

# Scaffolding and Social Architecture: A Framework for Interventions to Promote Healthy Relationships

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Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence  
La Promotion des Relations et l'Élimination de la Violence

# Overview of Workshop

	Developmental	Relationships
Definition		
Why Worry?		
Risk Factors		
Assessment		
Intervention		



# Understanding Bullying

Bullying is a relationship problem  
that requires relationship solutions

- Child who bullies is using power to control and distress another.
- Child who is victimized becomes trapped in a relationship in which he/she is being abused.





# Bullying and Power

Bullying is a form of aggression used from a position of power.

Children acquire power in many ways:

- Advantage in size, age, intelligence.
- Advantage in social status with peers.
- Knowledge of another's vulnerability (e.g., learning, family, sexual, ethnicity).

With repeated bullying, the child who bullies increases in power and the victimized child loses power and becomes increasingly powerless to defend him/herself from bullying.



# Bullying Takes Many Forms

## Bullying can be face-to-face or indirect

### Physical bullying

- hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, or damaging property

### Verbal bullying

- name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating, threatening, racist comments, or sexual harassment

### Social bullying

- excluding others, gossiping, spreading rumours, making others look foolish, damaging friendships

### Cyber Bullying

- Use of email, cell phones, text messages, internet sites, to threaten, harass or socially exclude



# Two Lenses on Bullying Problems

## Developmental: Focus on child

- How is child doing?
- What is he/she capable of at this stage?
- What are his/her strengths and challenges?
- What can be done to support him/her?

## Systemic: Focus on child's relationships

- How does child interact with others (family, friends, class, school, community)?
- How do others interact with child?
- What can be done to promote healthy relationships for child?



PLAY

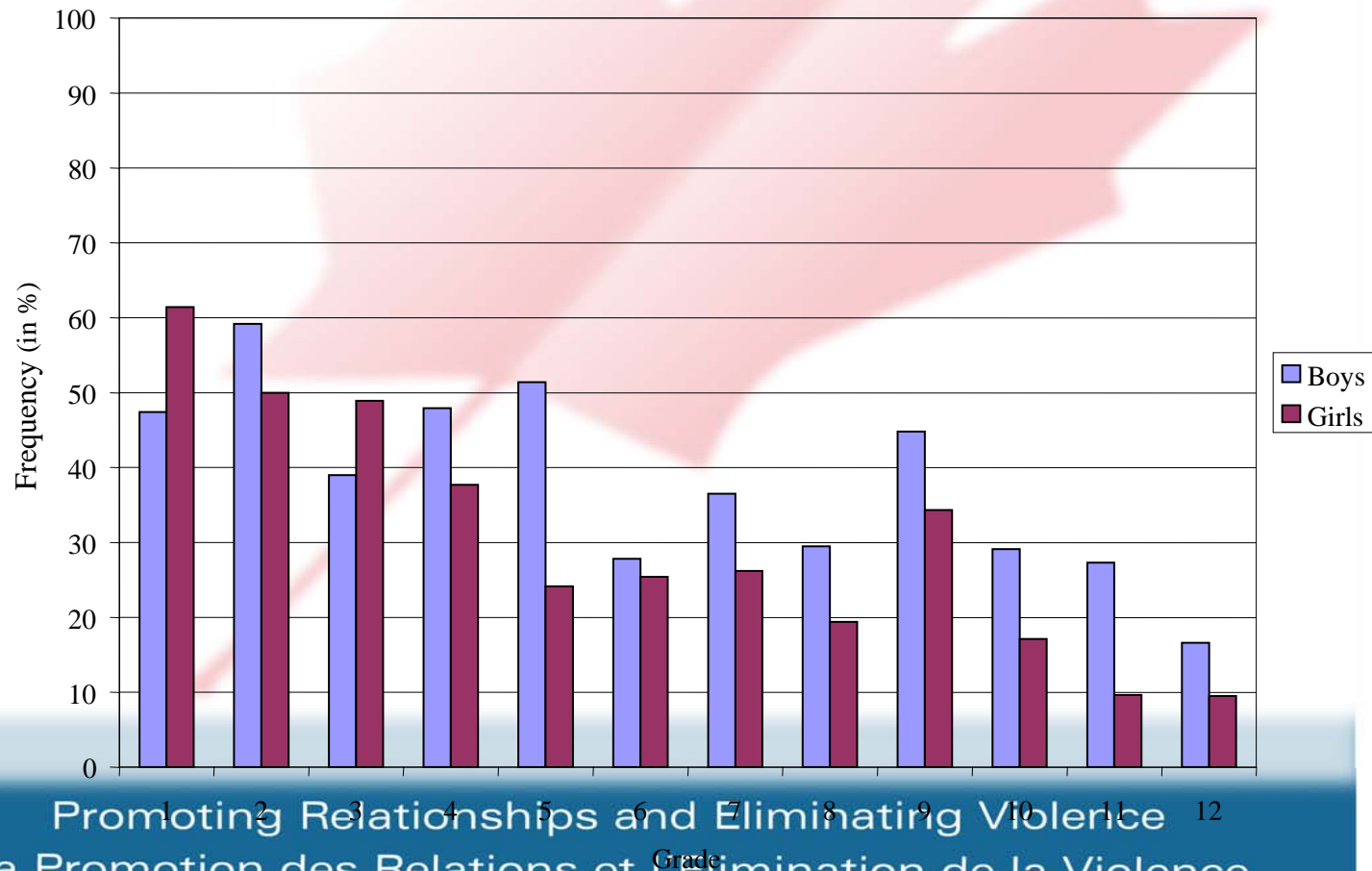


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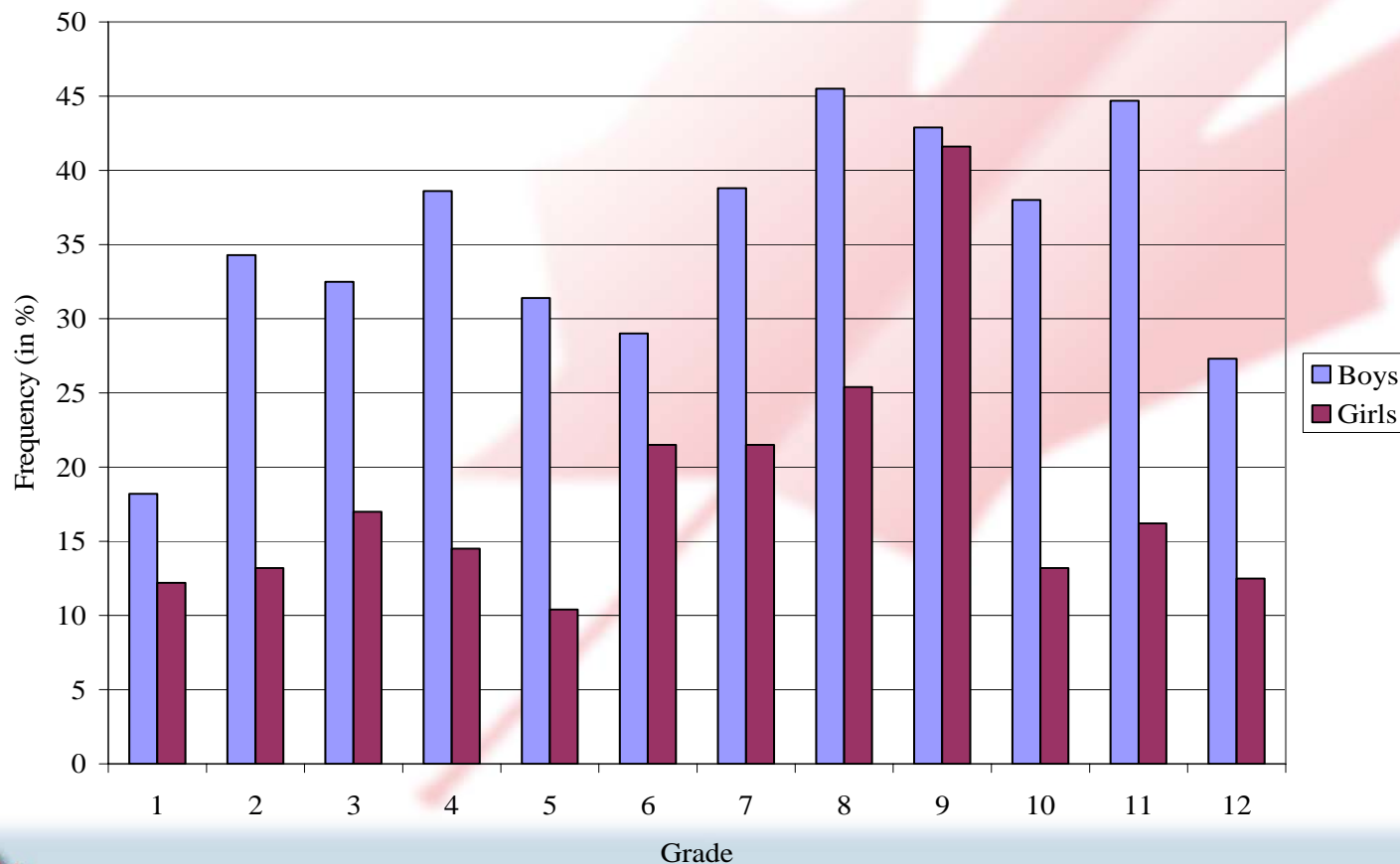
# Why Worry About Bullying?

## % Reporting Being Victimized at Least Once in Past 2 Months



# Why Worry About Bullying?

## % Reporting Bullying Others at Least Once in Past 2 Months



# Potential Outcomes of Victimization

The experience of repeated abuse at the hands of peers may lead to a range of psycho-social problems.

- Social anxiety and loneliness
- Somatic problems (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)
- Depression
- Low self-concept
- (Further) social withdrawal and isolation
- School absenteeism, phobia
- Academic problems
- Aggressive behaviours, bullying
- In the most extreme cases, suicide



# Potential Outcomes of Bullying

Lessons of using power and aggression in bullying may carry over to other significant problems.

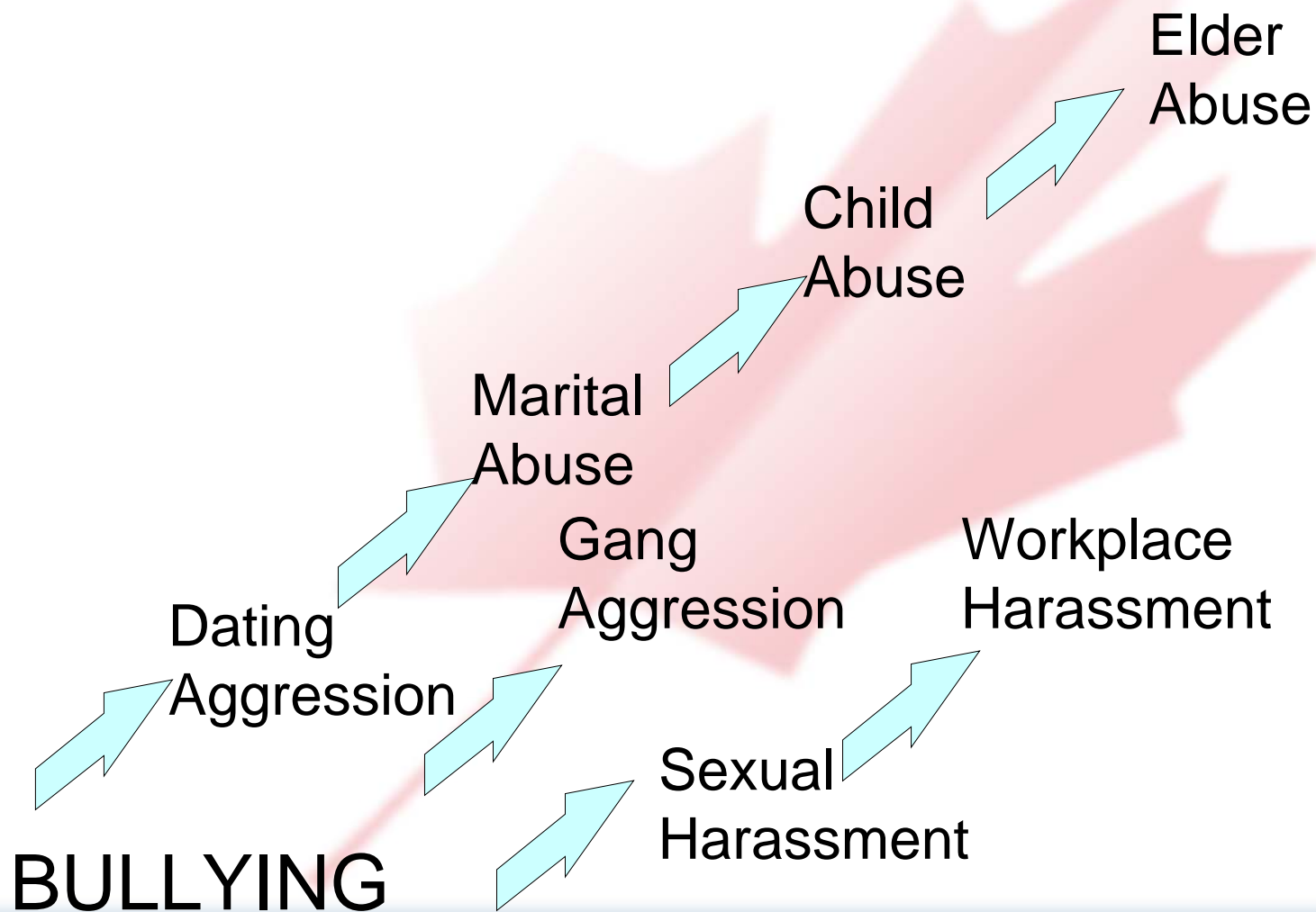
- Moral disengagement
- Delinquency and substance abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Dating aggression
- Victimization
- Suicide
- Adult criminality

\*\*A small number of students are involved in both bullying and victimization and they experience the most serious psycho-social difficulties.



# Why Worry About Bullying?

## Developmental Trajectory of Power and Aggression



# Risk Factors for Victimization

## Developmental

- Anxious, reactive temperament
- Over-regulated
- Lack of social skills
- Differences

## Relationships

- Overprotective, anxious parenting
- Isolation in the peer group
- Lack of integration in community activities (isolation)



# Focus on Child who is Victimized

## Warning Signs

Change in behaviour and/or emotions

- Not wanting to go to school
- Anxious, fearful, overreactive
- Headaches and stomach aches
- Lower interest and performance in school
- Loses things, needs money, hungry after school
- Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing, things
- Unhappy, irritable, low interest in activities
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares, bedwetting
- Threats to hurt themselves or others



# Focus on Relationships of Child who is Victimized

## Warning Signs

Concern for lack of relationships in which child can experience positive identity, power, and independence

- Parents may be overprotective, restrictive
- Siblings may bully child at home
- Lonely and isolated at school
- Few friends at school or in neighbourhood
- Teacher unaware of child's strengths and challenges and is unresponsive to needs.
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school, and in the community (positive power)



# Risk Factors for Bullying

## Developmental

- Difficult temperament
- Over-active
- Lack of social skills
- Under-regulated, risk-taking

## Relationships

- Coercive, permissive parenting
- Association with deviant peers
- Reputation in the peer group (varied: range from popular to rejected)



# Focus on Child who is Bullying

## Warning Signs

Behavioural or emotional signs that child is using power aggressively:

- Low concern for others' feelings
- Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour on others
- Aggressive with siblings, parents and others
- Bossy and manipulative to get own way
- Has unexplained things and/or extra money
- Secretive about possessions, activities, and whereabouts



# Focus on Relationships of Child who is Bullying

## Warning Signs

Concern for use of power and aggression in relationships either by the child or by others

- Parents may model use of power and aggression by yelling, hitting, rejecting child
- Parents may model use of power and aggression with each other
- Siblings may bully child at home
- Child has friends who bully and are aggressive
- Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure
- Teachers or coaches may model use of power and aggression by yelling, excluding, rejecting
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school, and in the community (positive power).



# Assessing Bullying and/or Victimization

## Developmental

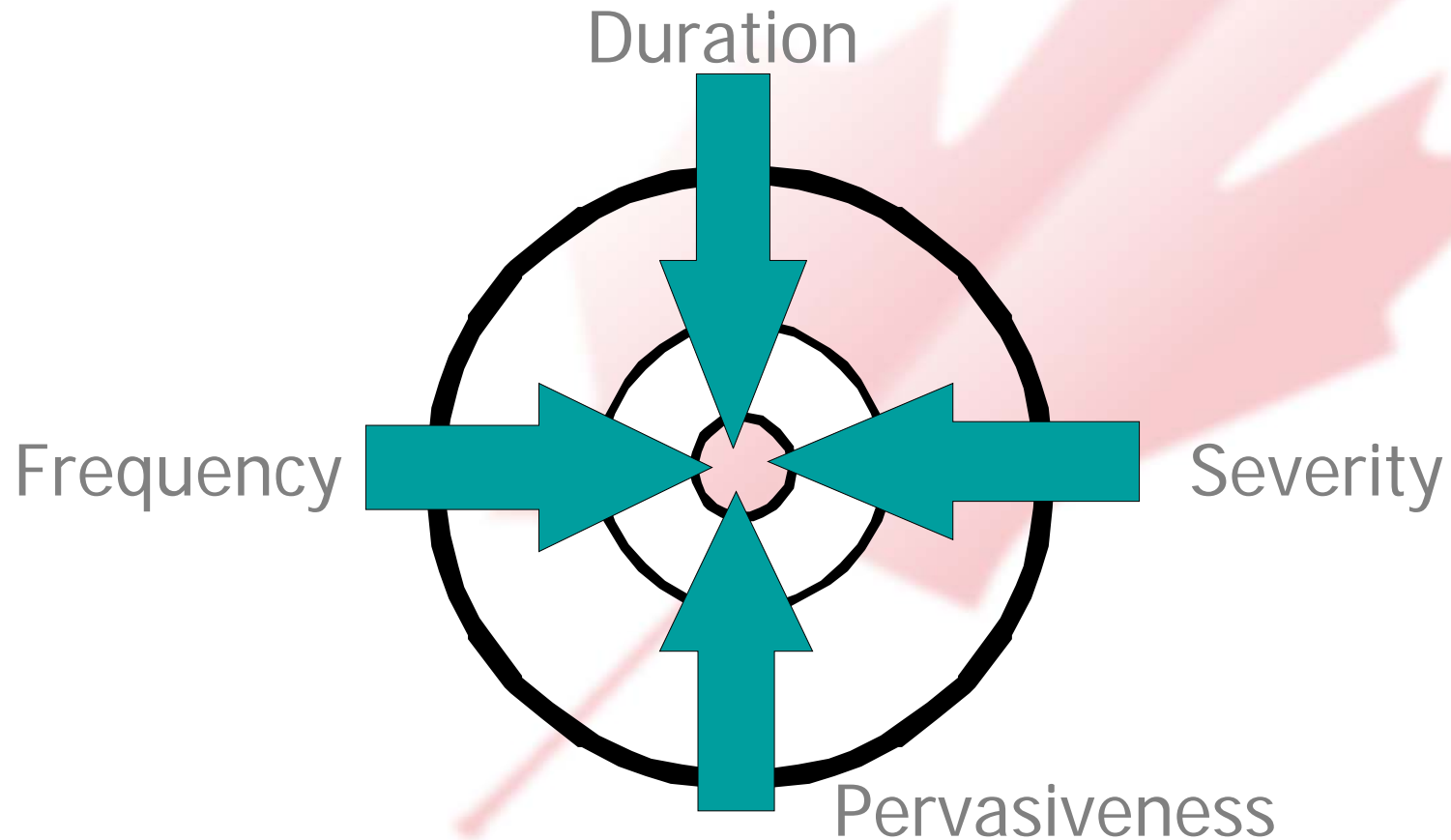
Focus on the child: his/her strengths and vulnerabilities

## Relationships

Focus on the child's relationship as they might promote or inhibit adaptive functioning  
(family, peers, school, community)



# Assessing Children at Risk for Bullying and/or Victimization: Determining degree of risk



# Assessing Bullying and/or Victimization

## Developmental

Questions and observations regarding child's emotions, behaviours, attitudes

## Relationships

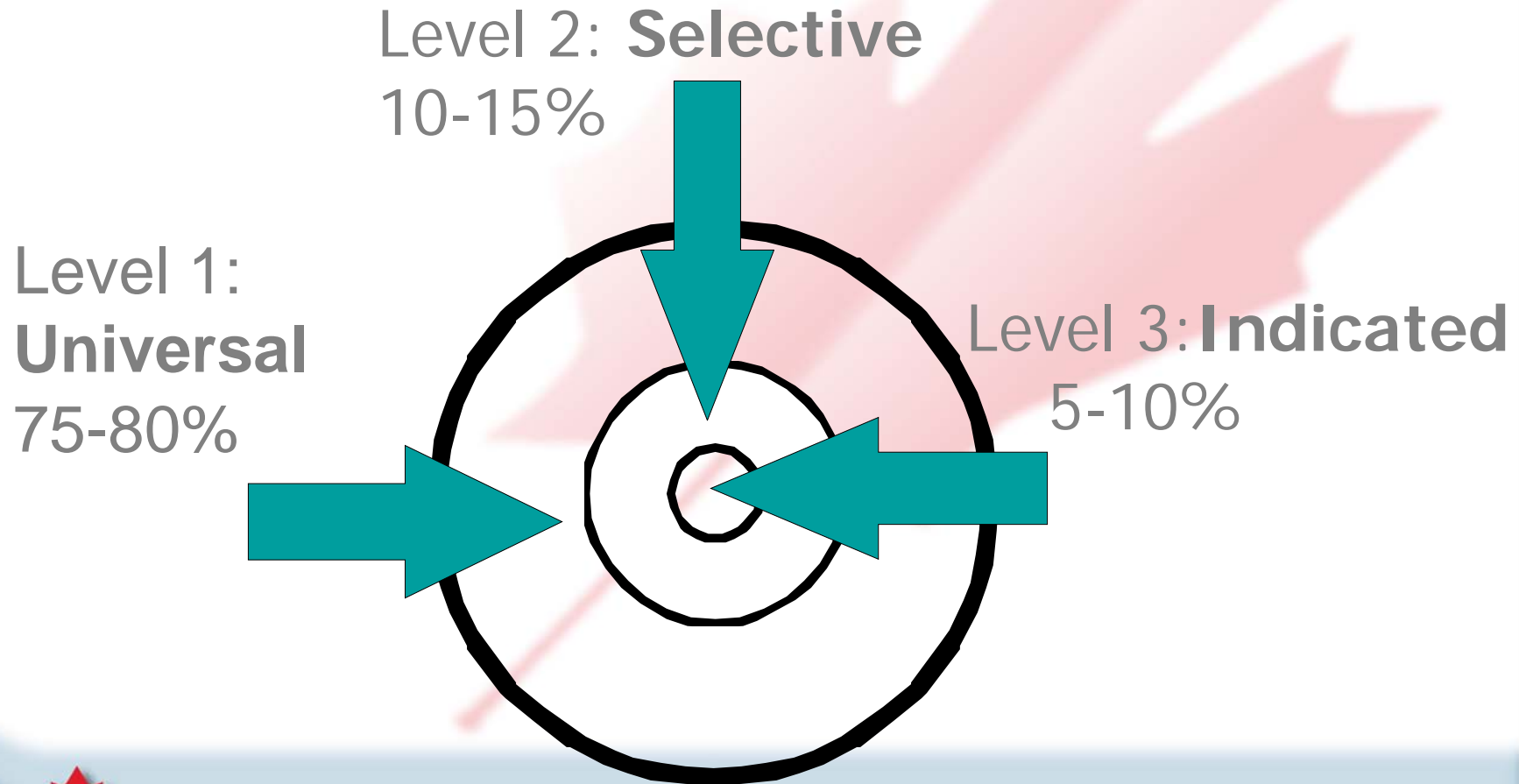
Questions and observations regarding interactions in with: parents, siblings, friends, at school, in community

Challenge: adults seldom observe bullying; importance of observing, listening, questioning

Informants: child, peers, parents, teachers



# Interventions for Children at Risk for Bullying and/or Victimization: Determining Intensity



# A Framework for Healthy Relationships

## Scaffolding

### Support for child

- What are his/her strengths and challenges?
- What can be done to support him/her?

## Social Architecture

### Support for child's relationships:

- What are the positives and challenges in child's relationships with others?
- What can be done to promote healthy relationships for child?



# Intervening with Children involved in Bullying and Victimization

**Bullying is a relationship problem that requires  
relationship solutions**

## Developmental

A focus on enhancing child's relationship capacity:  
emotions, behaviours, attitudes

## Relationships

A focus on promoting positive relationships and reducing  
negative dynamics that contribute to bullying and/or  
victimization.



# Scaffolding: Supports for the Child

- Scaffolds provide the child with support to function a bit above his/her normal levels.
- Relationship scaffolding: supports child to behave and interact in advanced ways
- Scaffolding can be both programmatic and moment-to-moment.
- Scaffolding can be provided by multiple foundations: parents, peers, schools, community



# Scaffolding and Bullying Problems

Assess and Tailor: Different scaffolding strategies for different developmental needs.

## Goal:

Promote RELATIONSHIP CAPACITY.

- Strategy:
  - Determine what the child needs to learn in order to have healthy relationships.
  - Determine the multiple ways in which you can create supportive scaffolding for that child.



# Strategies for Interventions with Children Who Are Victimized

## Challenges:

Avoid blaming children who are victimized

Avoid marginalizing children who are victimized





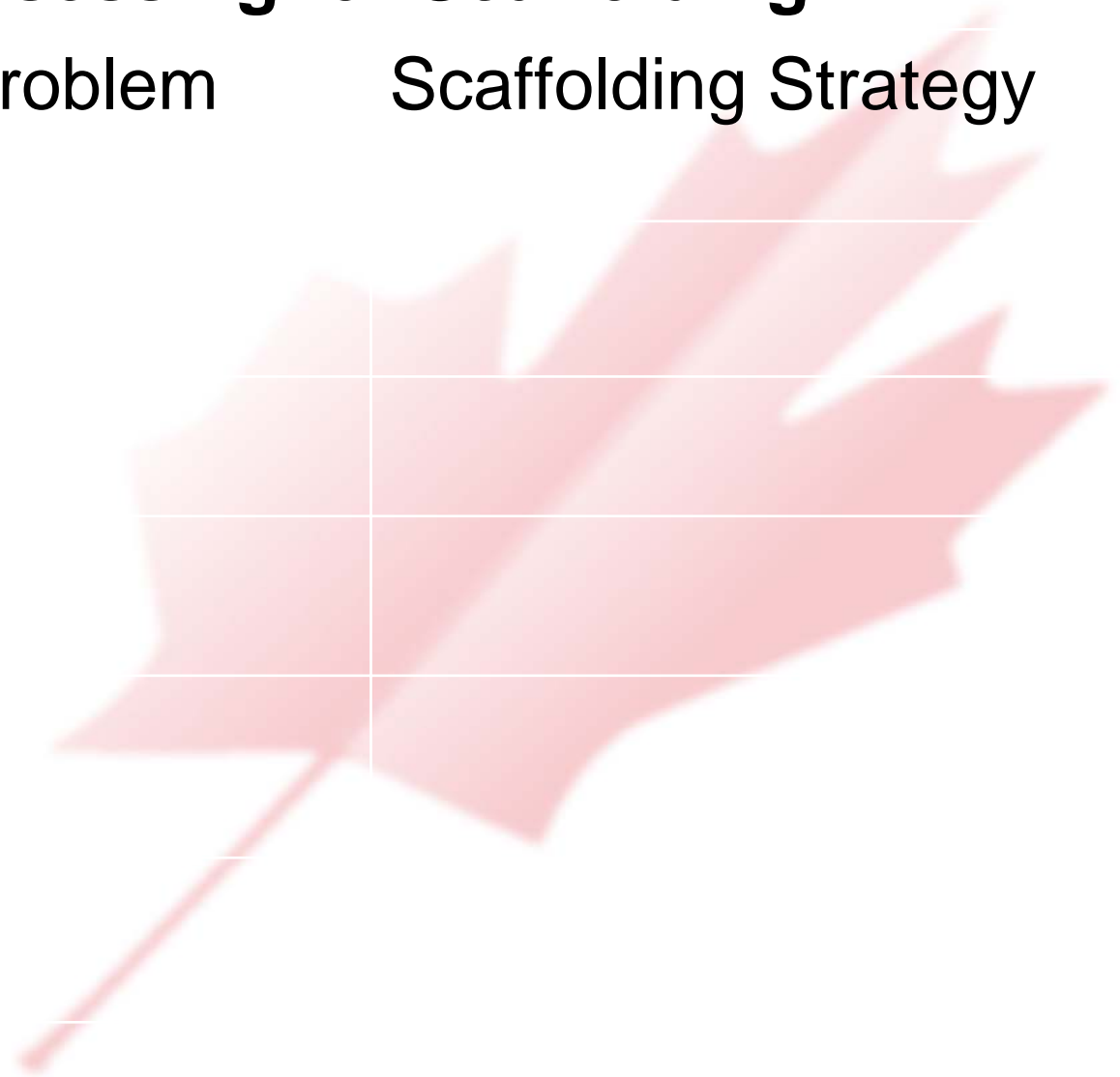
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# Assessing for Scaffolding

Relationship Problem

Scaffolding Strategy



# Scaffolding for Children who are Victimized

## Step 1: Determine Needs

- Protection
- Social skills
- Coping skills
- Peer skills
- Domains of competence

## Step 2: Search for Strategies

(no one magic strategy: multiple strategies for multiple children)



# Scaffolding For Victimized Children: Protection

All children have the right to be safe at home, school, and in their communities.

## If child talks to you about being bullied

- Thank him/her for telling you and explain right to be safe
- Listen and ask for details (what happened, who did it, where, bystanders, actions taken)
- Show concern, try to stay calm and helpful.

## Plan for protection

- Talk about what child could do to solve problem
- Explain difference: tattling (to get someone into trouble) and telling (to get someone out of trouble)
- Talk to child's teacher about bullying and solutions
- Identify people and ways to help keep child safe



# Scaffolding

## For victimized Children: Social Skills

Goal: to help children develop age-appropriate social skills

How?

- Help child to stand up in a positive way through modelling and role-play
- Help child learn to stay (or look) calm (e.g., counting, deep breathing)
- Help them make friends by inviting a child over on weekend (ask teacher to help identify)
- Help them think about their strategies: Do they make the problem smaller or bigger?
- Coach in when to get help from adults and friends and what to say
- Counselling (turning for help)



# Scaffolding For Victimized Children: Coping Skills

Children's interactions are complex:

Bullying occurs frequently but usually ends quickly (on average lasts 37 seconds).

Goal: Provide support to cope with minor bullying

How?

- Stay calm and pretend to be confident
- Pretend to ignore and walk away
- Speak out: "That's bullying, please stop"
- If bullying doesn't stop, get help from friends, teacher, others.



# Scaffolding for Victimized Children: Peer Skills

Goal: Provide support in developing skills and confidence to interact with peers.

How?

- Participate in community activities
- Older peer buddy/mentor
- Interacting with younger children can provide unique opportunity for developing skills (they look up to older child and don't recognize social awkwardness).



# Scaffolding for Victimized Children: Domains of Competence

Goal: Help child develop talents and strengths and celebrate them.

How?

- Talk with child and child's teacher to identify interests and domains of competence.
- Find ways of developing talents at home, school, and community
- Find ways of highlighting and celebrating child's talents to promote positive reputation in peer group and school.



# Strategies for Interventions with Children Who Bully

Challenges:

Avoid bullying children who bully

Avoid marginalizing children who bully



# Assessing for Scaffolding

Relationship Problem    Scaffolding Solution





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# Scaffolding for Children Who Bully

## Step 1 - Determine Needs:

- Empathy
- Controlling emotions and behaviours
- Attitudes and moral understanding
- Social skills
- Positive leadership
- Alternative problem solving
- Withstanding peer pressure.

## Step 2 – Search for Strategies:

(no one magic strategy: multiple strategies for multiple children)



# Scaffolding for children who Bully: Empathy

Some children are not able or do not to put themselves in the shoes of the child being victimized

Goal: Help child recognize his/her own feelings and feelings in others.

Help child read others' feelings to determine effect of his/her behaviour on others.

How?

Through moment-to-moment coaching

Through role plays, discussions, reading stories about victimization, media, opportunities to repair, Support Group (No Blame) Approach, Method of Common Concern, Restorative Justice, etc.



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Social Skills

## Goal:

- Help child stop and plan before acting
- Help child control anger and aggression

## How?

- Keep track of emotions and behaviours
- Moment-to-moment coaching
- Formative Consequences – consequences that TEACH the child something  
    Read a story, write a letter, work with younger children, make a poster
- Anger management
- Counselling (turning for help)



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Alternative Problem Solving

Goal: Help child understand think about how to avoid bullying and solve problems the next time.

## How?

- Teach about positive problem solving; stay positive yourself; avoid labelling your child as a “bully”.
- Moment-to-moment coaching (watch for bullying at home; respond immediately; “rewind” the action and try again)
- Model positive problem solving and the many ways to solve a problem.



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Attitudes and Morals

## Goal:

Help child understand what is right and wrong and why.  
Help child think positively about others and relationships.

## How?

- Teach about rights and responsibilities
- Moment-to-moment coaching
- Model positive attitudes and behaviours
- Consequences that help child recognize what is right and what to do next time.  
(Avoid bullying the child who bullies!)
- Counselling (turning for help)



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Positive Leadership

## Goal:

Help child find positive ways to use power and establish status and a positive reputation.

## How?

- Explore issues of power – positive and negative power..
- Talk with child and child's teacher to identify interests and domains of competence.
- Find ways of developing talents at home, school, and community
- Identify activities at school and in community where child can excel and experience success.
- Find ways of promoting positive leadership at home, with friends, at school, in community.



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Alternative Problem Solving

## Goal:

Help child understand think about how to avoid bullying and solve problems the next time.

## How?

- Teach about positive problem solving; stay positive yourself; avoid labelling your child as a “bully”.
- Moment-to-moment coaching (watch for bullying at home; respond immediately; “rewind” the action and try again)
- Model positive problem solving and the many ways to solve a problem.



# Scaffolding for Children who Bully: Withstanding Peer Pressure

## Goal:

Help child think about what is right for them, when there is trouble ahead, and how to say no.

## How?

- Starts with a healthy sense of self; praise and support your child through the ups and downs (10 positives to 1 negative).
- Talk openly about challenges that your child (and you face). Help them find their own positive solutions (making problem smaller).
- Make a plan for times when your child might get in over his/her head (e.g., call home with code phrase).



# Scaffolding for Adults in Children's Lives

Relationships are the foundation for relationship solutions.

Providing scaffolding for children requires heightened sensitivity to their needs.

Sometimes teachers, parents, coaches and others may require support, themselves, in determining the needs and appropriate interventions

Communication is essential – the earlier the better!



# Social Architecture

Creating dynamic health promoting social contexts for children and youth

- Requires attention to social dynamics in children's relationships at home, school and in community
- Adults can organize children's social experiences to:
  - Enhance positive interactions and opportunities
  - Reduce probability of risky interactions and opportunities



# Assessing for Social Architecture

Relationship Problem      Social Architecture  
Solution





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# Social Architecture: A Focus on Children Who Are Victimized

Find a “friend”

- Circles of Support
- Peer Mentor
- Helping Hands – Buddy groups

Parents need support too!  
in creating supportive social architecture  
at home

- Positive family relations
- Potential positive friends
- Positive community group activities





# Social Architecture: A Focus on Children Who Bully

Critical issue: Peers observing bullying provide a lot of positives to the child who is bullying.

Dilemma: How can we shift the dynamics away from positives for bullying?

- Try to involve child in positive school and community activities where he/she will meet prosocial peers
- Separate deviant peer groupings in class, on the playground, and in community activities

Positive Focus on Peers: when peers intervened, bullying stopped 57% of time within 10 sec.



# Social Architecture: A Focus on Children Who Bully

Critical Issue: children who are not involved in bullying directly are often bystanders. They can be part of the problem (watching, joining) or part of the solution (intervening).

Goal: to mobilize peers to be part of the solution by speaking out, removing the child being victimized, or by telling an adult.

How?

- Raise peers' empathy and awareness of responsibility
- Coach students in effective intervention strategies and in withstanding peer dynamics in bullying
- Create cooperative learning and play opportunities
- Interventions with peer group embedded in broader interventions (e.g., with school staff, parents, coaches).



# Scaffolding and Social Architecture for Bullying Design Does Not Come in a Box

Awareness of potential problems (assessment and intervention toolboxes)

Catch the problem EARLY; Need for ongoing support

Moment-to-moment scaffolding – connections between adults and students

Communication among adults, from children to adults, from adults to children, from home to school, home to community, etc

Support for the most vulnerable children and youth.

# Creating Scaffolding and Social Architecture for Healthy Relationships

Collectively we can identify the critical poles and cross-pieces for dynamic scaffolding to support the optimal development of all children.

We can learn not only how relationships influence children's development, but also how to promote strength in these relationship contexts.

Healthy relationships provide a strong foundation for school engagement and life-long adaptation.



Thank you for your work to support  
the healthy relationships of children  
and youth

