

Pondering Point

Many of us think of bullying as something that occurs on the playground amongst children. The reality is adults are as capable of using bullying tactics as any child. *What is a bully?* Male or female, a colleague of equal or lesser status or even a person of authority, bullies treat others in an overbearing or intimidating manner and provide persistent, unwelcomed behavior. They take advantage of people perceived as vulnerable for the purpose of gaining control over the victim or social group. With so many different types of bullies, many may not even be aware that they are bullying. From cyber bullies who send threatening emails or parents who bully through intimidation and fear, this type of detrimental and aggressive behavior can be found in our workplaces, our communities and even in our homes. **Different from constructive criticism, bullying is persistent and leaves the recipient feeling powerless.** Even the bystander may become scared to confront the bully and can often adopt the behaviors of the victim or the bully. *As a witness to bullying, don't we have a personal responsibility to take action?*

Recognizing the bullies in our life may propel us to hold the mirror up to ourselves. *Have I ever employed bullying tactics to get my way?* Some argue that certain forms of bullying are acceptable to reinforce social norms. *Where is the line between constructive criticism and unnecessary brutality?* These aggressive actions are role modeled through other adults and send messages to the youth on how to relate to others. **What messages are we sending through our bullying behaviors, whether intentional or not?**

Who might you have BULLIED lately?

You can take the bully out of the playground...



Imagine... no longer being the bystander by standing up to the bully.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity:

At some point we have all been bystanders to bullying. Discuss with a group the dynamics of a situation where you are witness to this aggressive activity.

- *What are some options a bystander has?*
- *What are some repercussions of doing and not doing these options?*
- *What affect does this have on the person being bullied?*
- *What plan can we form to stand up to bullying?*

"Whilst accidents and assaults injure and kill people quickly and spectacularly, bullying and consequent prolonged negative stress injuries and kill people slowly and secretively. The outcome, though, is the same."

- Tim Field

Reflection:

Try this – Man in the Mirror

Hold up a mirror – do you see a bully in there? Reviewing the definitions above on what constitutes bullying, answer the following questions.

Have you ever...

- *bullied someone?*
- *been overly aggressive in order to control the conversation?*
- *continually teased a coworker or friend for the amusement of yourself or others?*
- *been a bystander to bullying?*
- *What did you do? How did you react?*