



Bullying Behaviour Activity

20 minutes (15 minute discussion 5 minutes reporting back)

Your school will have its own anti bullying policy; however it can be helpful to discuss bullying and appearance as part of your anti-bullying action plan.

Choose one or two case studies below as basis for discussion in small groups to explore the bullying behaviour. Each group reports back on what they agreed should happen.

You will need: Pen, paper – either photocopy the questions and case studies below or display them on a white board.

Questions to consider:

- What is the bullying behaviour that is taking place?
- What could friends in the group do that would be unhelpful or make that situation worse?
- What could friends in the group do that would be helpful or make the situation better?

Case Study 1

Tanisha is 13 and is part of a WhatsApp group chat with ten people from her local school. Claire was in a house fire as a child and has burn scars on her face and body as a result the group chat is usually about music and dance and Claire considers everyone in the group to be her friend. One day someone shared a photo of a character from a horror film who has facial scars, along with the message, “Tanisha, you’re famous!” Tanisha sent a message to say that she didn’t think that the message was very funny. Three people from the group then replied to say that Tanisha should learn to take a joke and that she should not be so sensitive. When Tanisha went on to the group chat the next day, someone had changed the group chat image to the horror film character.

Case Study 2

Amina is 16 and wants to be a hairdresser. She has started posting video tutorials for different hairstyles on YouTube (she has a cleft lip and palate). She was pleased to see lots of positive comments about her hairstyling skills, but suddenly, she started to receive large numbers of negative comments about her appearance. One of these comments said that Amina “shouldn’t be allowed to show her face in public as it will give children nightmares”. Amina was really upset by these comments and told one of her friends how she was feeling. Her friend told her that she had overheard a girl in their year at school talking about her “disgusting face”. Amina looked at the girl’s Twitter feed and saw that she had tweeted a link to her videos and encouraged people to leave negative comments. She also saw that some other people in her year had shared this message and when she went to school the next day, heard people laughing about her in the corridor.

Case Study 3

Connor is 13 and has just moved to a new youth club, he has severe acne on his face. Connor has made some friends but notices that other young people from group stare at him. He also overheard some of his friends talking about how he “must never wash his face” and that he should “sort his face out”. One day, after a swimming session, Connor went into the changing rooms and found a bottle of face wash on top of his bag. He asked the other boys if they knew who had put it there, but the other boys all shrugged and said they didn’t know. Connor was sure that someone must know who did it and felt really upset that no-one would say. The next time Connor went to the youth club he saw a group pointing at him and giggling. One of the group then shouted over to Connor, “I hope you liked your present last week” and then laughed.

Case Study 4

Maddie is 11 and has a large birthmark on her face. Maddie sometimes feels self-conscious about her appearance. Maddie walks to and from school with two of her friends every day and notices that some people stare at her as she walks past. One day, Maddie and her friends walked past a group of older pupils from her school who were standing outside a shop. One of the group stepped in front of Maddie and asked her, “what’s wrong with your face?” Maddie tried to walk past, but the older pupils surrounded her to stop her from leaving. Maddie’s two friends shouted at the older pupils to leave Maddie alone, but they were pushed to the ground and told to “shut up”. The group of older pupils continued to make negative comments about Maddie’s birthmark and threatened to beat her up if she told anyone. Eventually, the shop owner opened the door and shouted at the group to “stop hanging around outside my shop”. The older pupils left, and Maddie made her friends promise not to tell anyone about what happened.