

National Anti-bullying Week 2014 - What can teachers learn about bullying in the classroom from apes?

Monday 24 November, 2014

Beastly bullies: a new initiative in the UK to help teachers reduce bullying in the classroom

In order to fight bullying successfully, understanding its dynamics is one of the most important things. It may come as a surprise that bullying is natural behaviour and our closest relatives, monkeys and apes also bully each other. There is a major difference though: bullying never escalates in a primate group. Understanding the reasons behind this difference may offer the key to successfully fighting bullying at school. On the occasion of the National Anti-bullying Week 2014 a special workshop is taking place in Chester where teachers and headteachers have the opportunity to learn a new approach and acquire new skills to fight bullying.

More than 69% of all young people in the UK say they experienced bullying at primary school at some point. People experience lasting traumas as a result of bullying at school. It is known to be a major cause of suicide amongst young people. In business the cost of bullying reaches pound billions annually. Considering these, it is astonishing that there has been hardly any worldwide research done into the causes of bullying in humans. This research has, however, been done in monkeys. Enough reason to look at how you can reduce bullying and influence it, in every way.

Apemanagement®, a consultancy from The Netherlands is offering unique *Beastly bullies* courses for teachers in the UK to help recognizing and understanding bullying better. They say that to fight bullying it first has to be seen and recognized. This sounds obvious but not so much if you learn the following surprising statistic: *only one in every four bullying incidents is picked up by teachers*. Apemanagement® courses provide teachers with new skills to be able to address this. The workshops are held at a zoo, where monkeys and apes are observed and teachers explore how knowledge and experience from primates and biology can contribute to tackling bullying in schools. Workshops can also be held in the classroom.

Beastly bullies has proven to be a successful approach in The Netherlands, where more than 4.000 teachers have participated in workshops in the last couple of years. Patrick van Veen, founder of Apemanagement® says 'Observing behaviour objectively can be difficult. Teachers leaving our courses often tell us how surprised they were learning about their own unconscious biases and prejudice. With the help of the tools the course gives them, they are able to spot bullying quicker and more accurately, which are both essential for intervening in time and preventing escalation.'

Additionally to leading the workshops, Patrick conducts research in primary schools, jointly with the Dutch Radboud University, to gain a better understanding of the causes of bullying at school. Patrick says 'It is hard to believe that there has been next to no research done observing children to understand the underlying causes of bullying. My research aims to get an answer to that while excluding factors such as the victim's fear of reporting bullying incidents, which is often a problem. Currently I'm working on an 'early warning' system by categorizing children's behaviour to understand what can indicate hidden bullying.'

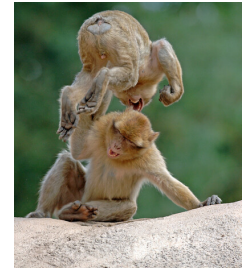
This Wednesday morning, on the 26th November 2014 Patrick is holding a course at Chester Zoo to introduce to teachers and headteachers how observing monkeys can lead to fighting bullying successfully at school.

For more information check the website: <http://www.beastlybullies.co.uk/>

Beastly bullies is a product of Apemanagement® and its contents are not necessarily supported by the zoos the courses are held at.

The National Anti-bullying Week 2014 is coordinated by the Anti-bullying Alliance which Apemanagement is a Core Member of. #StopBullying

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