artist talks about their meaning, thoughts, insights, from their journal.

You could also “read” the images en masse

Group the same type of images on one table, and read one type first. Students share:

- ▶ What do you see in any of these images?
- ▶ What emotions seem to be represented by these images?
- ▶ What recurring ideas do you see in these images?
- ▶ If you made an image that is on this table, what ideas came out of making the image for yourself?

In a classroom I might keep a list of these on chart paper or up so everyone can see them as they share.

Let's "read" an image

1) No questions to the artist yet.

- ▶ This image makes me think of _____.
- ▶ This image reminds me of _____.
- ▶ To me this image _____.
- ▶ This image makes me feel _____ because _____.
- ▶ I think this Bully/Victim is saying _____.

2) Listen as the artist talks about their meaning, thoughts, insights, from their journal.

From here ...

Follow your intuition ... you could ...

Have students brainstorm ways to cope with each stage of a stressful situation.

Talk about emotional and self regulation (Richard Cash's book *Self Regulation*).

Have students brainstorm ways to be empowered as The Bystander and The Victim.

Research ways other schools have dealt with bullying (Buddy Benches, Peer Mediation).

Connect this activity to cyber-bullying.



**Got any
questions?**

No?

GOOD!

References/Resources

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