

### **Step 3 – explain the problem**

The facilitator starts by telling the group that he/she has a problem – he/she is worried about “John” who is having a very hard time at the moment. He/she recounts the story of the victim’s unhappiness and uses the piece of writing or picture to emphasise their distress. At no time does he/she discuss the details of the incidents or allocate blame to the group.

### **Step 4 – share responsibility**

When the account is finished, the listeners may look downcast or uncomfortable and be uncertain about the reason for the meeting. Some may be anxious about possible punishment. The facilitator makes a change of mood here by stating explicitly that:

- No-one is in trouble or going to be punished.
- There is a joint responsibility to help John to be happy and safe.
- The group has been convened to help solve the problem.

### **Step 5 – asking the group members for their ideas**

Group members are usually genuinely moved by the account of John’s distress and relieved that they are not in trouble. No-one has been pushed into a defensive corner by accusations and the power of the group has shifted from the “bully leader” to the group as a whole, whose members withdraw consent for the behaviour to continue.

Each member of the group is then encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier. These ideas are stated in the “I” language of intention. “I will play with him at break.” “I will ask him to sit with me at lunch.” Ideas are owned by the group members and not imposed by the facilitator. He/she makes positive responses but does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

### **Step 6 – leave it up to them**

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. No written record is made – it is left as a matter of trust. She thanks them, expresses confidence in a positive outcome and arranges to meet with them again to see how things are going.

### **Step 7 – meet them again**

About a week later, the facilitator discusses with each student, including the victim, how things have been going. This allows the teacher to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process.

These meetings are with one group member at a time so that each can give a statement about his/her contribution without creating a competitive atmosphere. It does not matter if everyone has not kept to his/her intention, as long as the bullying has stopped. The victim does not have to become the most popular person in school, just to be safe and happy.