With All Due Respect

The role of schools in promoting respect and caring for self and others

Civility, tact, respect, a willingness to put ourselves in the situation of others, to see ourselves as, finally, their kin, because they are fellow human beings, no matter the differences between any of us and any of them – all of these qualities of mind, heart and soul are still the utter bedrock of our professional competence.

**Coles, R., *The Mind's Fate*,
Back Bay Books, Boston, 1995**

Introduction

Most people know how they hope their lives will be. They hope for health, happiness, caring family and friends, a sense of belonging, of self-respect, of security, of future and of meaning in their lives. For very many people this is, on the whole, how life turns out to be. But, some are not so fortunate. The lives of too many women and children are marred by the violence and fear of domestic abuse, and by the consequent threat to the secure, nurturing and caring relationships that should be at the heart of supportive family life.[1]

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a subset of violence in society as a whole, in particular violence to women. It takes many forms - physical, sexual and emotional. It takes place within an environment and in the context of family relationships that are expected to be founded in love and nurture.

This paper recognises that men too can be victims of domestic abuse, though generally to a much lesser extent and with less violent outcomes. That it is rarer makes it no less important. Therefore, though this paper takes as its main focus violence to women, the concepts and strategies it recommends to schools for the promotion of respect and caring for self and others apply equally to all.

In that domestic abuse is part of a range of behaviours constituting male abuse of power, it is inextricably linked to broader issues of gender inequality and discrimination. It raises fundamental questions about the way our society is currently organised and about the values and structures that facilitate inequality.

Abuse affects women and children in ways that are likely to damage their physical and emotional health. Those who are its victims neither seek it nor provoke it, though often accused by their abusers of doing so. They live in fear for themselves and for their children in the face of constant yet unpredictable demonstrations of power and control. Children who are its witnesses are also its victims.

Apart from the fear abuse engenders at the time, women and children deal constantly with the anxiety of anticipation, and with a feeling of never-resolved loss; of the self; 'of 'normal' family life; of caring parenting; and of the right to dignity, to security, and freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, human rights enshrined as long ago as 1948 in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

Domestic abuse is associated with broader gender inequality, and should be understoood in its historical context, whereby societies have given greater status, wealth, influence, control and power to men. It is part of a range of behaviours constituting male abuse of power, and is linked to other forms of male violence.
National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland, Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse, Edinburgh, November 2000

The National Strategy also recognises that children who witness, or are used in the abuse of their mothers can experience stress and fear and that all those who experience domestic abuse suffer a range of adverse effects, including physical injury, poor health and an array of psychological difficulties.
National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland, Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse, Edinburgh, November 2000

Eventually for many women, the threat of disruption of an affiliation is perceived not just as a loss of a relationship but as something close to a total loss of self'
Gilligan, C.: In a Different Voice; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1982,1993

There is no excuse

Those who abuse victimise and demean those close to them. For this there is no excuse. There are, however, reasons, and it is only by understanding the complex reasons for abuse that we can begin to do something about it. It is not enough to say *'This won't do'*, more a matter of urgently asking *'What can we do about it?'*

The roots of violence

Though those who abuse are all different and individual in their motivation, a common motive for all types of violence is the desire for respect, for the maintenance of pride, dignity and self-esteem. The less respect for self people are able to feel from within, the more they are dependent on respect from others, the more likely to perceive humiliation, shame and degradation in words or behaviours that to others seem unexceptional.

Abuse is about power and control. Men's violence against women is intentional and functional for men, in that they may choose to use violence as a means of asserting or reasserting their masculinity when they perceive their partners as undermining it. By physically controlling their partners' life in all its aspects, by isolating them from support mechanisms and by undermining their sense of self-esteem, men who abuse assert their authority and dominate and control the women they say they love.

Abuse is a cultural and sociological issue. Although a good deal of progress has been made since the days when violence against wives was permitted by law, in many respects the ideas and attitudes which legitimised this view of men and women's place and role in society continue. Some men act in intimidating and coercive ways, fully believing that they have the right to do so and taking support from the legal and societal ambivalence towards such behaviour.

Men who abuse have been socialised in a society which continues to condone and reinforce inequality between the sexes. This can translate into a set of expectations of their women partners and of themselves in relationships with women. Whilst the details of those expectations are very varied, and dynamic, changing from generation to generation, women's perceived transgressions from their ' traditional' role may be experienced as direct threats to men's authority and secure sense of self. Within this context some men may allow themselves to justify abusing and controlling their partners, seeing violence as both legitimate and justifiable. In their minds, it is a seemingly effective means of restoring the gendered order.

In many respect therefore, abuse can be understood as an extension, for some, of condoned behaviour in a society of social inequality rather than as individual deviancy. Men who abuse are not a distinct group of inadequate individuals; they are fathers, sons, brothers and uncles.

They are, however, men who _choose_ to use violence or intimidating behaviour to silence women, to assert male authority and to deny women a voice. For these men, violence serves a useful purpose and their use of it is intentional. This appears to overide and obliterate, at least as far as their relationship with their partners is concerned, the empathy, concern for others, guilt and remorse that prevent most of us from seeing violence as a valid response, no matter how useful or condoned.

Making a difference

The routes to abuse are characterised by a complex series of experiences and influences. Counter-acting the behaviours resulting from these experiences is the task of many agencies, working in collaboration, including schools. Schools cannot solve this problem on their own, nor should they be expected to, for it is a societal and inter-agency problem. But, research indicates clearly that schools are one of the three important supportive factors in the lives of young people – family, school and community – that can make a difference, especially when one or more of the other factors is missing.

The purposes of education

Schools offer one of the few opportunities for affecting the attitudes of all involved and the experiences that children and young people have in school play an important part in helping them deal with life as they live it in all its complexity and ambiguity. Schools can and do make a difference.
The National Priorities for Education make it clear that schools are not only in the business of helping young people to gain the grades and qualifications that will stand them in good stead for the future. Equally importantly, they emphasise that it is part of the task of schools to help young people to develop into fair-minded, considerate and caring human beings. The purposes of education are as much to develop qualities such as respect and caring for self and others, a commitment to equality, to citizenship and to learning, with which to deal with life in general, as to ensure success in the future world of work. This is to make real the articles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

From the beginning and throughout all the time that they work with children and young people, all schools should develop

Education, mainly in schools but also through community and informal education, represents the principal mechanism through which society is able to influence its own future. It offers the most effective route through which attitudes can be influenced, though that influence is normally exerted only gradually and over a long time-scale
National Group Prevention Strategy: Draft Paper

protective factors based on caring and support, positive expectations and active participation.

They should:
- Express positive expectations of all, including staff
- Address issues of the continuing inequality between men and women and the attitudes that flow from this.
- Encourage altruism and co-operation
- Encourage staff to see themselves as caring people.
- Foster active involvement for all
- Provide opportunities for leadership and participation
- Encourage goal setting and mastery
- Involve parents

Adapted from Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together, CentreSource Systems, Sausalito, 1995

Making connections

There is an increasing recognition that if schools are to fulfill the broad range of the purposes of education, the efforts of a number of public agencies needs to be co-ordinated. New Community Schools, with their inter-agency emphasis, are on the way to bringing supportive factors together and to working in a holistic and collaborative way to influence the lives of young people and their families. This is also the rationale for Health Promoting Schools, for Eco-friendly schools, for Citizenship Education, for Education for Sustainable Development and for Education for Personal and Social Development. All of these perspectives are inter-related and interdependent. The challenge for schools and for those with whom they work collaboratively is to see and to make real these connections.

What can schools do?

One of the first questions that is asked is *'What can schools do to foster pride, dignity and self esteem?'* This is an understandable question at a time when teachers feel constrained to have more regard to grades and qualifications than to personal and social development, though this is a false dichotomy, since the two are interdependent. Happy, healthy children and young people, at ease with themselves, with their classmates, with their teachers and with the environment in which they learn, learn better. Better learning fosters better health and happiness.

Perhaps a prior and more urgent question ought to be *'What sort of places should schools be in order to foster pride, dignity and self-esteem?'* One of the first answers is that they need to think carefully about the sorts of places they *want to* be, the sorts of qualities and beliefs they *want* to model, and the sorts

In helping young people and ourselves to learn joyously as well as effectively, we must remember that the enabling devices of systems and procedures are just that – they are the means which are to be judged by the quality of the human flourishing they promote.
Fielding M., Delivery, Packages and the Denial of Learning, Cambridge, 1996

of messages that they *want* to send, as well as practical 'things to do'. For some schools and teachers these will be uncomfortable issues to address, since it will mean a change in the prevailing culture, and change is always challenging. This is the much derided 'vision thing'. But without vision strategies are empty vessels, devoid of genuine meaning.

Schools need to afford to teachers and other members of staff all possible opportunities to reflect on and to discuss the kinds of communities they hope to be, the aims of all that they do, the ways in which they will do it, and the kinds of learning opportunities they will offer all the young people that they work with. Reflecting on the nature and purposes of education should be at the core of initial teacher training, of all continuing professional development and all inter-agency working. This is a challenging agenda and one not only specific to issues of respect.

In thinking through these issues there are various aspects that merit consideration.

The learning context

Even the most well thought-out interventions or programmes are of little value if their messages of respect or of equality are not mirrored in all that the school believes, does, and says. A whole school ethos of caring, of equality, and of respect and caring for others should be evident in all interactions and relationships, in the language that is used and in the values that are promoted. This means developing an ethos, a climate and a sense of belonging that answer the question *'What do we as a community of learners value?'*

Caring school communities deliberately engender a sense of belonging and an ethos of achievement for all. They convey to all members of the community that they are cared about and valued equally. Indeed, they will make particular efforts to counter-act the gender inequalities that allow some boys and young men to continue in an inappropriate set of beliefs and ways of behaving.

Caring schools take issues of inclusion seriously. Schools working towards inclusion – for it is a process, not a state – do all they can to ensure that all young people know that school is something that is done *with* them rather than to them or for them.

Caring schools are places that do not operate on principles of shame and humiliation. They avoid counter-productive punishments that would increase these feelings, in the belief that all pupils should know that they are valued as human beings, though their behaviour at times may be unacceptable. Such schools recognise the importance of using 'inviting' as opposed to demeaning language. Teachers should certainly indicate that they are unhappy with particular behaviours, but avoid giving messages that locate all the blame within the

A caring community is not merely one in which abstract values are affirmed, but one in which real people come to know, work and care for each other.
**Scottish CCC:
Values in Education:
The Importance of
the Preposition, 1995**

We need to get past thinking of individual student behaviour problems as hopeless, uncontrollable or pathological. The majority are in need of inclusion and affection from teacher, family and peers.
**Gibbs, J., Tribes: A New Way of
Learning and Being Together,
CentreSource Systems,
Sausalito, 1995**

individual child. For example, there may be a variety of perfectly acceptable reasons why a child is late for class that are not to do with the child in some way having 'got it wrong'.

Such schools recognise that ethos affects everyone and is generated by everyone. Sharing the responsibility for generating that ethos helps to create a sustainable community in which each person has a contribution to make and each contribution is valued. In short, they are communities of belief that model the following:

- School is a place where people learn
- School is a place where respect and caring for others is at the heart of the community
- School is a place where each and every individual has value and worth
- School is a place that promotes gender equality and challenges gender stereotypes
- School is a place where prejudice, bigotry or sexism will not be allowed
- School is a place where responsibility is shared
- School is a place where people feel safe
- School is a place for everyone – not just the best, the most well-behaved, or the members of any one group.

Adapted from Educational; Leadership

The 'manner' of the teacher

How teachers, and others, behave with young people and with each other, the kinds of language they use, the feelings they exhibit, and the qualities they model send extremely important messages. No matter what 'subject' a teacher is teaching, and this can be done in very many ways – there is no one-size-fits-all model of teaching – teachers should be aware that all the activities that are part of teaching – giving directions, explaining, demonstrating, checking, adjudicating, motivating, reprimanding – all need to model the same choices and behaviours that they want young people to display.

This way young people can see that real people use these strategies and that they work.

Sending consistent messages

From the very beginning and throughout schooling schools need to be consistent about the messages that they impart to children and young people. Even in pre-school settings, small children are sensitive to the messages that are implicit in the teacher's demeanour, in her ways of treating them as individuals, of encouraging collaboration, sharing, and of resolving conflict.

Play is an important context for learning in the pre-school setting.

Your students should see by your behaviour that you are genuinely committed and concerned about their well-being and future. If they do, your students will trust and respect you, and the values your behaviour reflects will leave an indelible impression on their minds.
Extract from 'The Teacher': The Dalai Lama on Kids Today in Educational Leadership, Volume 54, No. 4, pp81-82, December 1996/January 1997

They understand that they cannot expect honesty without themselves being honest, or generosity without being generous, or diligence without themselves being diligent.
G.D. Fenstermacher: Some Moral Considerations on Teaching as a Profession, 1990

Children, when all is said and done, aren't much different from adults. If they are treated with respect they blossom; if they are treated with inconsistency they feel anxious; if they are treated carelessly they hurt. It is what they (and adults) do with that hurt that can be perplexing, galling and irritating to others.
Orbach, S.: A culture of child hating; The Guardian Weekend, January 4, 1997

Over time … children's minds take in what they notice and in various ways turn what has been witnessed and overheard into their own visions of the world, their own voice.
Coles R The Mind's Fate, Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1995

That girls' and boys' approaches tend to be different means merely that they reflect different styles or voices that will tend to persist throughout life. With the help of the teacher both can be encouraged to make adjustments – in the pre-schools stages to play and to learn, and in later stages to work and to learn - at all stages learning to relate to each other in a different voice. The kinds of play promoted by practitioners at the pre-school stage can encourage girls to be more gently assertive and boys to be more gently collaborative throughout their school years. Girls can learn by experience that self-respect does have to do with the status they internally accord themselves, just as boys can learn that respect for others is not best demonstrated by asserting dominance and control.

As they progress through the primary and into the secondary stages, the messages that are implicit in early learning can be made more explicit. As well as learning experientially, children and young people can be encouraged to discuss the issues at the heart of respect, both for themselves and for others. There are many opportunities in a variety of curriculum areas, as well as in special focus programmes, to reflect on the ways in which others see the world and understand that different does not mean less valid.

Recognising the 'different voice'

Research shows that girls and women tend to speak about their lives and their relationships in terms of connection, to have a more developed understanding of empathy and attachment, while boys and men tend to speak in terms of separation and of achievement. This does not mean that men are from Mars, and women from Venus. We all inhabit the same planet. We simply see it differently. We talk about the world we share not in a different language, but 'in a different voice'.

Teachers need to recognise these different voices, including their own, and to understand that they need to promote a classroom climate where all children and young people are encouraged to speak up - research shows that boys do much more talking and demand more attention in classrooms than girls and that teachers generally spend more time with boys than with girls; where put downs are not permissible; and where everyone has the right to be wrong without being humiliated. Wrong answers merely demonstrate stages of personal understanding.

In addition, the very core skills advocated for all are less likely to be those with which girls and young women identify. The repeated finding of many studies is that the skills deemed necessary for adulthood – the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision making and responsible action – are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self – disturbingly by young women

These worlds of play shed light on the worldviews of women and men in relationships. The boy's play illustrates why men would be on the lookout for signs that they are being put down or told what to do. The chief commodity that is bartered in the boys' hierarchical world is status and the way to achieve and maintain status is to give orders and get others to follow them … These dynamics do not drive girls' play. The chief commodity that is bartered in the girls' community is intimacy.
Tannen, D.,
You just don't understand: Men and Women in Conversation, Virago, 1991

themselves, who, with the onset of puberty, learn to still their articulate young voices as inappropriate ways of being in the world.

Learning and teaching

Some methodologies are more conducive to learning how to respect and care both for selves and others that others. A teaching scenario where the teacher promotes him/herself as the fount of all knowledge and the source of all power merely reinforces the view, in a sense, that 'might is right'. Power and control are in the hands of one individual who exercises it merely by respect of their position. While this power may well in most cases be benevolently exercised, the message is nevertheless that power is in the hands of those in authority. On the other hand, a methodology based on the concept of co-operative learning, which encourages students to take decisions about their own learning, to learn how to discuss and compromise with others, to make decisions based on empathy, and to work in an autonomous manner, both as an individual and as a member of a group, supported by the teacher, who gives away power in order to facilitate learning, encourages the concept of working with and understanding the needs of others.

Essential experiences

Irrespective of curriculum area or 'subject' schools and teachers should try to ensure that throughout their education, children and young people, as they grow and mature, are exposed to certain essential experiences. By ensuring that these essential experiences are at the heart of all learning, schools can encourage *all* pupils to feel a sense of self-worth, and enhance their sense of belonging to a community in which it is as important to value a sense of *being* together as of *doing things* together. It is important to recognise that these essential experiences should be at the heart of education from the earliest stages. Educational experiences should progressively develop, through the ethos and central messages that are conveyed, through the opportunities that are offered at all stages to exercise choice and make decisions, through what is taught and the manner in which it is taught, through a specific focus on educational and personal and social development and through explicit teaching on a variety of social and ethical issues, such as domestic violence, an awareness of the importance of respect and caring for self and others.

- **Feeling valued:** it is important that children and young people develop a secure feeling of their own intrinsic worth as people – that they are responded to with unconditional positive regard. Quite apart from the innate desirability of valuing all human beings, it makes sense. Young people are more likely to respond well in circumstances where they have a sense of being valued, where they feel included, and where they have opportunities to succeed.

Learning to share responsibility means learning to accept individual responsibility, but it also means learning to accept responsibility for others.
Scottish CCC: Sharing Responsibility, Dundee, 1995

- **Sharing responsibility:** young people need to learn not only about the concept of democracy, but also what it means to *be democratic*. This is an important element of Citizenship. By involving young people in the discussion and negotiation of rights and responsibilities, schools help them to experience the nature of the democratic process in action. Learning to share this responsibility helps young people to understand the need for compromise, to see that they can positively affect decisions about their own lives and to understand that others may have different but equally valid points of view. It helps them to understand, by being involved in processes of negotiation, that they cannot always have their own way and that sometime others have better solutions than their own. It also makes clear that discussion and negotiation and not domination or aggression is the way to a reasonable solution. Having your voice heard and *genuinely* listened to is a powerful way of instilling dignity and pride.

  Sharing responsibility can also encourage children and young people to understand that they can, with help and guidance, manage their own learning. This is at the heart of developing a commitment to life-long learning.

- **Working both co-operatively and independently:** it is important that young people develop the capability to act autonomously, that is to develop a mind-set that confirms that they are capable of making coherent choices in pursuit of their own needs and purposes, and those of the community as a whole. Feeling secure in making good choices is an important element of self-worth. Schools should also offer children and young people opportunities for team working and for collaboration with others in a whole range of situations and tasks. In a society and a world characterised by diversity, it is important to learn how to accept compromise in the reconciliation of different interests and to develop a sense of shared purpose. It is also important to learn when compromise is not appropriate.

- **Experiencing a sense of achievement:** it is important that young people know what it means to succeed. Knowing that there are very many ways to 'do well' and that these ways are recognised and celebrated by others is essential to the development of a feeling of self-worth. Successfully responding to high expectations, often self-generated, promotes a greater commitment to learning. By fostering an ethos of achievement where all talents, all gifts, all people and all abilities are valued schools can enhance feelings of self-esteem and self worth. Providing wide-ranging opportunities for achievement and success (not necessarily only those that are subject to evaluatory devices) leads to a

*We all want above all to be heard – but not merely to be heard. We want to be understood – heard for what we **think** we are saying, for what we **know** we meant.*
Tannen, D. ibid

There are those who never even have a chance to get respectable grades at school – yet they may acquit themselves impressively in the course of their time spent on this earth.
Coles, R. ibid

positive self-image, as opposed to failure and feelings of rejection and shame that can only result in retaliatory behaviour designed to at least be noticed. No student should feel that his/her only recognition is in rebuke. Schools need to provide opportunities for all students to be identified, both by themselves and by others, not as deficit models, but in terms of their positive qualities and their contribution to the community as a whole.

It is also important that schools make clear that achievement is of equal importance to boys as it is to girls. It is essential to put in place opportunities for success that counteract the mistaken view of many young men that it is not 'cool' to achieve, or to focus only on inappropriate ways of enhancing their self-esteem. On the contrary, schools should promote achievement in the most wide-ranging sense as both an attainable and a valid aspiration for all.

- **Giving and receiving feedback**
  Children and young people need to have opportunities as they learn to discuss how they are getting on, how they feel about what they are doing, the mistakes they have made along the way and the things they might helpfully do next. Being able to say for themselves how well they are doing helps to develop a sense of achievement and to see mistakes and set-backs as simply steps along the way. These kinds of supportive discussions shield them from falling into apathy, hopelessness or defiance, feelings at the heart of low self-esteem. They also prevent impulsive and angry reactions to frustration.

These essential experiences:
- show young people that they are valued members of the community – that they belong
- reinforce the feeling that they have a contribution to make to the community – that they are useful
- encourage a sense of achievement – that they are competent

There are very many ways in which these experiences can be made real and it is important that schools reflect on how best to do this in their own particular circumstances. It is important too to remember that essential experiences should also be part of the everyday life of all members of the school community. It is just as important that headteachers, teachers, parents, janitors, educational psychologists, community liaison personnel, all those who are part of the community of the school, know what it is to feel valued, experience a sense of achievement, develop a sense of shared responsibility. In a community we are all in it together.

Children learn most not from what their parents tell them, but from what they see their parents do. When parents treat each child with the generosity, respect and dignity that a person requires in order to feel valued and wanted, the children learn to treat one another in the same way.

**Rowe, D.,
quoted in the Guardian, 2000**

Working with Parents

Many of the ways that children and young people understand and respond to the world around them have their root in family life. Young people bring their own personal constructs of life as a whole to the experiences they have in school. For some these are negative constructs, engendered by the sorts of lives they are constrained to lead. The experiences they have in school – for all these experiences need to be understood as part of the curriculum - can show them that there is a different way. Personal constructs can be influenced and altered by experiences that challenge individual assumptions about how life has to be.

Forging strong links with parents makes good sense, not only in order to be able to understand where young people are coming from, but also to have in place strong relationships that can stand them in good stead in times of difficulty. There are many ways to involve parents in the life of the school, so that they too feel a sense of shared responsibility and of belonging. Many of these are described in '*How Can Parents help their Children's learning?: a guide for parents, families and schools. SEED 2002*

Special focus initiatives

A special focus approach may be taken to ensure more concentrated work on issues that have been identified as important for pupils, or which pupils themselves identify as being important to them. These are most effectively promoted through education for personal and social development programmes that focus on the development needs of pupils at the various stages of the school. Special focus initiatives, such as, for example, the Respect programme, aim to deal directly with a variety of issues, such as domestic abuse, to encourage debate and discussion, even in the very young, and to give children and young people the skills and knowledge with which to make their own choices. The more opportunities that schools offer, including special focus initiatives, to engage with issues of respect, equality or caring, the more young people can make good choices to express their feelings and meet their needs. However, this kind of specific teaching and the best of programmes will only be effective if they accord with a whole school ethos and climate of respect, caring and support that has been developed and established from the earliest stages.

Emotional intelligence

There are specific initiatives designed to foster the development of emotional intelligence, though these will only be effective in the context of whole school approaches that model mature and responsible ways of dealing with difficult emotions or challenging situations. (Effective schools and teachers are themselves emotionally literate – they use their feelings to make good decisions in life.)

Both approaches help to foster emotional literacy in young people. This involves the development of empathy, of social skills, of resilience in the face of difficulties, of hope and of optimism. It allows them to see that difficulties are not insurmountable, not best solved by anger. Emotionally intelligent people deal responsibly with their emotions and are both resilient and adaptable in the face of conflict or of change. They get along well with other people, manage their emotions in relationships and are able to lead or persuade, rather than force, others.

Of particular importance is the development of resilience – the ability to bounce back from difficult situations or from setbacks in working towards goals.

Research on resilience shows that some young people from difficult environments do better than others and that this can often be put down to a single supportive and caring relationship that a young person may have developed with a particular teacher. With his or her help young people from the most uncompromising of backgrounds go on to emerge as brave, thoughtful and compassionate. Teachers need to be aware of this and to accept the great responsibility that this implies for all that they say and do.

Whole School Initiatives

Conflict resolution and peer mediation

Fighting is the only way that some young people know how to maintain dignity, win the respect of peers, or to be successful. They have learned in the course of their lives to behave violently to express anger or frustration, to show off, or to protect themselves. They know no other way and they are not to be blamed. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programmes can help young people to understand that conflict can be resolved by means other than aggression and that there are ways of finding solutions in which both parties in any dispute can maintain their self-respect. Conflict resolution and peer mediation can demonstrate that there are alternatives to expressions of anger, frustration and impatience. So too can the kinds of relationships that students see modelled amongst all members of the school staff.

Anger Management

Young people can be taught ways of recognising the triggers and the build-up to explosive outbursts – often the precursors in a domestic situation to abuse – and of defusing and managing that anger. They can be taught strategies to 'count themselves down' and to take the time to regain their equilibrium.

The literature on resilient children, those who have grown up in the worst of circumstances and yet thrived, shows that what made the difference wasn't the terrible circumstances of their chaotic home life; but the fact that one caring adult got involved in their lives and helped them out. And often-times that person is a teacher.
**Goleman, D.,
Emotional Intelligence,
Bloomsbury, 1996**

That school glued me together; it made me stronger than I ever thought I could be, and so now I don't think I'll be able to forget what happened. I'll probably be different for the rest of my life'
**Coles, R.,: Children of Crisis:
A Study of Courage and Fear**

Circles of friends

One of the most difficult feelings for some young people to deal with is the feeling of being alone and isolated in their lives – that there is no one who cares for them or about them. Some schools have found it helpful to develop circles of friends, where vulnerable children or young people have designated others to whom they can turn, both when they feel overwhelmed by negative feelings or circumstances or simply just in the course of the day. Being able to share difficult feelings with others is a first step on the way to defusing what could unhelpfully be turned inwards and escalate into depression and rage. Though this tends to be more common in a primary setting, there is no reason why is could not be extended into the secondary sector.

Circle time

Circle time is a strategy that encourages children and young people to understand the dynamics of group relationships. By interacting in a controlled environment where active listening, the genuine expression of feelings, not interrupting others as they talk, compromise, and unconditional positive regard are encouraged, children and young people learn how best to form relationships and to interact with others. Though Circle Time has been generally promoted in the primary sector, there is no reason why the principles upon which it is based could not be extended to the secondary sector.

Buddy systems

Periods of transition are often the most difficult for all children and young people in that they must deal with the bewilderment that accompanies change. For some this is much more difficult than others, since their inner resources and resilience are too low to maintain a sense of respect for self in unfamiliar and uncomfortable circumstances. Buddy systems offer the kind of support that removes much of the anxiety that accompanies transition and offers a listening ear in moments of crisis.

Peer support

Research shows that, contrary perhaps to expectations, young people who exhibit challenging behaviour can be transformed by being invited to offer peer support. Being able to explain something to another in the certainty of one's own understanding is a powerful way to promote feelings of self-worth and of achievement.

Conclusion

Respect and caring for self and others is to be encouraged through the experiences children and young people have in schools, not simply because it is a good and right thing to do, or because it marks us as civilised, but because the inescapable fact is that we are all interconnected as human beings. At the heart of respect and caring for others is respect and caring for self. We cannot do one without the other. If we are to understand better how to live well together, we need to begin with the premise that we live not in separation but in relationship.

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The vision of justice and care, the ideals of human relationship – the vision that self and others will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair, the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no-one will be left alone or hurt - these disparate visions in their tension reflect the paradoxical truths of human experience - that we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others.

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