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### Breaking the Cycle: A Social-Emotional Approach to Bullying Prevention

Karen Cruz University of the Pacific

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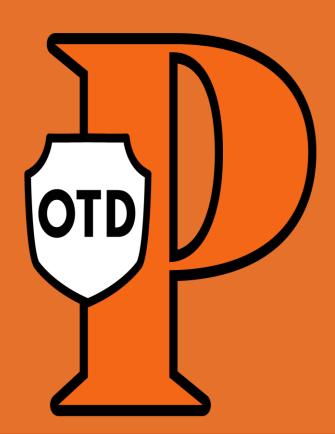
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## Breaking the Cycle: A Social-Emotional Approach to Bullying Prevention

### Awaken the Possible

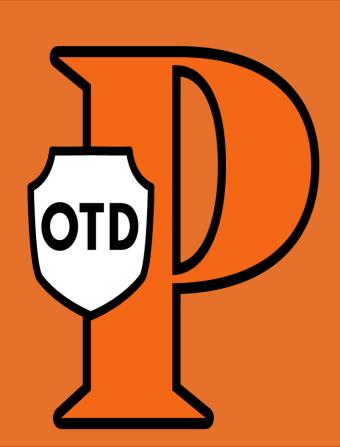
Student: Karen Cruz, OTD/S Site Mentor: Erin Schirm, Executive Director of Meristem Faculty Mentor: Natalie Perkins, PP-OTD, M.Ed., OTR/L, FIIE







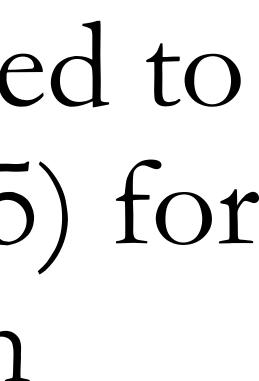
## Background



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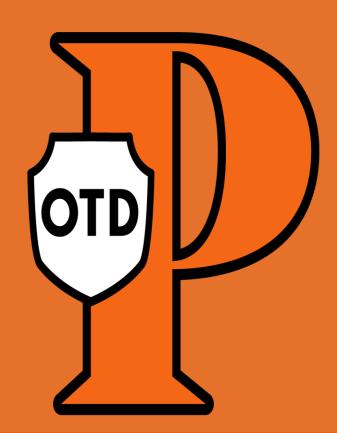
Meristem is a transitional program dedicated to preparing neurodiverse young adults (18-25) for a life of greater independence through experiential practice.

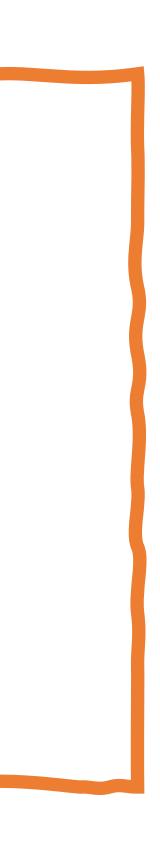




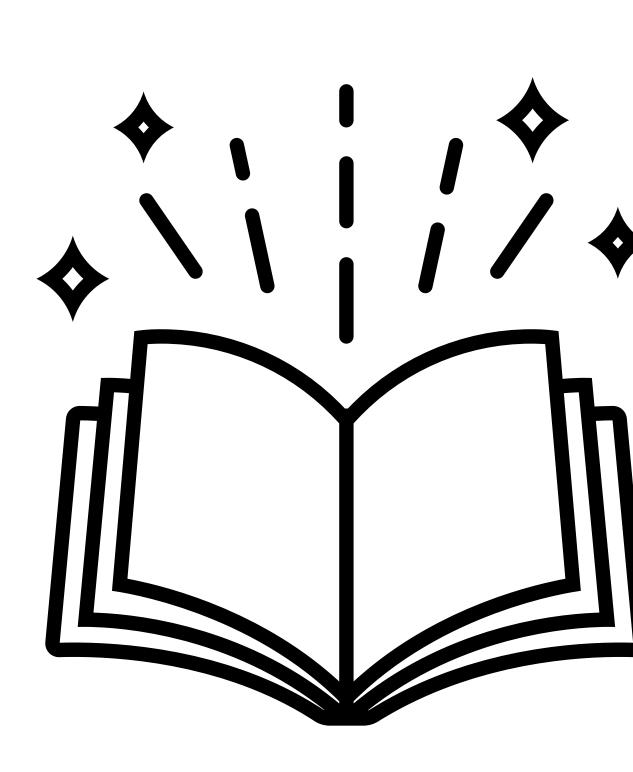
# 1 in 5 students report being bullied on school grounds

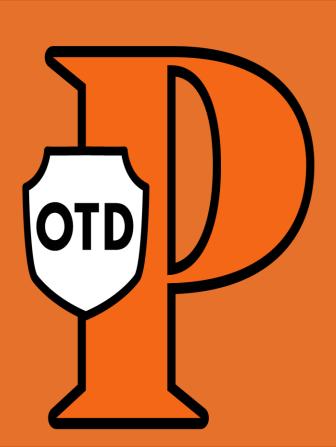
(Luciano & Savage, 2007; AOTA, 2013; Copeland, et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2017; Hymel et al., 2015; Volk et al., 2014; Center for Disease Control, 2021)



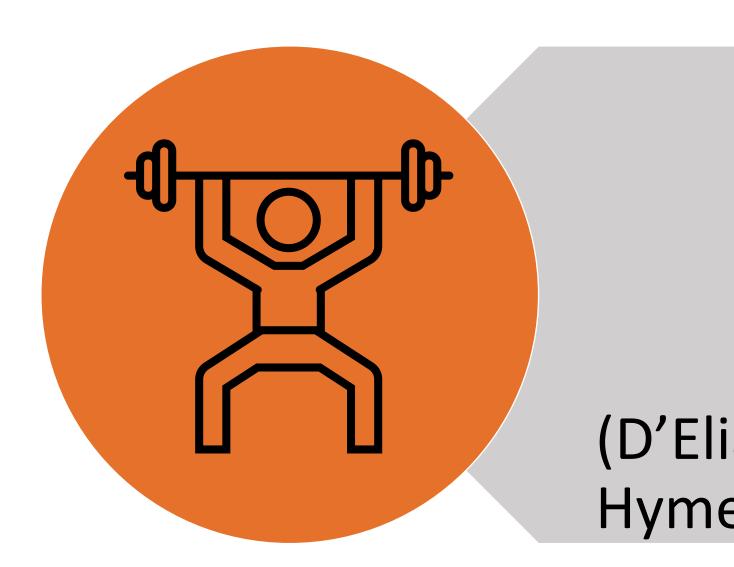


## Literature Review





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### Whole-school approach

(D'Elia & Brooks, 2017; Njelesani, 2020; Gaffney, 2021; Hymel, 2015; Jones & Augustine, 2015; Lee, 2015)

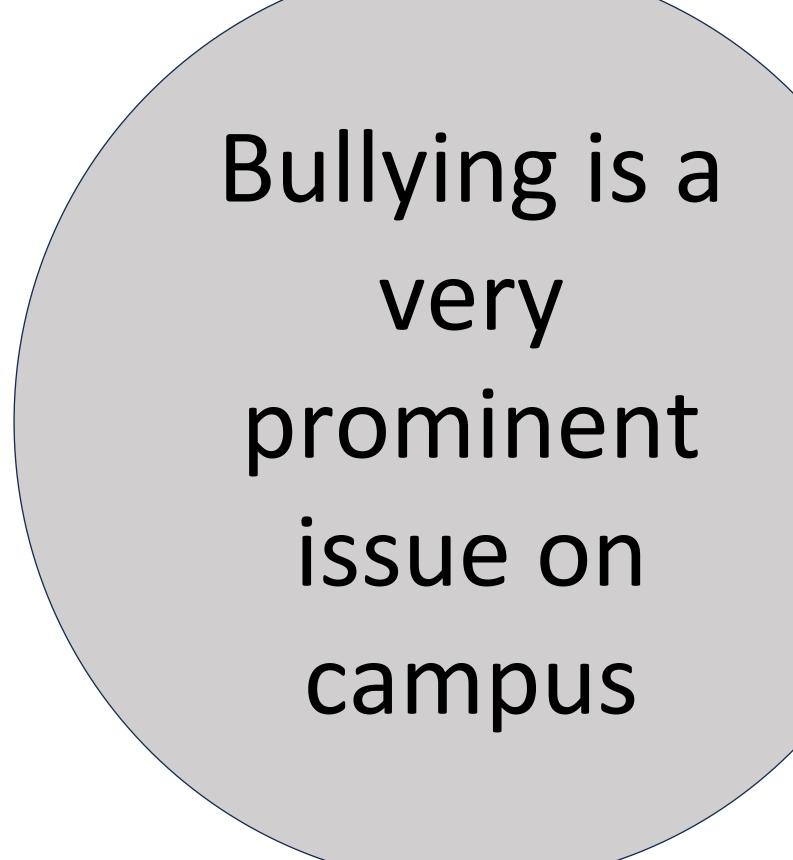
### Social-emotional learning

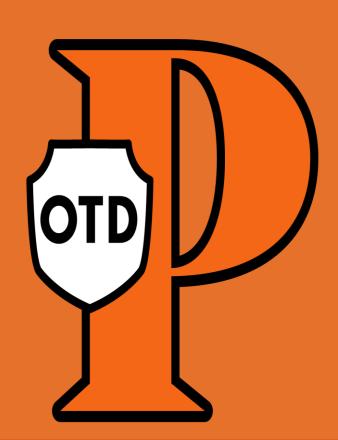
(Daley & McCarthy, 2021; Gourneau, 2012; Thomas et al., 2017; Fetsch et al., 2021; Hase et al., 2015; Jones & Augustine, 2015; Garcia-Vazquez et al., 2020)

### Strengths-based doing

(D'Elia & Brooks, 2017; Njelesani, 2020; Gaffney, 2021; Hymel, 2015; Jones & Augustine, 2015; Lee, 2015)







## Needs Assessment

The following themes were identified through a series of semi-structured interviews with staff members and students in the Meristem community:

> Students involved in bullying do not feel supported

Results from the literature review and needs assessment revealed there is a gap

### Staff and parents could benefit from more guidance

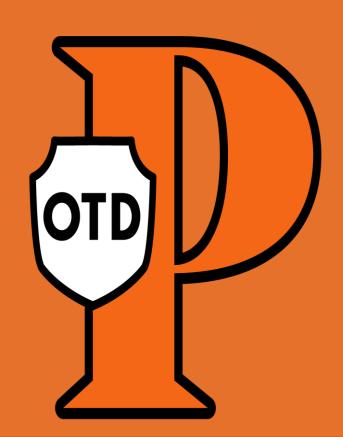
## in care and additional support is needed for communities affected by bullying.

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# learning principles, like:

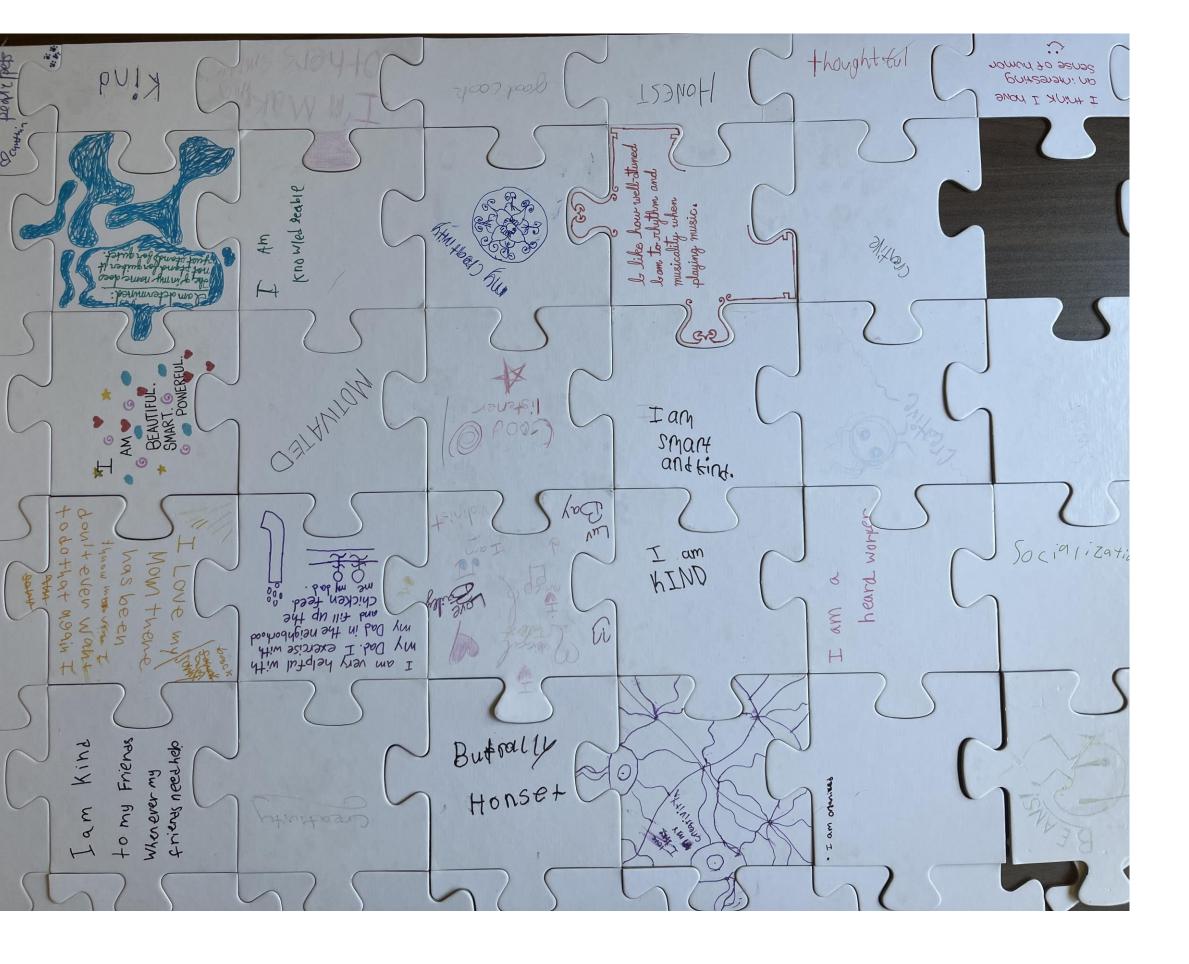
- Fostering a sense of belonging
- Nurturing empathy
- Enhancing coping skills
- Cultivating communication skills
- Building resiliency
- Empowering students



## Program Purpose

- The 4-week program aimed to reduce instances of bullying by incorporating social-emotional

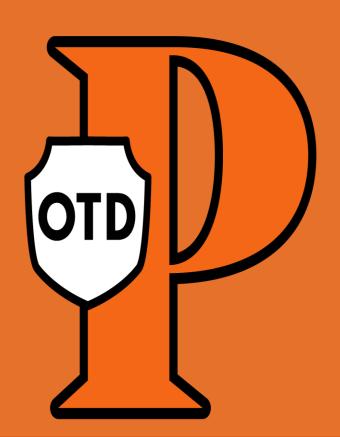






### **Biopsychosocial Model**

Interventions and prevention strategies for bullying can be designed to address biological, psychological, and social aspects of a person.



## Guiding Theory

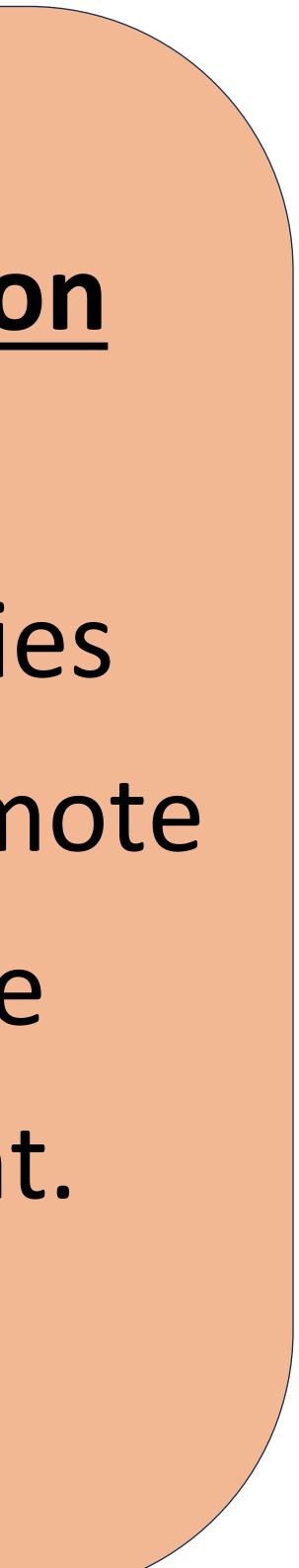
**Bullying prevention strategies** should be meaningful to promote new habit formation in the context of the environment.

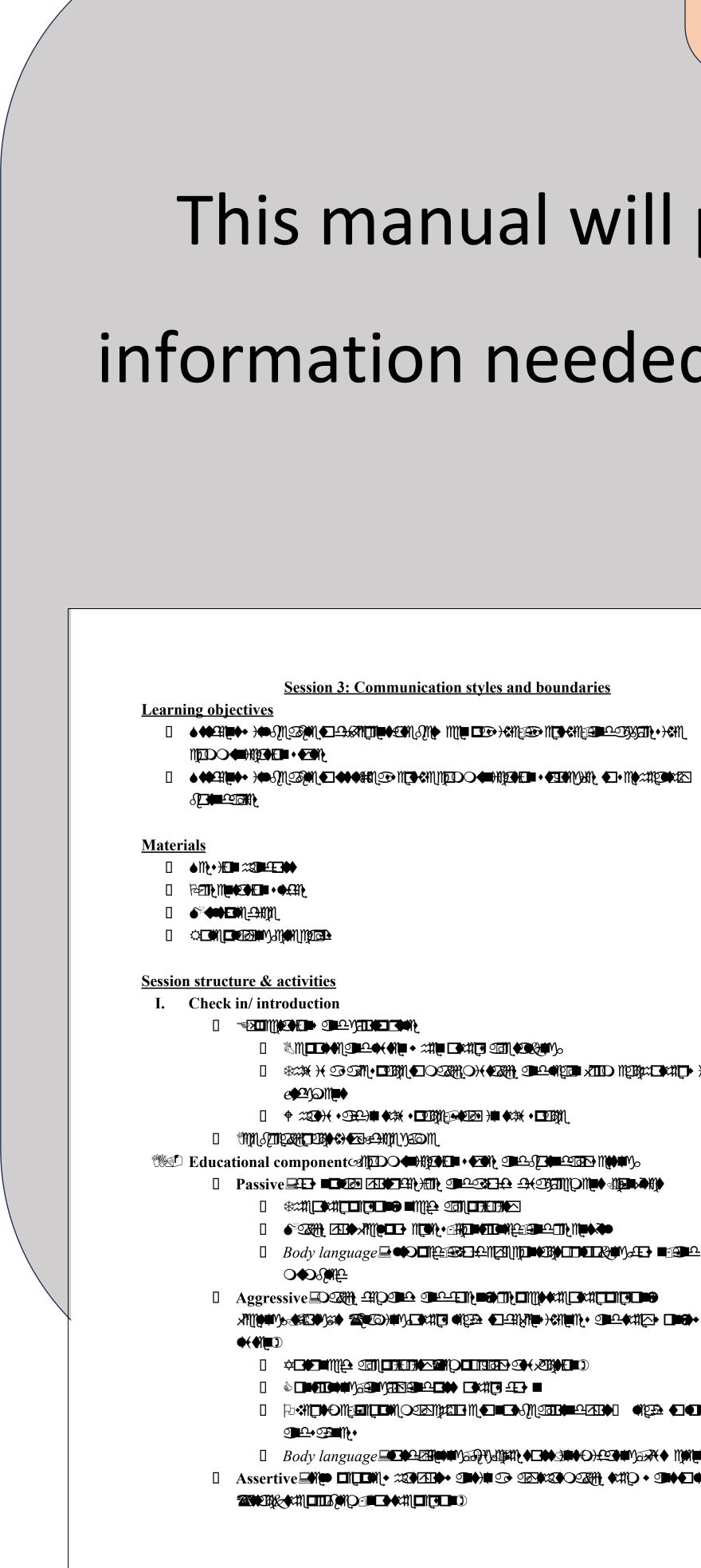
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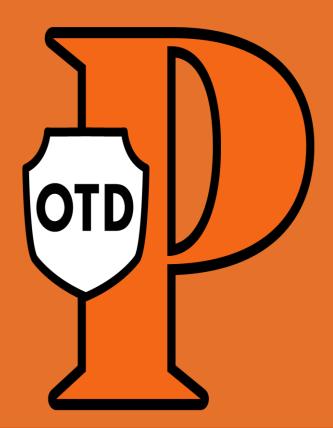


### Model of Human Occupation









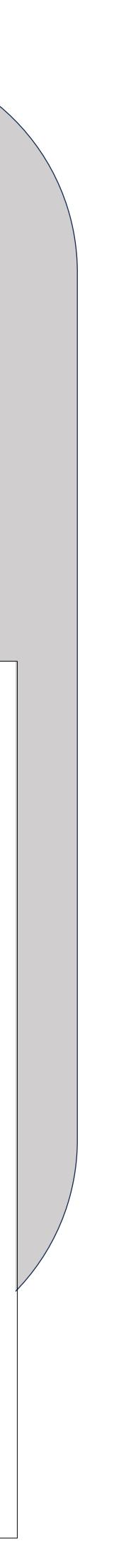
### **Outcomes:** Program Manual

### This manual will provide a detailed breakdown of the session structure and information needed to successfully implement the bullying prevention program.

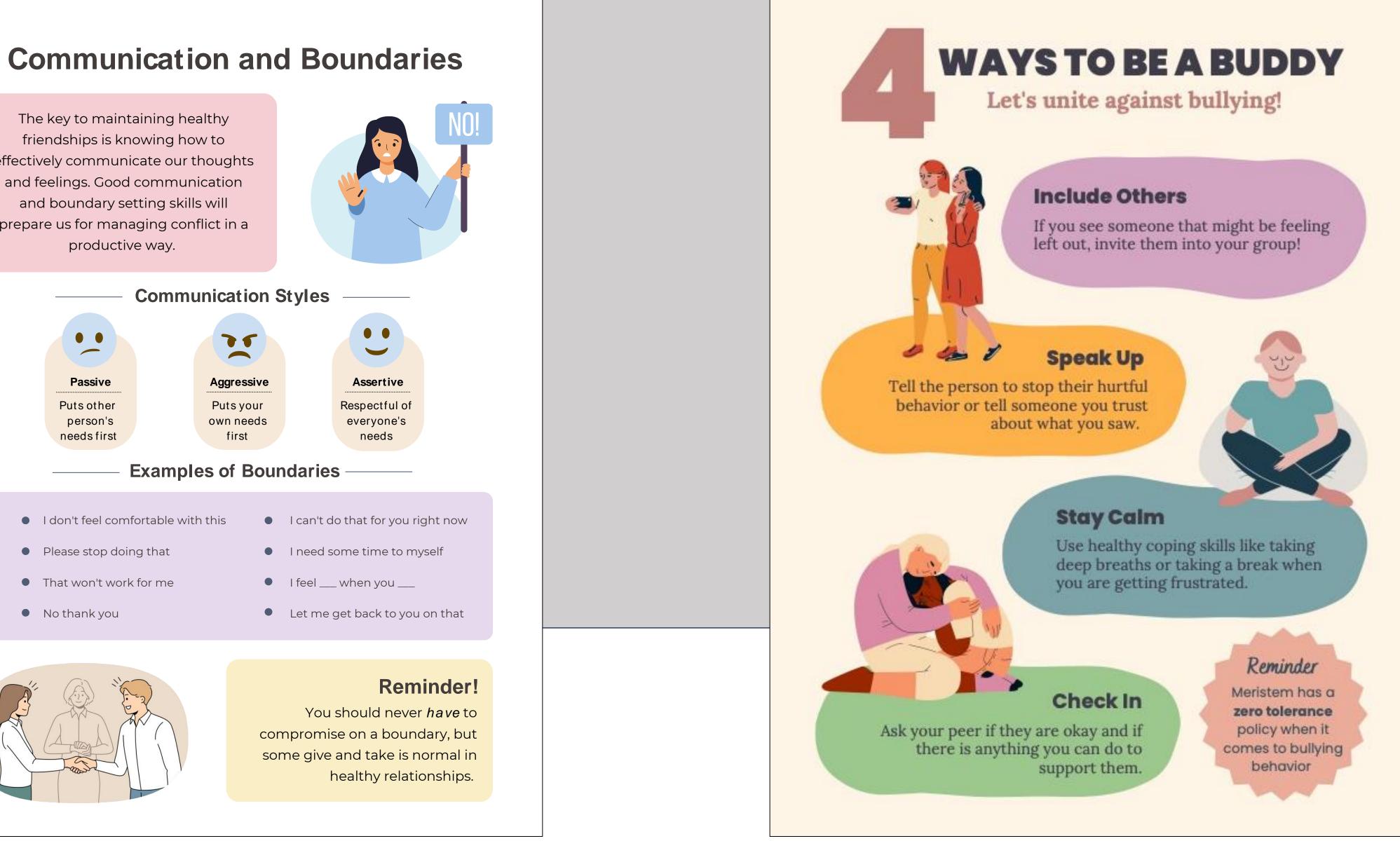
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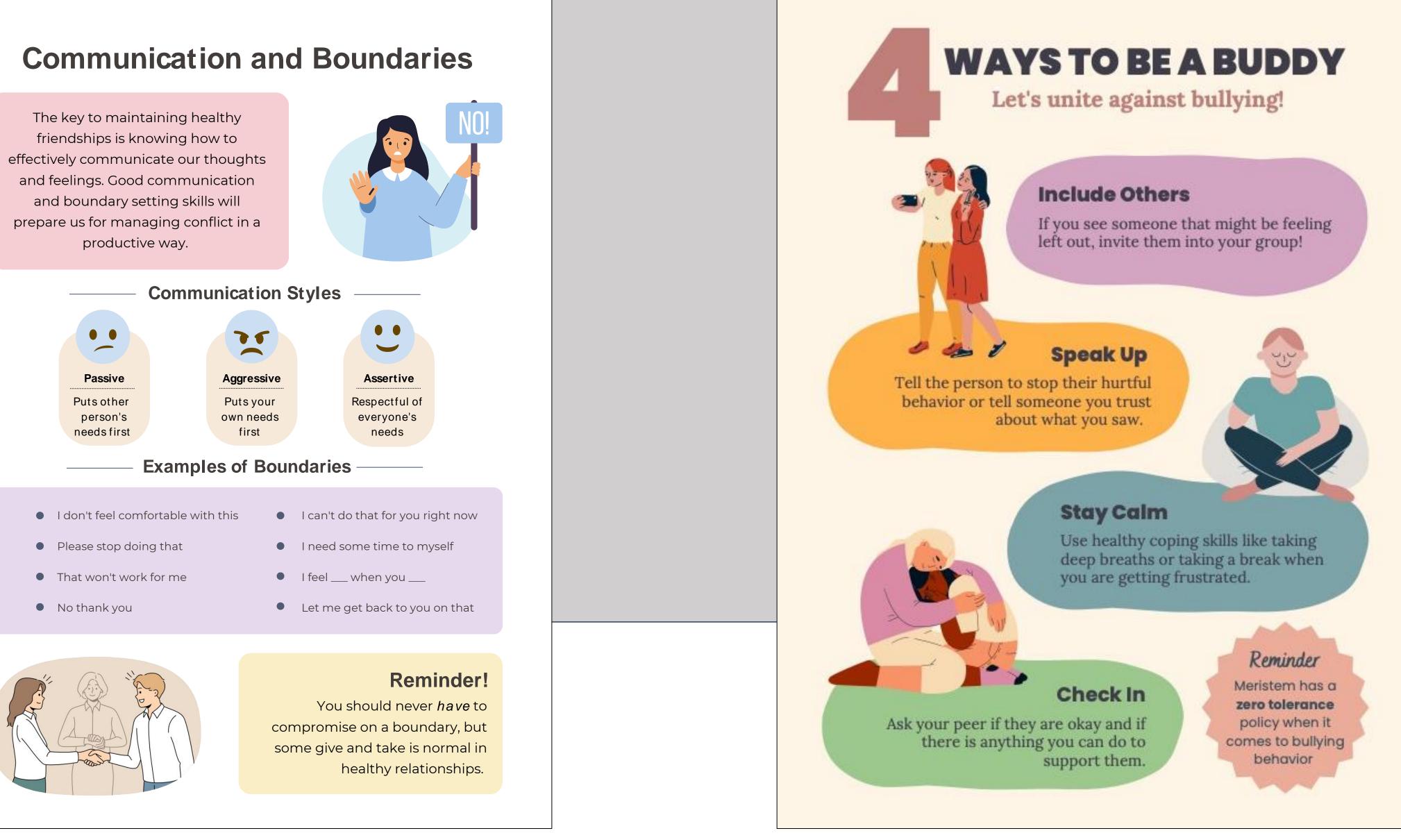
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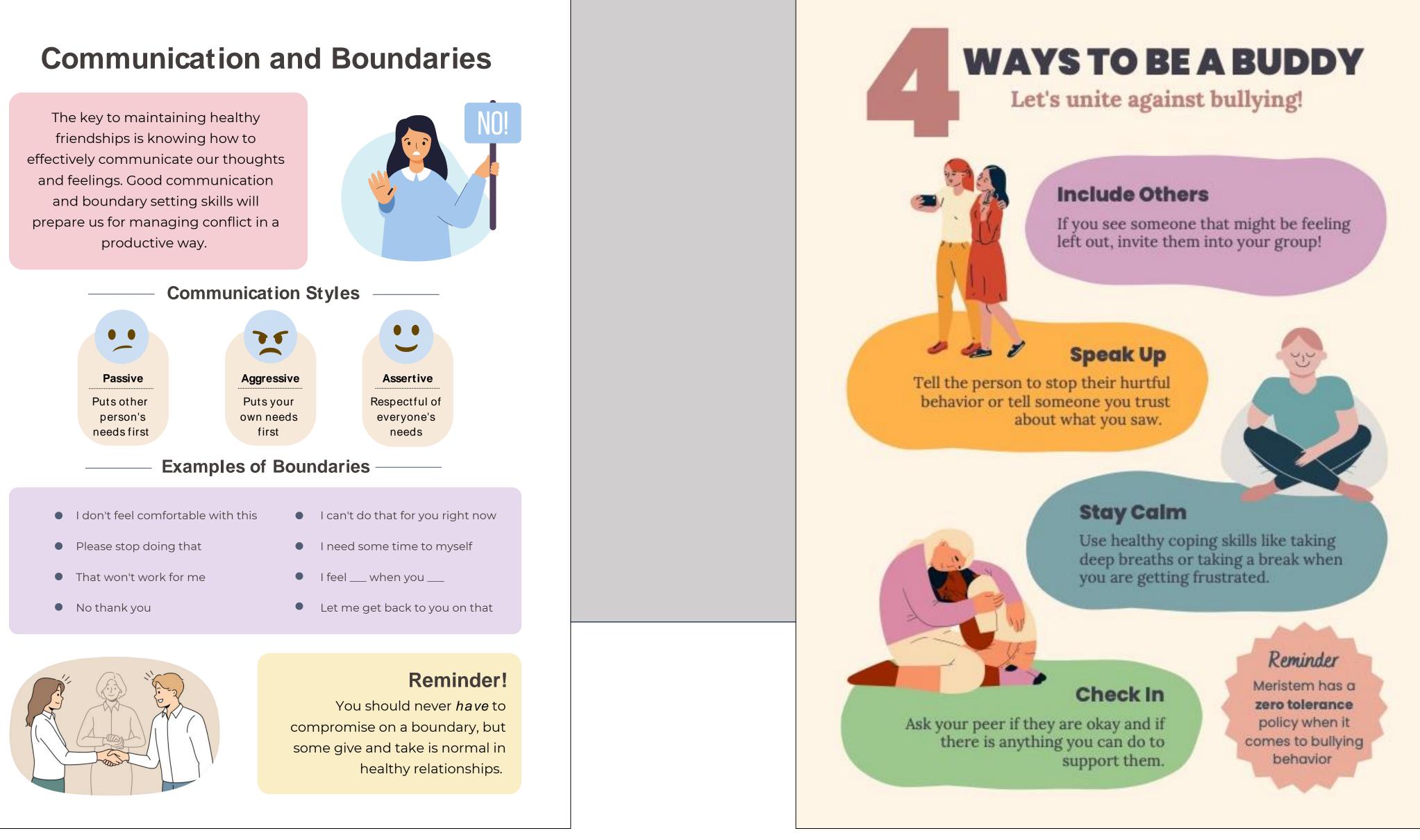
Image: Students will be broken up into small groups and given one die Each number corresponds to a certain question Image: Students will take turns responding until the time is up or all have had a chance to share **Role playing**– communication styles Image: Students will be broken up into groups of 3 and handed a cue card Each card will have a scenario and communication style 
 Image: Student will take turns responding to scenario with the communication
style listen on their card Example scenarios: Image: Your friend usually chooses the restaurant you go to eat, but you want to pick this time I Your friend has asked you to work one of their shifts for them, but you have a test this week that you need to study for. IV. Discussion □ Which communication method do you normally use and how does it feel? □ What are some long term effects of using assertive or passive communication? Can you recall a time that you had to set a boundary with someone? How did it go? What will you do differently next time?

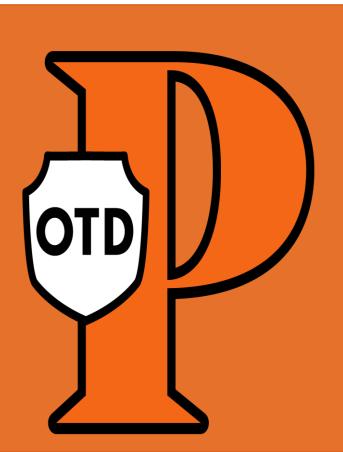


### The session-specific handouts will act as a guide for the group participants to support the structure of the session. The poster will have information for what to do in a bullying situation.









### Outcomes: Student Resources



### A newsletter will contain information for parents to identify signs of bullying in their children, strategies for reinforcing things learned during group, and resources for support.

### **Bullying Prevention Seminar**

CREATED BY KAREN CRUZ, OTD/S

The Meristem community came together for a 4-week seminar aimed at empowering students, nurturing empathy, and cultivating a strong sense of community to reduce bullying instances on campus. Through role play and games, we practiced communication skills, boundary setting, and learned about various coping strategies to help better manage aggression and anxiety.



### Definition

To be considered bully

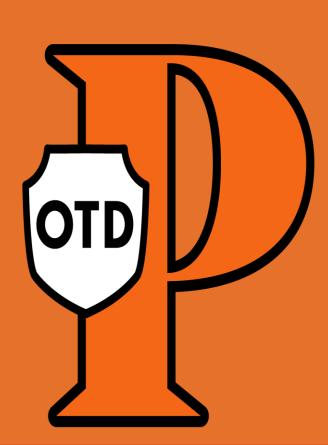
- Intentional harm Repeated over time
- Power imbalance

### Why it matters

Bullying can have major effects on a person's health & wellbeing, which makes it challenging to engage in daily activities.

- **Biological**: changes in eating patterns, disruptions in sleep patterns, upset stomach, and stress headaches.
- **Psychological**: depression, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating on assignments or activities.
- **Social**: feelings of inadequacy and isolation, lack of interest in engaging with peers, and difficulty adjusting to new situations.

This impact can have long term effects that can lead to developing deep-rooted mental health problems, increased substance use, and potentially reinforce the cycle of abuse with future relationships





### Outcomes: Parent Resource



### Why it happens

Bullying is a learned behavior, and there are many reasons why a person may bully others. They may live in a household where people "bully" one another to get their way or resolve conflict, or "act out" to get attention if they feel unseen. This behavior may have worked in the past to get their needs met, so now they don't know how else to communicate their needs

Everyone deserves an opportunity to learn and change. Bullying behavior indicates that someone needs more support in learning how to manage their aggression and effectively communicating their needs. The journey to adopting more positive behavior takes time. Once we understand the underlying motivations behind bullying behavior, we can initiate the healing and growth process.

### Warning Signs

### **Being Bullied**

- Reluctant to go to school, complaining repeatedly of headaches or stomach pains.
- Nightmares, difficulty sleeping, and
- changes in appetite • Loses interest in things they once enjoyed doing or grade start to
- suffer • Begins to socially isolate or avoid
- social gatherings

If your child exhibits any of these signs, engage in conversations with both your child and the school personnel to gain further insight into the situation and determine the most suitable approach to address it.



- intimidate others • Brags about actual or imagined superiority over others
- Suddenly increasingly hot-tempered, impulsive, and has low frustration tolerance.
- Has difficulty conforming to rules and tolerating adversities.

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### How to approach someone if you suspect bullying

It is difficult to not over-react if our loved one is involved in a bullying dynamic, but it's important to approach them with a calm and rational mindset. People who are involved in bullying often have difficulty opening up about it. Whether our loved one is being bullied or is bullying others, it's important to show that we can support them in finding the appropriate help. Below are some example phrases to get your loved one talking about bullying:

Who did you sit with at lunch today?

For more information

please visit:

StompOutBullying.org

StopBullying.gov

UNICEF.org/end-violence

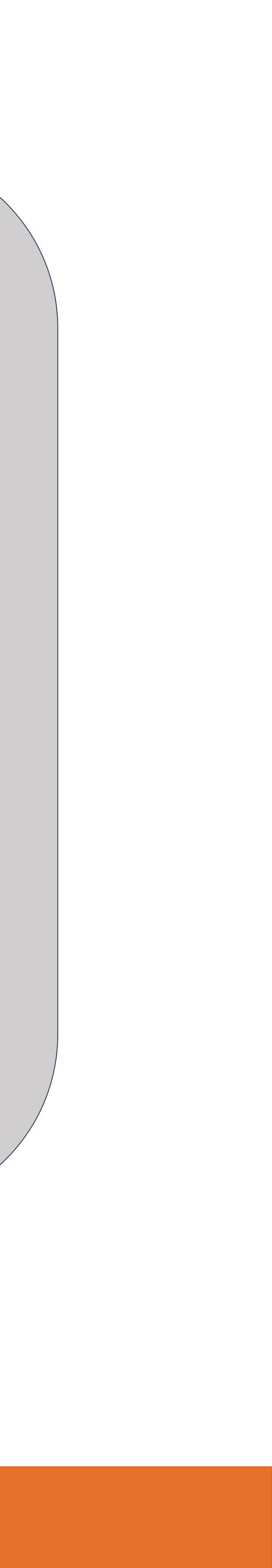
### 've noticed you've been wanting to be alone more than usual. Is there anything going on at school?

Is anyone at school making you feel uncomfortable?

- WHAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME
- Develop a strong value system in your home. Send a clear message that bullying behavior is completely unacceptable.
- Talk to your student regularly. Encourage them to share problems with you and reassure them that it is not tattling. Let them know if they see someone being hurt in any way or experience it themselves, they should come to you immediately.
- Model tolerance and compassion. Students take their emotional cues from role models in their lives. Stress the importance of treating all people with kindness, compassion and respect.
- Focus on their talents and strengths. This can promote confidence and increase the likelihood that they can
- successfully assert themselves during conflict. • Teach your student positive conflict resolution. Settle your own conflicts peaceably, and demonstrate how to manage anger without violence.

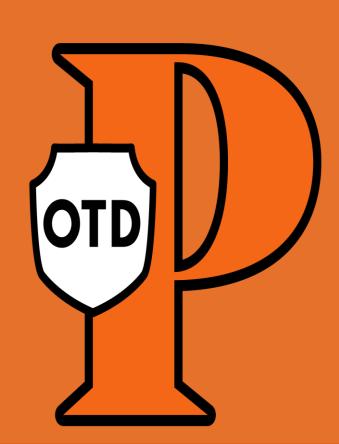
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- Staff reported an increase in compassion toward students who bully others
- Staff observed students utilizing the newly learned skills during social conflicts
- Majority of students reported an increase in empathy, found participation in the program valuable, and would recommend this program to others

## Staff reported a decrease in instances of bullying on campus



## Impact

Satisfaction surveys and semi-structured interviews revealed that:



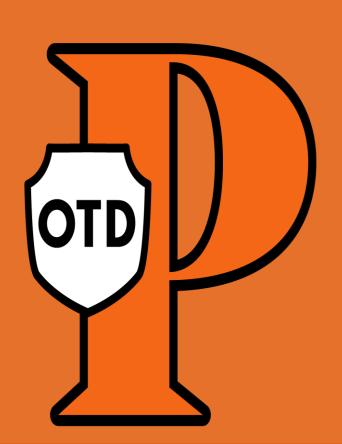
Suggestions for future implementation:

More sessions for shorter time

• Evaluate efficacy of parent resources

In-service targeted to staff members

and caregivers



## Discussion

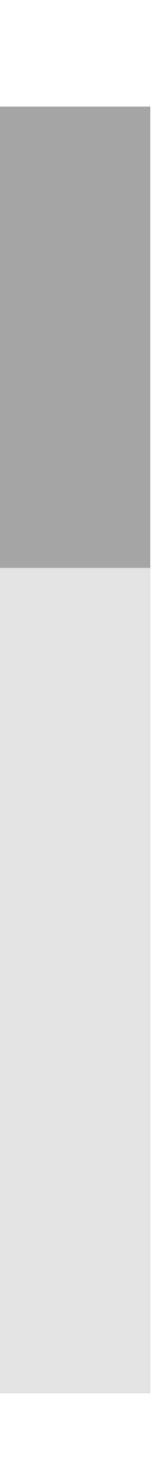
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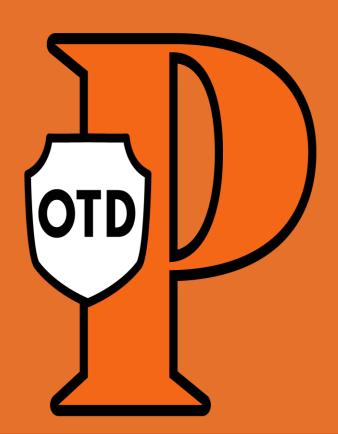


### Implications for the profession:

- •Emerging practice area
- Holistic and comprehensive
- Client and family centered







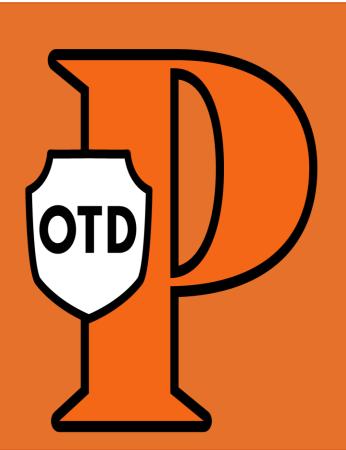


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