

Mentors and Students
—
An Unusual Approach to Avoid Bullying

Tanni

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0.1 Glimpses on the Mentors and students concept

Introduction

Bullying is a phenomenon which can cause tremendous harm in the lives of innocent people. It can destroy families – not just the family of the direct victim of a bullying process, but that of random other people too, see school shootings caused by bullying – if it is not recognized by parents and teachers. It can make that innocent people are considered guilty, while the ones who actually are guilty seem to be victims, thus leading to tremendous injustice.

Bullying is often belittled, seen as a "rite of passage", and the ones who are bullied are often considered people who simply "can't cope", thus insulting the victims. This makes it more difficult for the victim to change his situation and more likely that a bullying process goes on. Even worse, it makes a society as a whole more vulnerable to bullying.

In this text, I talk about my considerations about the phenomenon called bullying. I got bullied for a long time by several groups of bullies. So it constitutes the viewpoint of a victim, my experiences and thoughts about what has happened to me and how the problem should be tackled in a fair way, especially in a way fair to the victim. This also means that my considerations – at least up to the point where the Mentors and Students concept is introduced – don't care about morale or legislation, but only about a way to stop the plague: bullying.

Moreover, I think that the existence of bullying as a phenomenon requires morale and law in general to be reconsidered.

The term "bullying"

As I was bullied a lot, I started to think about that phenomenon quite early. Back then, I didn't know about a term for that phenomenon, and most likely that phenomenon wasn't recognized at all by most of the people. Even today, you can still meet people who don't know about bullying at all. So I, for a certain period of time, called it "mental rape", but people might not be able to follow the logic behind. I thought of it as some kind of mental violence, subdividing the general term "violence" into mental, bodily and structural divisions. (Note that many people only see "violence" as a term for bodily violence, which makes it difficult to talk about what happened to you.) From this point of view, sexual violence would be some kind of intersection between mental as well as bodily violence, defined by "some action you are forced to do or is done to you against your will. So something done against your will – declared or not – is some kind of rape. So, if someone is bullied, and I think that nobody likes to be bullied, this person is – at least mentally – raped.

Today, because people might not be able to follow that logic, for me, bullying is best described as repeated hidden targeted terror, derived from what happened to me, and it might cover more – and more serious – things.

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Proposal: Mentors and students concept

The state requires us to attend school, but seems not to care much what happens there. Joseph Weizenbaum talks of schools as "minimum security prisons" in this respect.

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Instead of delegating students with problems to so-called "experts", psychologists and psychiatrists, we engage life-experienced people called "mentors" living "next door" and therefore do know about the special situation of a student. This also prevents students from being stigmatised by being sent to a psycho-"doctor". The relation between a student and his or her mentor is that of mutual trust.

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Discussing the concept

Question: Can a teacher also become mentor?

A former teacher can be mentor. A teacher in active duty can't, because he or she is occupied with his profession of teaching, leaving not enough time for being a mentor. Mentors are supposed to disburdon teachers and parents. Another reason is that mentors should come form outside the realm of social professions, if possible, being able to provide help to get "normal" jobs. There might be conflicting interests if a teacher in active duty is mentor, too.

Question: There are your parents, there are your teachers, why do you need a mentor at all?

Mentors are supposed to disburden teachers and parents. They are supposed to help students if problems show up they cannot tackle by their own or with the help of their parents. Bullying is such a problem. There might also be problems a student will not like to discuss with his parents, e.g. when the parents themselves cause problems.

Consider overly religious parents: They might require their child to live according to very restrict religious rules, bringing the student into an outsider position among his peers and in a conflict situation concerning his parents. They might not recognize bullying as this isn't recognized by the Bible, and in consequence, they might accuse their child asking for help or understanding *because of* the bullying of misbehaviour *causing* the bullying. So the victim is turned into a perpetrator, insulting the victim. This – in the long run – can cause families to fall apart.

Being religious means that your thinking has to follow certain predefined paths, e.g. the ten commandments or other religious notions of morality, which in turn may impede you tackling problems like bullying in an appropriate way. Compare that with a system of linear equations. Such a system might have infinitely many solutions, exactly one solution

or even none. Similarly, in a given religious or moralic system, certain problems might have no solution. – Ok, in this case, there’s absolution! But absolution requires having committed nasty deeds, and we want to avoid their victims, so even absolution is not a real way to go. And there still remains the legal outcome of that deeds, too.

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Not able to cope

Some people think that being ”not able to cope” with the nasty things done to you implies a ”weakness”, and that’s the reason why they get bullied. This, in turn, implies that one ”needs to be able to cope” to not get bullied or to have the bullying stopped.

This sounds as if you would say: It’s your fault, when you’re bullied, because you’re emotionally weak, implying that ”if you would be emotionally stronger, you wouldn’t get bullied.”

The victim is left alone with what’s been said, being annoyed by the unsaid implication.

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Emergency signals and the ”caring adult”

If Mentors and students concept would be implemented, mentors would be the first addressees for emergency signals, as they have background knowledge on the situation of their students, their social environment and are entitled to intervene appropriately.

Mentors are supposed to talk with the student’s parents. According to my experience, parents often don’t understand or aren’t interested in what’s going on. They live in their own world, have their own problems. The child might not be able to explain things to them, simply because he’s the child. Or parents – and teachers – only accept what they like, what they want to accept, always thinking they know everything better.

The ”not able to cope” argumentation and the deliberate selective ignorance of facts doesn’t encourage children to give emergency signals, hence e.g. bullying processes can go on without being recognized. This in the worst case can lead to school shootings.

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Thank’s for your interest!

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