

# Talking About Bullying

People with a learning  
difficulty creatively address  
the issue of bullying in  
our community

Talking About Bullying  
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Talking About Bullying group members are -  
Ian, Katalin, Michael, Nevile, Paul and Teresa

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2000

Other resources available from Community Living Program:  
Lose the Stress-You Can Relax: Relaxation for your mind and body (video and CD format)  
Education Manual 2nd Edition  
Standing Proud Posters  
Talking About Schools: people with a learning difficulty share their experiences of being bullied at school.

“Talking About Bullying is a great group! It has helped me a lot to be part of it. I hope that we can continue to do presentations, in schools, workplaces and the community—and help people understand how bad bullying is.”

*Teresa*

“TAB means a lot to me. I find it really enjoying presenting and sharing information and personal stories with others. I hope to do many more! We need more people to get the message that bullying is not acceptable.”

*Ian*

“I hope people realise just how brave the members of TAB are by getting up and speaking out about bullying, especially in sharing their own personal stories. People need to learn to listen to each other. This is really important when it comes to dealing with bullying—to know when to listen, and when someone is asking for help. I hope people hear the TAB group’s message, and importantly, that people grasp the vital part about taking action.”

*Richard*

## Conclusions

The Talking About Bullying group hope you have enjoyed this booklet, and that it is a useful resource for the community towards stopping bullying. To conclude each group member would like to share a few words.

“I hope people understand what happens out in the community—that some people do get bullied all of the time. Also that if there is anyone out there who is getting bullied I hope they know that they are not alone, and that there is help. It makes a difference if you know that there can be an end to the bullying, that it can stop! With some support I made the bullying in my life stop. If I can do it, so can someone else!”

*Michael*

“My hopes are that when people see our presentation, or read our booklet, they realise how serious bullying really is. I hope people understand how hard it is for someone like me to be able to speak up and talk to someone else about the bullying that has happened to me. Bullying is a really hard thing to deal with, and it happens at school, at work and even from ‘friends’. I hope we help stop bullying for some people who come in contact with us, through our presentation or our resources.”

*Paul*

**30 Talking About Bullying**

## Table of Contents

Talking About Bullying Mission Statement	4
About this booklet	5
Teresa’s Story	7
Community Living Program	8
Talking About Bullying	10
Paul’s Story	13
The Story So Far...	14
Michael’s Story	18
Learning Difficulty and Bullying	20
What Others Have Said About TAB	24
Ian’s Story	27
TAB Frameworks on Bullying	28
Conclusions	30

## Mission Statement

'Talking About Bullying' (TAB) is a group of people working together with the support of the Community Living Program (CLP). The group educates the community about bullying and the effects bullying has on people. This includes physical, verbal, and emotional bullying.

The Talking About Bullying group works hard to achieve this by promoting awareness within the community about bullying and what we can do to stop it. Members of the Talking About Bullying group have experienced bullying themselves. This gives them the passion to work towards stopping bullying from happening.

We need to STOP bullying from happening at schools and in the community.

# Bullying No No No!

## How to stop bullying

- B** Be brave
- U** Understand each other
- L** Listen
- L** Learn to tell someone
- Y** You deserve respect



## Frameworks about bullying

With the help of participants at their recent story day, the TAB group has put together 2 frameworks to help them remember and communicate their understanding of bullying...

### How bullying makes you feel

- B** Bad inside
- U** Upset and unsure
- L** Lonely
- L** Like I want to explode
- Y** Why us?

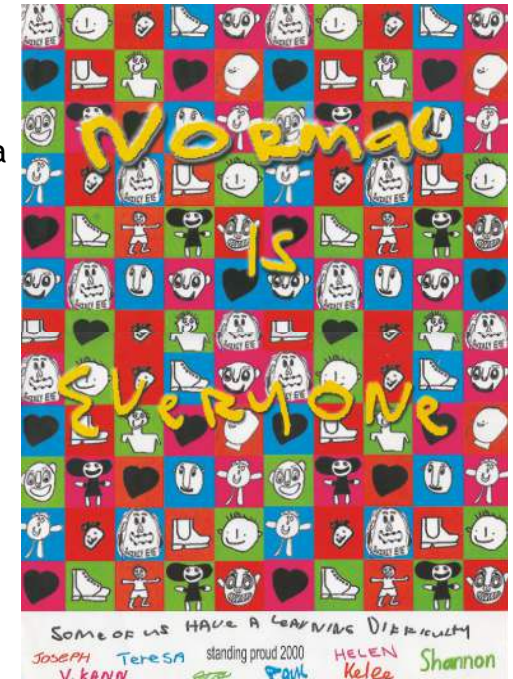


## About this booklet

The Talking About Bullying (TAB) group have developed this booklet with the support of the Community Living Program, and with the assistance of a grant from the Danks Foundation. CLP works with people who have a learning difficulty\*/ intellectual disability who live on the inner north side of Brisbane.

This booklet was produced to promote the activities of the TAB group, and to help get their message out into the community about the significant impact of bullying on those who experience it. The booklet contains a brief analysis of bullying and strategies on how to help stop bullying. It also contains information on some people's experiences of living with a learning difficulty.

The TAB group are available to do their presentation on bullying at schools (primary and secondary), workplaces, for community groups and conferences - in fact anywhere that people are interested in the issue of bullying.



If you are interested in the TAB group coming out to speak at your school, workplace, or group\*, then please contact Richard Warner or Toni Meyer at CLP (please see contact details at the beginning of this booklet).

You can find out more about TAB on their webpage ([www.clpadmin@tpg.com.au](mailto:www.clpadmin@tpg.com.au)). The group have also produced another resource: 'Talking About Schools: people with a learning difficulty share their experiences of being bullied at school'. This is also available through CLP.

\*People who come into CLP prefer the term 'learning difficulty' to intellectual disability, and this term will be used through out this booklet.

\*The TAB group charge a small fee for their presentation to cover expenses. Please discuss this with Toni or Richard when you ring.

## Ian's story



When I first came to TAB I found it very interesting. I began to realise that the bullying that happened to me actually wasn't my fault and that I didn't start it.

I have now realised that it was the bully's fault.

Going out and doing presentations has really inspired me. I feel very pleased with myself to be going out and talking to people about how bullying is not acceptable.

It does make me sad to hear some of the stories of bullying that people share with us when we are presenting. At the end of each presentation it has been good to know how other people in the audience are feeling about being bullied.

Dear Talking About Bullying team,  
Many thanks for your excellent presentation at the Asia Pacific Wataboshi Music Festival Brisbane 2003. You have created a powerful tool to present on the internet and in a workshop situation. The ability to share your personal experiences, followed by positive outcomes and solutions is growing from strength to strength. You are an inspiration and a strong role model for all who experience bullying—not just young people with a disability. It is remarkable that you have focused on this work for so many years now! Congratulations and best wishes for wherever you take it from here.

*Ludmilla Doneman*  
*Festival Director*

My name is Neville, and I work as a volunteer with the TAB group. Like many people, I thought bullying was a part of growing up, toughening one up for life's ups and downs. Since my involvement with TAB, I have come to realise the trauma this can cause, and also the effect on an individual's confidence to tackle the day to day demands of life.

I urge everyone to make an effort, and get involved where bullying is happening. Inform the bullies the effect their actions are having, and hopefully they will see the light. If we all make a contribution, I am sure we can make a difference in stamping out this unacceptable culture in our communities. Bullying No No No!

*Neville*  
**26 Talking About Bullying**

## Teresa's Story



School, it was such a shame. I couldn't keep up with normal schooling. I used to get made fun of.

After that I had to go into special education. I wanted to stay in normal school. I am normal, just a slow learner! I couldn't keep up. It's a shame some people don't understand and don't accept the way some people are.

I would get made fun of sometimes in the playground. I would get called names like spastic. It made me cry, but I used to try and ignore it as well and turn the other cheek. I also stayed away from people that upset me.

I'd like to let people know that I'm a good person and I'm capable of doing the best that I can. And I can look after myself by staying around people that make me happy. I leave behind those who make me unhappy because I want to move on with my life.

**Talking About Bullying 7**

# Community Living Program

Guiding practice at CLP is the fundamental understanding that mutual, healthy and freely given relationships are key to a person's overall health and wellbeing. CLP seeks to work alongside others towards creating a local community that genuinely accepts and values people who have a learning difficulty, and one that provides opportunities for meaningful participation within a safe and respectful context.

The agency's framework highlights 5 main areas in which the individual support, group work, project work, research and policy development occur across:

- ▲ Resources
- ▲ Personal meaning and meaningful use of time
- ▲ Physical and psychological well-being
- ▲ Safety and security
- ▲ Connectedness

Practice aims to be developmental and holistic in approach, and working with constituent's families, friends and significant others, as well as with other community members, is a central process in the work.

Volunteers play an important and valued role in the work done at CLP, and there is a diverse range of areas in which volunteers can participate in the program. If you are interested in finding out about the volunteer program, please contact Victoria at CLP.

## 8 Talking About Bullying

because one is different, and to do something to prevent it from happening to others. It therefore moves beyond therapy into social action and awareness raising. CLP is to be commended for supporting this initiative and showing the rest of the disability community a way out of the current morass of tokenism and paternalism.

*Colin Moore*  
*Social Worker*  
*Disability Services Queensland*

Talking About Bullying are a pro-active group who are interested in sharing ways to stop bullying from happening to school students, employees, and people in the community. The members have a lot of courage and determination to stop bullying from happening to themselves and others. I feel that they share a powerful message that they have triumphed through difficult circumstances and have come out learning more ways to stop the cycle of bullying happening to themselves and to people who may be a bit 'different'.

The TAB group have a very effective way of getting their message across via a presentation where they share their own personal stories as well as strategies to stop bullying. Sharing their own experiences brings the presentation to a more personal level where the people listening can relate to the stories being told.

*Lorelle Smith*  
*Former Tab member*

## Talking About Bullying 25



# What Others Have Said About TAB

The responses to the group's presentations have been overwhelmingly positive, from children in 'mainstream' and 'special' education units, through to university students and workplace employees. Here is some of the feedback...

The group is doing important and inspiring work in educating the community regarding this issue, and they deserve a wider audience. This is the second year I have invited the Talking About Bullying group back to speak at UQ as the reception and student feedback to their presentation the first year was so positive. Thanks again for your contribution this semester; it has certainly captured the student's interest.

*Jayne Keough  
School of Education  
University of Queensland*

"Talking About Bullying is about empowering people with disabilities to change their lives in a dynamic and positive way. Many organisations claim to be about empowerment but, unfortunately, merely talk the talk and practice forms of tokenism. The Talking About Bullying group enables its members both to work through the shame and humiliation of being singled out for bullying

Many CLP constituents have experienced exploitation, bullying and abuse at some stage in their lives, and for some people these are issues that have been experienced and re-experienced many times. CLP has developed proactive policies outlining the agency's stance on these issues. Constituents are encouraged and supported to speak out about any forms of exploitation, abuse or bullying which may be occurring in their lives.

CLP admires the courage and ongoing commitment displayed by the members of TAB, and values the partnership they have with CLP. The group has achieved a great deal, and the work they do makes a genuine difference—not only for the group members, but for the audiences who respond so positively to the group's presentation.

CLP looks forward to continuing its support of TAB in the future.

**Community Living Program is a service which works developmentally with people with a learning/intellectual disability to enable them to achieve their maximum potential as members of society.**

*(CLP Mission Statement)*

# Talking About Bullying



Talking About Bullying (top left to bottom right): Toni, Nevile, Ian, Paul, Richard, Theresa (social work student), Teresa and Michael (Katalin not pictured).

There is currently 6 members of TAB. One of the group's members, Nevile, a volunteer who has been part of TAB for about a year now, comes along to the group's fortnightly meetings, and supports the group in its endeavours. Ian, Paul and Katalin have been with TAB right since its beginnings in 1997. Teresa and Michael are long-standing members and have been with the group for many years now. TAB has developed a strong identity, and members support and encourage each other.

As far as we know, TAB is the only self-advocacy group for people with a learning difficulty in Queensland.

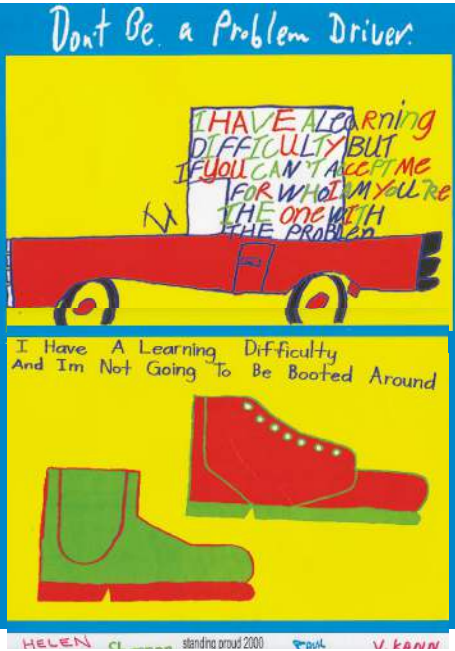
## 10 Talking About Bullying

Being part of TAB has had a positive impact upon all members in numerous ways. Sharing personal stories with others who have been through similar experiences in a group context enables opportunities for people to feel less isolated. The safety of the TAB group has assisted members to let go of some of the responsibility and self-blame they had taken upon themselves, and allowed them to externalise their personal and painful experiences and begin to heal.

Producing resources to educate the community and publicly speaking out the message that bullying is not acceptable has proven to be highly rewarding for TAB members. Their presentation has evolved and become more professional over time, yet it has not lost its uniqueness and its ability to reach people on a deeply human level.

Bullying is a significant problem in the community, and not just within the education system. Awareness is growing around the issue of bullying, and responses to

combat bullying are in place in many schools and workplaces. Yet in spite of this growing awareness and increase in responses, recent research informs us that 1 in 6 school students will experience significant bullying at school. Bullying in the workplace also remains a reality for many employees, especially people from non-English speaking backgrounds, young people and those who do not 'fit the norm'.



As a general rule, bullies will target those whom they believe to be different (due to race, culture, class, sexuality, disability and so on), and also those who appear to be more vulnerable than themselves. Bullying can be verbal (such as name calling and teasing), physical (such as hitting and pushing), and emotional (such as excluding someone from joining in).

## 22 Talking About Bullying

Toni and Richard, community workers from CLP, also work with the group. This working relationship is understood as a partnership between CLP and TAB.

Supporting the group to contact schools and other possible places for them to present at, as well working together with them to develop their presentation, are some examples of the ways that TAB and CLP work together.

**Helping people is a good thing. It's amazing running our own group. We try and work together. We are independent, not relying on other people to do it for us and that is a good thing! Teresa**

Members of the TAB group, while being experts on their own lives and of the bullying they have personally experienced, do not claim to be experts on bullying overall. What they offer is a personalised and unique perspective on the issue of bullying, and of the experience of living with a learning difficulty.

The TAB group have developed their own frameworks on bullying, describing how it makes people feel, and some strategies to stop it if it is happening to you. These frameworks are based on people's experiences of bullying, and were developed at a Story Day the group held in the local community in 2004.

TAB is open to new people joining the group. New members need to have an interest in bullying, and a desire and commitment to work with the group in their endeavours to stop bullying! Membership is open to

## Talking About Bullying 11

people with and without a learning difficulty. If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a member please contact Richard or Toni at CLP.

disability is of minor consequence on those who live with it.

“Gentle in effect” is the Oxford Dictionary’s definition of the word mild. Recent literature, alongside the practice wisdom of those who work with people who have a ‘mild intellectual disability’, clearly demonstrates that this group of people’s experiences are anything but ‘gentle in effect’. Highly over-represented across most of the measures of deprivation, exploitation and abuse, these people’s lives are often characterised by exclusion and isolation, poor physical and mental health, unemployment, poverty and homelessness. Many are victims of physical and sexual violence (often repeatedly), and they are over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of crime (O’Connor, 2000). Contact with the Department of Child Safety is also high— as children who, as wards of the State, are brought up in foster families, and as parents themselves, whose children are often placed into the care of the State.

Many people who live with a learning difficulty put considerable effort into hiding their disability from others. The basic need to be understood as ‘normal’, and therefore accepted and included, is a need often not actualised.

**People can take advantage of people with disabilities; it’s not right, and it’s not fair. People just walk all over you like you’re not there.**

*Michael*

# Learning Difficulty and Bullying

- ▲ I've got a disability and it takes me longer to work things out. But just because it takes me longer doesn't mean I can't do it!  
(It doesn't mean I can't do it! 1994)
- ▲ I have a learning disability, which means I have had to have a lot of strength to get by day by day.  
(Standing Proud Workshops, 1999)
- ▲ [I'm] someone who takes a while to learn things.  
(Forgotten People, 1994)

Learning difficulty is most commonly known as mild intellectual disability. Identified by means of standardised IQ testing, people are classified as having either a mild, moderate, severe or profound disability depending upon their rating. People who are determined as having a mild intellectual disability score 50/55-70 on the IQ test.

"IQ categories tell us little about the person, their abilities and their difficulties" (O'Connor, 2000), yet they remain a prominent discourse for defining and understanding this disability. The term 'mild intellectual disability' in itself is highly misleading, inviting people to mistakenly believe that a disability that is labelled as 'mild' means the impact of this

# Paul's Story



I think the group has meant a lot to me because I have been bullied in the past and it has been tough.

It's something that stays in the back of your mind forever really.

But you've got to do something to stop it.

I think getting the message out in the community is really important.

What I think can make it easier for people is -

- ▲ To make a decision to do something about it;
- ▲ To have someone to talk to;
- ▲ And to make a plan of action.

It's important that we all take bullying seriously and not sweep it under the carpet.

## The story so far...



*'Talking About Schools' Group with their Disability Access Week Award 2000. Clockwise from bottom right: Kelee, Joe, Teresa, Katalina, Lorelle, Trevor and Ian.*

The TAB group was formed back in 1997. A number of CLP constituents talked individually to their workers about the bullying they experienced while they were school students. CLP responded by inviting people to come together to share their stories, and support to develop some political action around bullying if people were interested.

Initially named 'Talking About Schools', the group began by sharing their personal stories of bullying with each

## 14 Talking About Bullying

I think he understood this. He apologised and I accepted his apology and then we shook hands. I don't think we had any problems at work after that.

If you are being bullied at work you should stand up for yourself and not be pushed around. Supervisors and bosses should stick up for people who are being bullied because bullying should not be tolerated in the workplace. It is important to meet and talk about the bullying, not ignore it. If you ignore it, it gets worse.

## Talking About Bullying 19

## Michael's Story



I was bullied in the workplace about a year ago, at my job at the Nundah Co-op where I work picking up leaves, catering and mowing.

I was working raking leaves at the time and sometimes thinking of things on my mind. Not very good thoughts were stressful. Sometimes so stressful I'd stop working.

Another worker started to call me lazy and other names. I didn't like him calling me names. It made me feel bad inside. It made me think I was lazy.

I told one of the supervisors at work about it. He went to the boss. The boss organised a meeting with me and the worker who was bullying. He asked me to invite my support worker along to support me.

We talked about it and I told him that I don't like being teased and treated badly. I told him that I wasn't lazy, but that sometimes my stress goes up and I drift off and it's like I'm on another planet.

**18 Talking About Bullying**

other. These stories were gathered together and put into a booklet, 'Talking About Schools: people with a learning difficulty share their experiences of being bullied at school'.

Through the stories a presentation was developed to take into schools. The aim of the presentation was to educate and promote awareness within the school community about the experiences of having a learning difficulty and of getting bullied. The presentation also shared strategies with the audience on how to stop bullying from happening. The overall goal was to reduce the high incidence of bullying towards people with a learning difficulty within the school environment.

The TAS group met at CLP on a fortnightly basis.

During these meetings members would discuss issues surrounding bullying, provide support for each other, and work on ways to get their presentation out into the schools in and around Brisbane.

TAS presented at numerous primary and secondary schools. They were also invited to speak at various

**Since the group's beginnings back in 1997 membership has shifted and changed. Initially the group had 8-10 members, while at present there are 4 members who come along regularly to meetings. Two of the four members at present have been with the group since it started! (Ian and Paul)**

**Talking About Bullying 15**

**This year the group also hosted a 'Story Day' in the local community, which was attended by a number of people from different parts of Brisbane. What became very apparent to the TAB group over the past year was that bullying remains a wide spread and significant issue for many people in the community, and especially for people with learning difficulties.**

conferences on disability, education and community. In 2000 TAS won a Disability Access Week Award. The group were also recognised and awarded for their voluntary efforts by the State Government in 2001.

In 2001 the group developed their own web-page with the help of a grant from The Federation of Youth

([www.clpadmin@tpg.com.au](mailto:www.clpadmin@tpg.com.au)).

Last year the group changed its name from TAS to TAB. This reflects the changing emphasis and understandings of the group, who have started to share stories about bullying that happens to them and others after school, as adults. This bullying occurs within numerous community settings, such as the workplace, on public transport and at local shopping centres, with neighbours, support workers, and within people's own families and other informal networks.

Throughout 2004 the group presented to numerous and diverse sections of the community, including the Asia Pacific Watoboshi Arts Festival held at the Powerhouse in Brisbane, and the Dual Disability Forum at the Prince

Charles Hospital. Early this year they participated in a discussion on friendship as part of 'Politics in the Pub'.

For TAB members, presenting in front of an audience is the most rewarding and valued part about being in the group. The various places within the community TAB has presented at is becoming more diverse. This diversity of audiences is exciting, as it enables TAB to get their message out to different sections of the community. At the same time, these different audiences provide great learning opportunities for TAB!