

NEWSLETTER FOR SEPTEMBER, 2015

Dear Parents,

September marks the death anniversary of our Founder, Major General Claude Martin, and we would like wish each and every one of you a very warm and happy Founders Day.

Even the briefest perusal of the life of our Founder makes for extremely interesting reading. Above all, he was to the very core, "A Gentleman". In our gender-specific times, we would prefer to refer to all our young people as Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, and we are indeed proud of the long tradition that our institution has in turning out such fine gentlefolk. The issue we have chosen to focus on in the next few webletters is very finely enmeshed in these words, because being a bully is most certainly not a part of any kind of well-turned out, good behaviour.

As mentioned earlier, the internet does provide more than ample information on the causes and effects of this phenomenon. The causes of such behaviour are manifold, but most often, it involves a kind of power play. The "bully" is an insecure child who has a deep rooted feeling of inadequacy, inferiority and a sense of needing to prove himself, and he proceeds to do just that – by establishing himself as an all-powerful, frightening figure of authority who can snatch whatever he wants, whenever he wants, from whomsoever he chooses to. Unfortunately, a bully will never pick on someone his own size – he will wait and watch for someone who he feels is weaker or inferior to himself, and will then proceed to make life miserable for his chosen victim. It is important to underline that an individual who chooses to be a bully is **not typically born with the characteristic**. It is a result from the treatment they receive from authority figures, including parents. Bullies often come from families that use physical forms of discipline, or where there is domestic violence or abuse. This somewhat turns the tables on the bully, making them the victim in different circumstances. Unfortunately, this leads to a strategy of bully or be bullied. This however is not always the yardstick by which we identify a bully.

Nowadays, more often than not, a child who chooses to bully others is often from a well educated, privileged background, where he or she might be the focus of all affection and attention. Such a child may find it very difficult to accept mediocrity at school or wants to be in the limelight all the time. At times, such a child may also be very popular or well liked by others, but for the same reasons of insecurity and inadequacy, might choose to "tease , rag or play pranks" on a weaker child. In our experience, we have even noted that the bully often poses as a friend, and explains away his or her behaviour as "mere friendly banter or having fun", where the fun certainly goes beyond limits of what is appropriate and certainly gives no pleasure to the victim. This is seen more often in cases where the bullying is of the "mental harassment" variety, rather than the direct physical kind.

Here, we also note the change in the psychology of the victim – the child who is being bullied often uses the same excuses, such as “ he / she is my friend” or “its ok, i don’t mind” - even though they may be deeply hurt by the behaviour of the so-called friend, they do not protest or resist because they are intensely afraid of losing the friends’ circle that they belong to.

There are some other roles in bullying that take place. McNamee and Mercurio have identified the people involved in bullying as: the person doing the bullying, the person getting bullied and the bystander as the "bullying triangle"-

- Bully – Students with power (social and/or physical) who repeatedly picks on another student or group of students with the intent to inflict harm or discomfort.
- Victim – Students who are the target of the bullying.
- Bystander – Student who observes bullying – may ignore bullying, encourage bullying, or take a stand against bullying.

Even if a child is not directly involved in the bullying he or she might play a role. There are several roles children play when witnessing bullying.

These roles include:

- Assisters – These children are not the main “bully” so to speak. They help in the bullying but do not directly start it. They are encouraged in this behaviour from surrounding peers.
- Reinforcers – These children are not directly involved in the bullying or assist in the bullying. These children are ones who laugh and give the bully an encouraging audience.
- Outsiders – These children are incidental bystanders - they are not involved at all in the bullying but witness it. They mainly will feel sorry for the victim but do not know how to get involved.
- Defenders – These children either get directly involved or defend the victim or there to console the victim after the bullying.

What we are trying to highlight here is the fact that every single child involved in the situation is psychologically affected by what he / she sees, hears and experiences in the situation. Most schools, including ours, have a comprehensive set of rules and regulations that ensure that bullying is actively discouraged and which also prescribes certain actions or sanctions which act as deterrents to such behaviour. What we would like to underline at this juncture are two points which often get lost along the way :

1. The need for psychological intervention for both the bully as well as the victim
2. The need for bullying to be addressed as a topic of study and discussion in our classrooms, as part of life skills training and value education

Thankfully, both of the above are an integral part of our institutions.

Once again, we will leave you with these thoughts, and will urge you to continue talking to your children about them. As always, dialogue opens a way to positive action and awareness.

Until next time,
With Best Wishes,
The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata

For appointments, interactions and discussions with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls : 033 4040 6663

La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612 / 033 4040 6629