



# Kids' Business

There's nothing you can't talk about

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY CARLA MEURS / CATH SOUTH



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

People Pictures 

<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>

'I want to spend more time with Dad.'

'Dad has stopped talking to us.'

'We want to see our great-granddad before he dies.'

'No one plays with me and I'm not included.'

'There was a big fight last night and I felt really scared and frightened.'

'My dad threatened me with a knife.'

'I got alternate suspension, I was bullying Will.'



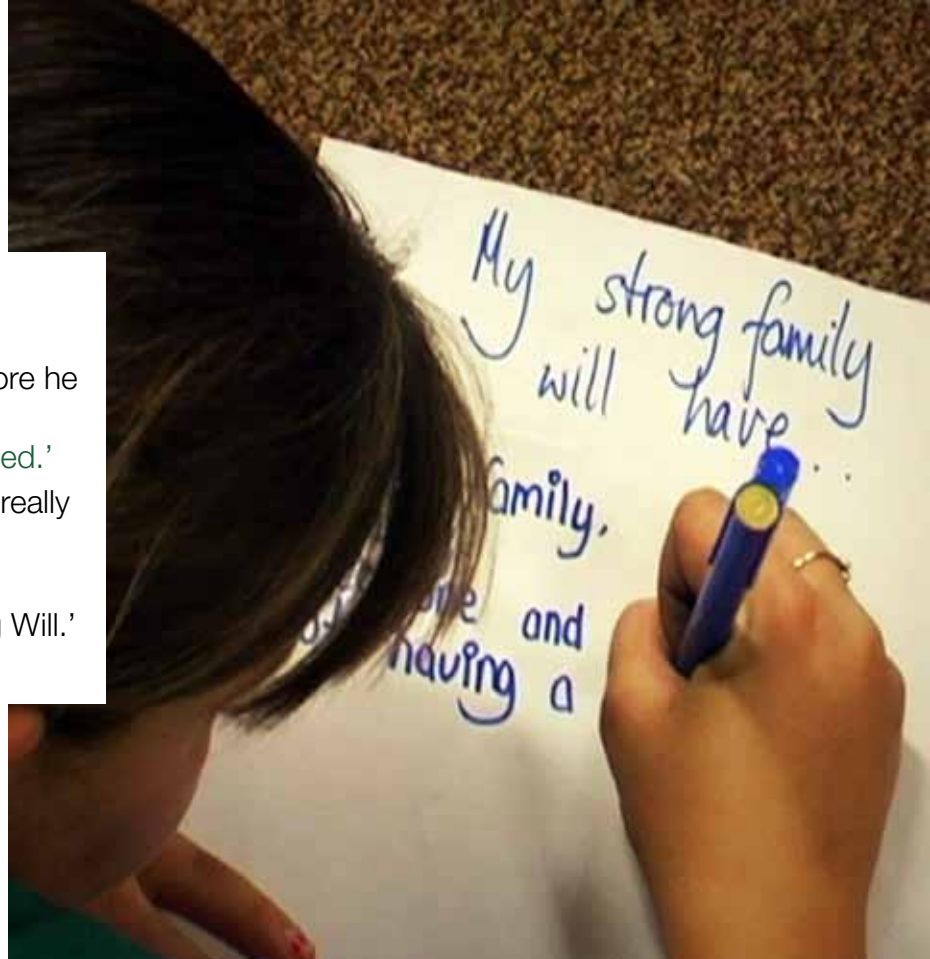
## Synopsis

**K**ids' Business is an inspiring portrayal of young people learning to grapple with their lives head on. The documentary charts the progress of Grade 5 and 6 children in a school-based, well-being and resilience program called 'Solving the Jigsaw'. Over a year, the children explore many life issues including bullying, grief, domestic violence and relationships with parents, peers and others.

For one hour each week, facilitator Bernadette Wright encourages young people to think and talk openly about themselves and their lives. The children are challenged to discuss their positive qualities, they learn to discuss their feelings and to listen to one another. Importantly they learn a clear language to discuss violence. The children learn how to talk about their lives and they learn how to talk to their parents about what matters to them.

Matt wants to spend more time with his dad. He has tried many times but his dad just doesn't seem to have the time. Jess and Hayley haven't seen their great-grandpa because of a family feud, and are fearful they may never see him again because he is ill. Jacob is worried that his dad is angry with him and may not want to see him. Casey is struggling to manage the pattern of aggressive behaviour by her dad at home and her own behaviour at school.

The children reveal the complexities of their lives and relationships. They see that at times things are difficult in the adult world and they clearly articulate how deeply it can affect them. When Kacee describes witnessing frightening domestic violence, the affect on the children is clear. Children see violence around them at school, in their community and at home. Due to the complex nature and



## Curriculum and training links

This is a resource that has relevance across many curriculum areas and for well-being programs and support programs in primary and secondary schools as well as for support staff in schools.

- » Anti-bullying programs
- » Well-being and resilience programs
- » Values Education
- » Health and Physical Education
- » SOSE

The resource is valuable at tertiary level and in training programs:

- » Teacher training
- » Psychology (training counsellors for school and the community)
- » Social Work
- » Special needs programs (victims of violence etc.)
- » The Police in Schools program

Teachers, support staff and trainers will find that the 'Guide to Talking to Children and Young People' (on page 15 of this study guide) provides information and strategies to use with students.

stigma of violence, children are usually left alone to work out how to manage their feelings and to understand what is going on. The ongoing effects on children can be very damaging and often impact on the people and community around them.

**ABOVE:** KACEE REFLECTS ON THE QUALITIES THAT WOULD MAKE UP HER IDEAL FAMILY.



Bernadette Wright has a very open, practical and non-judgemental approach to working with children and bridging the boundary between home and school. Young people are encouraged to talk about their feelings, consider what has happened and make decisions about their future. Over the year, the film movingly shows how the children gain confidence and certainty about what is important in relationships. When they describe their future imagined families, the children highlight communication, the ability to deal with conflict and the importance of love and respect. These are typical children, not children 'with problems', yet the classes and one-on-one sessions show the huge lessons they can learn and potentially carry into their lives.

## The production team

People Pictures is the close partnership of Stewart Carter and Cath South. They have been making documentaries together for twenty years. Working primarily as a two-person team, they write, direct, produce, and edit. From sound recording to cinematography, their approach is responsive and empathetic.

People Pictures' documentaries have screened on television in Australia and overseas.

In 2004, People Pictures documented the delivery of the 'Solving the Jigsaw' program to a class of Grade 5/6 students at a primary school in Bendigo. During this process, it became clear to Cath and Stewart that the footage could be made into a powerful film that would reveal the experiences and wisdom of the children.

*The making of this film has been an extraordinary learning experience. As filmmakers, it has always interested us that there are some stories that are virtually impossible to tell in a documentary form. We thought some of the stories in this film might never make it to the screen.*



**LEFT: VANESSA RIGHT: BERNADETTE WRIGHT – COUNSELLOR AND JIGSAW FACILITATOR BELOW: CASEY REFLECTS ON HER FUTURE.**

They filmed each week for a year, with Stewart on camera and Cath recording sound. Like any person in the room they too had to join in the activities. This was at times challenging as they were also asked to share their lives with the group.

*At first it was difficult to tell the kids honestly about how our lives had been going over the last week, but our confidence grew as we listened to the kids. It was an eye opener to hear the children talk so wisely about their feelings and particularly about how the adult world affected them.*

When they started shooting, Cath and Stewart had no idea they would be witnessing such challenging and moving moments from a typical primary school class:

*Whilst shooting we were very moved by the issues that came up for the kids. But it was a real lesson to watch how easily Bernadette turned 'dramas' into places of learning, with clear ways to move forward. We were particularly struck by the wisdom and clarity these kids showed in their understanding of their experiences.*

However the filmmakers still wondered how the children's parents would feel about their children talking to other people about 'family stuff'.





- Should the stories in the film be shared? Why? Why not?
- Should this sort of well-being program happen in schools? Why? Why not?
- What did the filmmakers learn from this experience?

## Information about the 'Solving the Jigsaw' program

More information is available from the 'Solving the Jigsaw' website <<http://www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au>>.

### How did the program start?

'Solving the Jigsaw' started in a domestic violence support service in Bendigo (EASE) in 1997 because of the devastating reality that twenty-five per cent of children and young people in Australia witness violence in their homes. EASE decided to form partnerships with school communities to prevent violence and support those who are affected by it.

From humble beginnings in two pilot schools, 'Solving the Jigsaw' programs have grown over the last eleven years to reach over 20,000 children and young people and over 500 teachers have participated in comprehensive training programs reaching 110 schools.

### What is 'Solving the Jigsaw'?

'Solving the Jigsaw' is a multi-award-winning violence prevention and well-being program. The program has a whole-school approach and aims to assist school communities to address violence and bullying at school by 'changing the culture of violence' and 'building a culture of well-being'. The program seeks to strengthen connectedness and resilience in young people in primary and lower secondary school. One-hour weekly sessions in twenty- and forty-week programs are conducted for whole classes. The sessions are run by a trained facilitator, and the classroom teacher participates. 'Solving the Jigsaw' also runs professional development days for teachers and a nationally accredited facilitator training course.

### Program strategies

The strategies used by the project for building a 'culture of well-being' are:

- Creating an environment where each student feels valued and respected, and experiences a sense of belonging and participation with their peers and the school community
- Using class group work processes with a trained facilitator and the participation of the class teacher to foster self-awareness, empathy and social skills amongst students and the school community



*There is a strong feeling in our culture that family business is private, we were quite nervous to include some of the stories in the final film. But in the process of making the film we had often seen 'difficult' topics being raised by the kids and then watched Bernadette help the kids gain greater understanding of their lives. It was clear to us that the kids were happier because they had discussed stuff.*

**TOP:** BENADETTE OVERLOOKS AS THE BOYS LIGHT THE END OF YEAR CANDLE. **BOTTOM:** AFTER RECOVERING FROM A BRAIN TUMOR, JACOB IS ACCEPTED BACK INTO THE FOOTY TEAM.

During the editing, the filmmakers screened the footage to the main subjects of the film. With their consent, the filmmakers screened the footage to the parents.

The filmmakers' decision to include challenging and sensitive stories in the documentary, turned out to be a positive one. All the families agreed for the footage to be included in the documentary.

*The parents were often very moved by the footage of their children. They could see that it was important for people to hear the perspectives of their children. They felt that the film provided a rare opportunity for others to hear kids talk wisely and openly about their feelings. Hearing the kids' perspective on issues such as domestic violence, relationships with parents, grief etc. shows clearly how kids are deeply affected by such issues. There is no doubt that the film forces us as parents and adults to be more aware of the impact of our behaviour on children.*

### Discuss

- What difficulties do you think the filmmakers would have had making this film?
- Why did they use a small crew?
- Why did they film for so long?
- Should these stories have remained private stories?
- Do you think that our culture encourages silence? Why? Why not?



- Creating a safe environment which allows for open dialogue about difficult and challenging topics
- Creating an intimate setting where the language of feeling is respected and nurtured
- Promoting respectful and supportive relationships between student and student, teacher and teacher, student and school, parent and child, parent and parent, and between the school and its external support services.

## Creating a culture of well-being

In each 'Solving the Jigsaw' classroom session, a trained facilitator runs the group and the classroom teacher participates and assists. Each child is listened to, and is able to explore his/her concerns with the rest of the class offering their ideas and support. Ideas are offered by peers and new strategies suggested. Through every child's story, the class learns some problem-solving skills and some assertive communication techniques. On a deeper level, a safe environment is provided where each child is valued, their experiences and thoughts are taken seriously, they are listened to, and able to share their feelings, their concerns and their troubles. They experience connection and support from the group and the adults in the room and are nurtured and cared for. Compassion and responsibility for self is encouraged, time is available for thinking and considering, new ideas and options are explored. This is an environment where children are supported in negotiating difficult issues and life challenges and they recognise that life can have all sorts of ups and downs and that they are cared for and supported as they negotiate these. In 'Solving the Jigsaw', this is called creating a culture of well-being.

## Addressing difficult topics and having awkward conversations

Awkward conversations can occur when a child brings a sensitive incident or topic to the group or to



a facilitator separately. 'Awkward conversations' may include 'my dad's dying of cancer', 'mum and dad had a fight', 'my brother's in jail' etc. Being prepared to engage with a child in an 'awkward conversation' is about validating the child's experience and supporting the child to identify what they think and feel. Intimacy and trust is created in a safe setting which allows a child to explore thoughts and feelings which might otherwise remain locked away inside them. Resilience research has identified some key protective factors for children living with adverse life experiences. These included having a significant and loving relationship with an adult, experiencing connection and belonging to others, the ability to separate issues in the outside world from their own lives and being clear about what they are or are not responsible for. If children have a safe space where 'awkward conversations' are not taboo, this can be an avenue where they can acquire some of these protective factors.

## Changing the culture of violence

Changing the culture of violence is about being up front about violence. This means being able to openly talk about and explore with children and

**LEFT:** BERNADETTE DISCUSSES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH KACEE. **RIGHT:** BERNADETTE AND CASEY WORKSHOP A DISCUSSION WITH HER FATHER.

young people, what violence is, to develop an understanding and ability to identify the types of violence and the ways violence affects people. It means developing an understanding of concepts of misuse of power, deliberate harm, using 'power over' to control and belittle someone as opposed to power sharing. It's about exploring where violence and bullying happens. It means gaining an understanding of trust and trust groups and children learning about and identifying 'good' and 'bad' secrets. It's about presenting and enforcing a clear position that violence is not acceptable and must not be ignored or condoned.

**Breaking the silence:  
Naming violence and making a supportive and respectful space for children who engage in bullying and violence to take responsibility for their behaviour**

Changing the culture of violence is about teaching children, young people and teachers strategies for dealing with violence and bullying. In 'Solving the Jigsaw', this is called 'naming it'. 'Naming it' refers to breaking the silence and secrecy around bullying and violence by telling someone (the person, a teacher or parent) what is going on when someone is bullying or being violent. It is about telling a trusted person when people are getting hurt, being honest, asking for help and stopping the behaviour. Children are supported to personally name the bullying to the child who has bullied them, using 'I' statements and describing how they have been affected by the bullying. Learning about how to name violence gives victims of violence and witnesses to violence the tools to take assertive action, to stop the violence or bullying. The 'Solving the Jigsaw' program provides an ongoing support and focus to encourage and reinforce taking assertive action in situations of violence. It does this through a range of activities and by responding to incidences of bullying that occur within the school and supporting children with issues that occur outside of the school.

'Solving the Jigsaw' is based on the belief that bullying is best dealt with within a group setting. Behaviours are learnt in groups and reinforced by group dynamics. Behaviour therefore needs to be addressed and changed by the group. The program takes the stance that this is best done in a non-blaming and non-pathologising way which makes a space for the stories of children who have been bullied to be validated, and children who engage in bullying and violent behaviours to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to be supported in making changes. Addressing violence requires a multi-layered approach.

- It is about supporting and assisting victims to take action through naming violent behaviour and seeking support so that they can reclaim their power and restore their self-esteem.
- Naming violence also assists children with bul-



**TOP:** JACOB TALKS ABOUT MISSING HIS DAD.

lying and violent behaviours to accept responsibility and to make changes. It is important to assist and support children who have bullied to accept what they have done, to acknowledge the effects of their behaviour, to want to change their behaviour, to experience remorse for what they have done and to actively make changes. The group provides an audience for positive changes being made.

- In a group setting, bystanders are able to give input in a supportive way to the processes of change. Bystanders learn that their silence condones and gives permission for the bullying to continue. Decisions and agreements can be made by the whole group about future class and individual behaviour.
- The class group participates in supporting all children whether they have been victims or whether they engage in bullying behaviours, and as in all group work processes, each member of the class group gains their own learning from hearing and bearing witness to the stories told in the group.

**Assisting students to deal with conflict and incidents of bullying and violence**

Bringing all parties together to discuss an incident of bullying is an important aspect of the program. Children who name bullying to a teacher are supported to approach the person who bullied them in order to discuss the incident and restore a balance of power. When bullying or other violent behaviour that is happening within the school is named within the group, the facilitator guides discussion that respectfully explores what has happened and opens up options for ideas about solutions. A non-blaming and supportive approach is taken within the group and all children in the group become involved in asking questions and making suggestions about future action. The children can draw upon what they have learned in the group about violence and its effects, the misuse of power, and about the value of friendships and caring for self and others to fully participate in this process.

## Introduction to the children's stories and themes

*Kids' Business* raises many sensitive topics of discussion that we generally avoid in our community. The documentary's secondary title, 'There is nothing you can't talk about' refers to the challenge of having these 'difficult conversations'. Why is it hard to tell someone you love that you don't agree with them or that something they do upsets you?

Often when children are brave enough to talk to an adult about something that upsets them, the adult also finds it challenging and might even silence the child. This can reinforce a child's fear to talk. Children learn to blame themselves or put up with painful feelings alone. Without support, young people can suffer both in the short and long term. The consequences of bottling up these emotions are often expressed in high levels of youth suicide, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and the use of violence.

The Jigsaw class that the students attend is a safe place with group rules that focus on respectful communication. The children learn about themselves and their feelings. They study concepts like power and trust, and most importantly, they learn that it is not impossible to have those difficult conversations.

With courage and insight, the young people in the class talk about the challenging issues they face. Bernadette's non-judgemental and practical approach focuses on clarifying the problem or issue. She assists children to separate the behaviour from the person. She encourages the children to think through the issue, its implications and possible consequences. The film shows that when the young people are supported, what appear to be insurmountable problems become clear and manageable.

The communication skills that Bernadette teaches the children ('I' messages, not blaming, finding appropriate times to talk with parents etc.) enrich the relationships of these children with their families and with all those around them. In particular, it gives the young people skills and a language to understand their feelings and those of others, their rights and how violence can be addressed.

The experiences within this ordinary class of young people reflect the prevalence of the difficulties faced by Australian children, however, as Bernadette puts it:

*If children have the opportunity to think about an issue, reflect, and talk about it and have someone who'll help them make sense of it, and they understand that it's not their fault, that they can learn things from it and that they can be in a better position to choose for themselves later on; then that's a good thing.*

## Suggested ways to view this film

The classroom support materials track four stories that focus on violence and bullying and three stories that focus on themes including communication, loss and grief and separated families.

Each story is presented with key issues, suggested discussion questions, and links to further resources.

**Stories 1 and 2, Casey and Kacee's stories, are more appropriate for study by older students, the rest can be used in any age group.**

The documentary has a big emotional impact as it focuses on real young people, their families and their school life and deals with the often sensitive and controversial issues of bullying, violence and the misuse of power and force. It is therefore critical that you consider carefully your approach to using it in the classroom.

It is recommended that you preview the DVD with as many teachers/peers as possible and with the school/college welfare officer/worker. Consider the possible responses within the class to screening the documentary. There will be students who will need support around issues and this needs to be managed well. See background information and support notes for teachers further on in this study guide.

When screening this film with your class group, don't underestimate how valuable you are as an adult in the lives of the children. Often, what they really need to do is to tell you as an adult what is happening for them and for you to listen to them. Take note of the 'Guide to Talking to Children and Young People' on page 15 of this guide.

Teachers should become as knowledgeable as possible about what exists in terms of local support for children and young people. For instance, what local council support is there? What domestic violence or sexual assault services exist in your area? Is there a community health youth worker? What is your local child and adolescence mental health service? (Note the support services listed at the back of this document.)

It might be possible to ask these local organisations to speak to your class about what services they offer. You could invite them to attend the class screening or they could be invited to come and talk to the class about some of the issues raised in the film that are relevant to their work.

The DVD of the documentary can be viewed in segments that focus on the individual children's stories. In this way particular aspects can be used in different units of work and shorter segments can be shown to particular classes.

Stories 1 & 2 and discussion starters can be printed out for older students or for younger students where considered appropriate. Stories 3–7 can be used with all ages primary–tertiary.



## Themes for stories 1–4: Violence and bullying

### STORY 1 – CASEY’S STORY

Casey tells the group that she got sick of her dad not listening to her. She tried telling her dad how she felt and raised her voice at her dad. He responded by picking up a knife and then jabbing it into the chopping board. Casey felt really scared by his action. She went up to her room and cried. Her mum spoke to her dad and her dad went out in the backyard and he cried.

Casey tells her Grade 5 & 6 class this story while the class are doing a group activity that explores violence and bullying.

#### Key issues

- Definition of violence and bullying
- Definition of ‘power over’
- Casey’s right to be safe in her home
- Responding sensitively to disclosures with appropriate questions
- Casey’s right to talk about the effects of this behaviour and how it makes her feel
- The importance of the peer group supporting Casey and respecting her confidentiality
- The importance of Casey getting support and understanding that she is not responsible for her dad’s misuse of power
- The role of trusted adults in the lives of children and young people
- How to express your feelings in a way that doesn’t blame others
- Where to get support and more information about family violence
- That you can love someone but not like some of their behaviours
- The role of the teachers in supporting Casey
- Managing confidentiality in the



- classroom and staff room
- Where can Casey, her mum, dad and siblings get support and information?

#### Discussion questions

##### Thinking about Casey

- What happened to Casey?
- What type of violence was used?
- How did Casey feel?
- Who is responsible for Casey’s dad’s behaviour?
- Who can change his behaviour?
- What are some alternatives to violence that Casey’s dad could have used?
- What percentage of young people experience violence in the home?
- How did Casey’s dad’s use of violence affect Casey?
- What is meant by someone having power over you?
- How does talking about what’s happened affect Casey?
- What did the story illustrate about Casey’s rights to talk about the effects of her father’s behaviour and how it makes her feel?
- How can the class support Casey?
- What would happen in your class if someone shared a personal story?
- How could your class ensure that the person felt safe to confide their problems?
- What kinds of support would help the person?

- How does Bernadette support Casey during the class?
- How does Bernadette support Casey after the class?
- What does Casey decide to do?
- Who else is going to support Casey?
- What could you and your friends do to support someone with a similar story to Casey?
- What role do trusted adults have in the lives of children and young people?
- What could you do if something like this happened to you?
- Who are the adults in your life that could support you?
- What kind of adult would you trust? List their attributes. For example: kind, responsible, caring, respectful, knows me well.

##### Thinking about relationships

- How would you know if you are in a violent relationship?
- What would be some of the warning signs?
- What actions could you take?
- Where can men who use violence go for help?
- Where can women and children who are living with violence get help?
- What are some of the things you would want in a relationship?
- What sort of partner would you be?



## Resources

### Young People

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au>

Online counselling available for youth and children. Online newsletter, support, information and resources.

### Family Violence and Sexual Assault

<http://www.burstingthebubble.com>

This website provides information, quizzes, links to services and help lines and facts. It is for anyone who wants to know more about family violence and sexual assault, it is user-friendly and targeted at an adolescent audience.

### Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

<http://www.mwaves.org>

This Canadian website has great handouts for younger and older adolescents about healthy and unhealthy relationships. Topics include: Sex and trust; Self esteem and abuse; Boundaries & communication; No means no; Dealing with abuse; What if I'm afraid?; Where can I get help?; etc. Teachers and students will find this site useful.

### Men and young men who use violence

<http://www.menslineaus.org.au>  
1300 78 99 78

This website has topics such as: Men and emotions; Is your relationship in trouble?; Children and separation; Family law; Ten ways to become a better partner; What to do; Services; and includes a young men's site.

### Information about violence and abuse for adults, young people and family and friends

<http://www.dvirc.org.au>

This website provides information about violence and abuse for adults, young people and family and friends. It is user-friendly and a great resource for anyone seeking assistance and information. The site also provides a listing of contact and support services in every state.

## STORY 2 – KACEE'S STORY

Kacee tells the group that her mum and her stepdad had a big fight last night. She says she is really upset, frightened and scared because her stepdad held her mum down and then he grabbed her brother around the throat.

Kacee tells the class this story while they are doing a 'catch up'. Each week the Jigsaw class begins with a catch up where children practice reflecting on their week and sharing the things that are important to them.

### Key Issues

- Definition of family violence
- Kacee and her family's safety
- Impacts on Kacee
- Reporting family violence
- The difference between good and bad secrets

Other issues overlap with Casey's Story (previous)

### Discussion questions

#### Thinking about Kacee

- What happened to Kacee?
- What types of violence were used?
- What do we call violence in the home?
- How did Kacee feel?
- How does talking about what happened affect Kacee?
- If something like this happened to you, who could you tell? Who are some trusted adults in your life?
- How would you feel if someone shared a story like this in your class?
- How could you as a group of young people show support when one of your friends has experienced domestic / family violence?

#### Thinking about Kacee's mum

- What happened to Kacee's mum?
- How do you think she feels?
- Where can she get support?
- What can the police do?
- What is an intervention order?

- What are some of the support services that could assist Kacee's mum?

#### Thinking about Kacee's brother

- What happened to Kacee's brother?
- How do you think he felt?
- How would you feel if something like this happened to you?
- Who could support you?
- What could your friends do to support you?

#### Thinking about Kacee's stepdad

- What did Kacee's stepdad do?
- What types of violence did he use?
- How has Kacee's stepdad used his power?
- Are there any circumstances that would justify Kacee's stepdad behaving like this?
- What are the long-term impacts of Kacee's stepdad treating his family like this?
- How could Kacee's stepdad change his behaviour?
- How could he make his family safe from violence?
- Where can Kacee's stepdad go to get support?
- If you were a mate of Kacee's stepdad what could you say to him about his behaviour?

#### Thinking about domestic / family violence

- What are the impacts of family / domestic violence on children and young people?
- What services are there for women, men and children?
- How can family and friends be supportive when they know someone is experiencing domestic / family violence?

#### Thinking about relationships

- What are some examples of abuse of power in relationships?
- Have you ever been in a relationship where someone has abused their power?

## Resources

### Impacts of family violence on children

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/HelpHub/FVKids.htm>

Family Violence Hurts Kids Too: for parents and other people concerned about children who witness family violence.

### Sexual abuse

<http://www.aboutdaterape.nsw.gov.au>

The About Date Rape site provides education information, resources and links to other sites.

### Relationships

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/>

The 'When Love Hurts' site provides a guide on love, respect and abuse in relationships. It includes quizzes, stories and links to services and support.

### The law

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/legal.htm>

This page provides information about criminal charges and intervention orders.

### Family and friends

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/HelpHub/friends.htm>

It can be really worrying when someone you care about is being hurt or abused by their partner. This guide will provide you with practical information on how to help, and how to look after yourself.

### Programs and supports for men

<http://www.freedomfromfear.wa.gov.au>

This site has a link to an excellent 'Men's Self Help Booklet'.

Men's Domestic Violence Help Line:  
1800 000 599

### Men's Referral Service

<http://www.mrs.org.au>

1800 065 973 (free call in Victoria)

The men's referral service has information for men who are thinking about changing their behaviour, help and support for women and family and friends and links to service providers.

### Depression

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

Info line 1300 22 46 36

beyondblue provides extensive information for individuals and schools about depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and post-natal depression.

### STORY 3 – VANESSA'S STORY

We see the Jigsaw class are doing an activity where they look at how they treat each other and how they feel about their place in the group. During this activity, Vanessa tells her group that she is not happy and she feels that people don't like her very much. Bernadette asks Vanessa if she can raise this with the rest of the class. She asks the whole class how they think Vanessa might feel? They say 'left out, excluded, isolated, unhappy, upset and heart broken'. Later in the activity all the groups read out the things that would help them all get along. Vanessa reads for her group. She says 'be friendly, even if you don't play with them'. Other children add 'be fair, communicate nicely, use your heart, have feelings, use power wisely, accept difference, share and include everyone'. Vanessa says that if these things happened, she'd feel 'more wanted and happy and everything'. Daryl says 'everyone would act generous toward each other. It would be a kinder place. Everyone would feel wanted, there'd be no power over'.

A few weeks later, Vanessa tells the group that she is more confident and is happier than she used to be.

### Key issues

- Role of the peer group in the well-being of children
- Breaking the silence about bullying (Vanessa's exclusion), providing a safe place for children to express their feelings
- Exclusion of someone as an act of violence / bullying
- The capacity of the peer group to empathise and make changes
- Supporting children to speak out in a supportive environment

- Peer dynamics and the ways power can be used, either wisely or unwisely
- Learning about others' experiences and perspectives

### Discussion questions

#### Thinking about Vanessa

- How was Vanessa feeling about herself and being at school?
- What made it possible for Vanessa to tell her group how she was feeling?
- How might some of the students in the class have felt when they heard Vanessa's story?
- What are some of the feelings the students might have had when they heard how Vanessa was feeling?
- How did things change for Vanessa?
- What could the other children do to make Vanessa feel more included and wanted?
- Where do you think you fit in your peer group?
- What is it like being in your position?
- Have you ever been in a different position, what was this like?
- Have you ever felt excluded or bullied?
- Who could you tell?
- Could you tell the bully how you felt?
- What could other children do to help?
- What are some of the things that would make your class more supportive and caring towards each other?
- If someone is being excluded and left out in your class group, what can you do to support them?

Work in groups to think of ways to describe bullying, for example:

Bullying is:

- » being teased about the way you look
- » when someone swears at you
- » when someone hurts you intentionally

- » when someone tells others not to play with you
- » when someone calls you names.
- Share your ideas and then create a definition of bullying. Remember that bullying is being hurt on purpose and that it can be emotional, verbal or physical. Discuss the idea of exclusion as a form of bullying. List ways someone can be bullied, draw pictures to place next to each type of bullying and display your lists in the classroom.

## Resources

### Children and Youth Health

<http://www.cyh.com>

If you open the 'Kids' Health' link and then click 'Your School' you will find the following useful topics: 'Dealing with bullies', 'Are you a bystander?' and 'Bullying – being unkind to others'. If you click 'Your Safety' you will find some great information under the heading 'Keeping yourself safe'.

### Bullying. No Way!

<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au>  
 'Bullying. No way!' is developed and managed by all Australian education authorities for use by Australia's Government, Catholic and Independent school communities. It is a comprehensive resource on issues, managing bullying and violence and strategies for schools, teachers and young people.

### Cybersafety and Cyber-bullying

Cyber Safe Kids, a resource for cybersafety and bullying  
<http://www.metromagazine.com.au/shop/categories.asp?cID=19>  
 Keeping young people safe on the internet is everyone's business. This kit contains essential information teachers and parents need to know about students' use of digital technologies – and activities to empower them to enjoy and safely use them.

### STORY 4 – HAYDEN'S STORY

During catch up, Bernadette asks Hayden why he did not come to class last week. Hayden states that he was in the alternate lunch program as the

consequence for having bullied another child. Bernadette talks positively about his behaviour during the year. She refers to the incident as a 'hic-cup' in his year. Bernadette asks him if 'during the incident he thought for himself?' Hayden admits that he did not. Hayden is encouraged to learn from the experience.

### Key issues

- Bullying
- Peer pressure
- Consequences for bullying behaviour
- Taking responsibility for your behaviour
- Learning from mistakes and changing your behaviour in the future
- Using positive qualities and strengths to change your bullying behaviour
- Separating the behaviour from the person

### Discussion questions

#### Thinking about Hayden

- What happened to Hayden?
- How does Bernadette talk to Hayden about this incident?
- What does Hayden's body language say about how he feels?
- What do you think about this discussion happening in front of the whole class?
- Is it possible for Hayden to change his behaviour?
- How can you 'think for yourself' when there is peer pressure to go along with the group?
- Often teachers / adults say to stay away from the bully, play somewhere else. Do you think this would stop the bullying?
- How can teachers and friends support someone who is being bullied?
- How can teachers and friends support you to 'name' the bullying behaviour?
- What does Bernadette mean when she says: 'Often when bullying occurs it becomes the group's secret'?

## Resources

### Worst Best Friends DVD and educational resources

[http://www.actf.com.au/learning\\_centre/edcat/c\\_worstbestfriends.htm](http://www.actf.com.au/learning_centre/edcat/c_worstbestfriends.htm)

*Worst Best Friends* is a comedy series that has wide appeal to children from Years 2 to 5, providing a valuable teaching resource across a wide range of KLAs and topics. It revolves around the life of young Roger Thesaurus, whose two best friends are worst enemies. Conceived and written by award-winning novelist and script-writer Max Dann, *Worst Best Friends* features characters from Max's highly successful children's book series *Adventures with My Worst Best Friend*, *Going Bananas*, and *Dusting in Love*.

The series has particular relevance to English and SOSE outcomes and the themes of civics and citizenship and identity and friendship. Viewing and discussing *Worst Best Friends* provides a focus by which sensitive and controversial issues may be introduced into the classroom, including bullying and family breakdown. The DVD is available from the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) and there are extensive online lesson plans and other educational resources to support its use in the classroom <[http://www.actf.com.au/learning\\_centre/title\\_pages/wbf\\_tp.php](http://www.actf.com.au/learning_centre/title_pages/wbf_tp.php)>.

### Lockie Leonard DVD and educational resources

[http://www.actf.com.au/learning\\_centre/edcat/c\\_lockie.htm](http://www.actf.com.au/learning_centre/edcat/c_lockie.htm)

*Lockie Leonard* the comedy television series is based on the books by Tim Winton. Lockie – a keen surfer – and his family move to a town on a surf beach where Lockie has to cope with his dad being a local cop. His mum is a frighteningly understanding parent, his brother wets the bed and his best friend's a heavy metal devotee. Then he falls in love at twelve and three-quarters years old. In *Lockie Leonard*, we view the truly mixed-up, yet very normal life of Lockie, his family and friends.

The resource is suitable for ages twelve to fifteen with particular relevance to English, Arts (film/media studies, drama, and music), Health & Physical Education (personal development), and Values Education. The resource focuses on personal development (transition, adolescence, masculinity, identity and individuality, growing up, relationships, peer pressure, bullying, coping with challenges, positive thinking and acceptance).

**Themes for stories 5–7:** Communication, loss and grief, separated families, relationships

#### STORY 5 – JACOB’S STORY

Jacob has had a brain tumour removed. Since the surgery he can’t play footy like he used to and he has short-term memory loss. Jacob’s friends are supportive and considerate of his changed circumstances. Jacob’s mum and dad separated soon after Jacob was born.

Jacob is really upset when his dad tells his sister how cross he is that the children forgot to phone him for his birthday. Jacob believes his dad mightn’t want to see him anymore.

Jacob’s teacher is concerned about Jacob and asks Bernadette to speak with him. Bernadette asks Jacob about what’s happened, how he feels about his dad and if he has told his mum how he is feeling. Bernadette asks Jacob if anything is being done and what Jacob would like to say to his dad. Bernadette supports Jacob to write down the things that he wants to say to his dad. Jacob agrees to Bernadette talking to his mum. In the end, we see Jacob in his family home, talking to his dad on the phone, with his mum and stepdad as supports. Jacob lets his dad know how he feels, he sticks to his points, he wishes his dad a happy birthday, says he’s sorry for forgetting his birthday, and Jacob and his dad say they love each other. Jacob tells Bernadette, ‘I just feel better than I did before’.

#### Key themes

- Significance of parents in children’s lives
- Relationships with parents during and after family separation
- Getting support to explore an issue and communicate how you feel
- The significance of parents’ decisions and behaviours in children’s lives
- The importance of clear communication within families

#### Discussion questions

##### Thinking about Jacob

- What has upset Jacob?
  - What does Jacob do about his concern?
  - What does Jacob say to his dad?
  - How does Jacob deliver his message to his dad?
  - Where did Jacob get support?
  - How did things change for Jacob after he talked to his dad?
  - Think of a time when you were really sad and upset about something your parents / caregivers said or did.
    - What was the issue?
    - How did you feel?
- If you were in that position again :
- Who could support you to decide what to do?
  - What would you like to say?
  - How could you say this in a respectful way, without blaming or accusing the other person? (‘I’ statements)
  - If you did deliver this message, how might the other person take it? Would they be fair, would they listen, would they hurt you?
  - Would you need someone to be with you when you deliver the message?
  - Who could you talk to about this?

##### Thinking about Jacob’s dad

- How did you think Jacob’s dad felt when the children forgot his birthday?
- What did he do about this?

- How did this affect Jacob?
- What could Jacob’s dad have done differently?
- If something like this happened with your parent, what would you want them to say or do?
- How can parents know how their children are feeling?

##### Thinking about Jacob’s mum and stepdad

- How did Jacob’s mum and stepdad support Jacob?
- Do you think it was important that Jacob spoke to his dad himself? Why? Why not?

#### STORY 6 – HAYLEY AND JESSICA’S STORY

Hayley and Jessica are cousins, there is a feud in their extended families and they believe this is one of the reasons they haven’t seen their great-grandfather for two years. The girls raise their concern that they won’t get to see their great-grandfather before he dies.

Bernadette talks to the girls about what they have tried, who they could talk to in their families and what they would like to say. The girls make some notes and each agrees to talk to one of their parents.

Hayley talks to her mum and accepts her mum’s view that it is better for Hayley to remember her great-grandfather as he was. Jessica is able to visit her great-grandfather. Hayley asked her family for a memento of her great-grandfather. Both girls seem to be pleased with these outcomes.

#### Key themes

- Significant impact of loss and grief on young people
- Children’s needs and experiences when the adults in a family are fighting
- Communicating how you feel and what you would like to happen
- The ageing and dying process
- Each girl finds their individual approach to solving the issue.

## Discussion questions

### Thinking about Jessica and Hayley

- What are some of the issues that are upsetting and worrying Jessica and Hayley?
- What are the things that Jessica and Hayley can and can not change?
- What are the results of their strategies?
- How would you feel raising these issues with one of your parents?
- How could you do it?
- Who could you ask for support to work out how to raise an issue in a respectful way?
- What is a memento?

### STORY 7 MATTHEW'S STORY

Matthew tells the group that he really wants to spend more time with his dad. He has tried lots of things but his dad is always busy and says 'when he has got some time', but Matt says he never has time.

Matt wants things to change but he has run out of ideas, some of the children in the class make suggestions about things he could try. In the end, Bernadette suggests that Matt could write his dad a letter. Not a 'you're a bad dad letter', but a clear non-blaming letter that says, 'I know you're busy dad, but I just want to spend more time with you.' Matt says he will give this a try.

A couple of weeks later we see Matt have a discussion with Bernadette about what he decided to do. Matt says he has thought about his dad a lot and he thinks his dad would feel really weird about getting a letter, because his dad has learnt his ways for 'thirty-something years' and it's hard to change when you've been raised for that long. Matt thinks he could get his brother and dad to go to a place where they've got lots of Xbox consoles and computer games that his dad's good at.

Matt is happy with the outcome and the idea he has come up with.

### Key themes

- Young people wanting more time with their dads
- Talking about things that are bothering you
- Getting support
- Having time to reflect and consider new ideas and possibilities
- Working out what you can and can't change
- Resilience, recognising life has ups and downs, and bouncing back
- Assertive communication using 'I' statements.
- Young people being supported and confident enough to find their own solutions.

## Discussion questions

### Thinking about Matthew

- What does Matthew want?
- What does Matthew do about his issue?
- What do you think about his solution?
- Do you think he could have done something else?
- What would you do in a situation like this?
- Can Matthew change his dad?
- What can Matthew change?

### Thinking about Matthew's dad

- Do you think Matthew's dad knows Matthew wants to spend more time with him?
- What do you think would make Matthew's dad change?
- If you were Matthew's dad what would you do?
- What would you want Matthew to say to you?

### Thinking about families and relationships

- If you have a family when you are older, what qualities would your family share?

- If you are a parent when you are older, what sort of parent would you choose to be?
- Do you want to spend more time with your mum / dad?
- How can you tell them or suggest things to do together?
- What kinds of activities do you enjoy doing with your parents?
- Design a storyboard (a storyboard is like a comic) of a fun activity you like doing with one or both of your parents. Share it with the class.
- How many other students enjoy the same activity?
- Do the other storyboards give you some ideas to suggest to your parents?

## Resources for stories 5-7

### Child and Youth Health

<http://www.cyh.com>

The Child and Youth Health website provides great information about all aspects of health and well-being. The site is divided into four information-packed sections:

- Kids' Health – Just for kids 6–12. This is a child-friendly site with lots of great information on topics including bullying, safety, feelings, nearly teens, conflict resolution, families, family conflict, divorce and stepfamilies.
- Teen Health – How to be a healthy and happy teenager. In the relationships section, topics include anger, conflict resolution, relationships with parents and family breakdown.
- Young Adult Health – healthy choices, relationships and advice. In the relationships section, topics include sexual health, stepfamilies, sexuality, fighting with brothers and sisters, relationship violence and surviving sexual abuse.
- Parent and Child Health – all you need to know about caring for children. In the family relationships section, topics include being a mum, being a dad, stepfamilies and single mums.

## Background information about violence and bullying

### What is violence and bullying?

Violence and bullying is the misuse of power that hurts, controls, silences and belittles another person(s).

Violence is:

- Misuse of power
- Deliberately hurting someone
- Using power over another person to control them
- Using force to make another person do what you want them to.

### What are the types of violence and bullying?

There are three main types of violence and bullying. They are physical violence (hitting, spitting, punching, pushing, sexual assault), verbal violence (swearing, shouting, yelling, threatening, gossiping, spreading rumours, writing notes or messages) and emotional violence (looks, exclusion, threatening gestures and body language, belittling you in front of your friends). Physical and verbal violence always has an emotional impact.

### Where does it happen?

Violence and bullying happens in many places including at school, at home, in the workplace, at sport, and at social events. On the internet and mobile phones it is called cyberbullying. Violence that happens in the home is called family violence or domestic violence. Racism, sexism, homophobia, sexual assault and harassment are also forms of violence and bullying.

## 'Breaking the Silence' about violence and bullying

When victims are silent, it is because they truly believe that taking action will only make things worse. When victims are silenced, perpetrators are able to maintain their misuse of power.

However when victims and bystanders speak out, they become stronger because the perpetrator no longer has the power to control and silence them.

By getting support and taking action, victims and bystanders feel stronger, less fearful and they are no longer alone.

Talking to trusted adults about the abuse helps victims understand that they are not responsible for the perpetrator's behaviour and that they have the right to be safe and treated with respect in the home, school, workplace, internet, and socially.

See information provided in the 'Guide to Talking to Children and Young People' on page 15 of this study guide.

## The facts

### Impact of bullying on children

- One in six Australian children are bullied in some way on a weekly basis.
- Children who are bullied are three times more likely to develop depressive symptoms.
- Former bullies are four times more likely than other pupils to engage in relatively serious crime. By the age of twenty, sixty percent of bullies have a criminal record.
- Children who are bullied have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, illness and suicide ideation.
- Those who bully are more likely to drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, as well as engage in subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviour.

### Impact of family violence on children

The effects on children who witness domestic violence may include:

- feelings of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame, despair and distrust
- a sense of powerlessness
- physical reactions such as stomach cramps, headaches, sleeping and

- eating difficulties, frequent illness
- slowed developmental capacities, poor school performance, low self-esteem, difficulty relating to peers
- substance abuse
- behavioural problems such as running away from home, violent language and behaviour, acting out
- learning that violence is a legitimate means for obtaining control of a situation or for resolving conflict

– <http://www.dvirc.org.au>

### Impact of violence on young people and their relationships

- More than half a million teenagers are living with violence in the home
- Up to twenty-five per cent of young people aged between twelve and twenty in Australia have witnessed parental violence against their mother or stepmother.
- Nearly one in seven (fourteen per cent) of boys believe it's OK to make a girl have sex with you if she was flirting.
- Close to one in three (thirty-one per cent) of boys believe 'it's not a big deal to hit a girl'.
- Nearly one in three (thirty-two per cent) of boys believe 'most physical violence occurs because a partner provoked it'. Boys aged between twelve and fourteen show higher support for these sorts of attitudes.
- The total annual cost of child abuse and neglect, including long-term human and social costs as well as intervention is \$4.9 billion.
- More than 350,000 (one in seven girls) aged twelve to twenty have experienced sexual assault or rape.
- Almost a third of girls in Year 10 who have had sex, have experienced unwanted sex.
- Full report is called 'An assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships'

– <http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au/media/documents/AssaultOnOurFutureFinal.pdf>

## Guide to talking to children and young people

**Support notes for teachers, welfare staff and other trusted adults in children's lives**

### There is nothing you can't talk about

One of the most important things adults can do to support children is be available to listen to them when they are experiencing challenging life issues.

Don't underestimate the value of listening and talking to a child. By providing a safe place to talk, children can break the silence about violence, depression, anxiety, bullying, family separation and other issues. When a child talks about these issues with a trusted adult it lightens their load, they feel better, they can see more options and they are no longer alone.

### Don't rescue

You can't rescue the young person. This is not helpful and takes away ownership of the child's feelings. When you stop thinking you have to fix everything up you will be much more useful in the support you provide. Wherever possible, the child should be in charge and have ownership of what happens. This helps them move from a silent and frightened victim to being a safe, supported and cared for young person who is believed and has trusted and reliable adults in their life.

- Stay focused on the child's reality and their needs. Don't let your reality and needs for particular outcomes become the focus.
- Understand what you can and can not change in a young person's life.
- Don't get into blaming or justifying the action of others, including parents.
- Always look for ways of assisting the child to build their relationships with parents, carers and family members.

### Listen, enquire, validate & support action

What the young person needs is for you to listen to them and help them make sense of what has happened. When they talk about violence and bullying they need you to affirm their experience and to assist them to take actions that are safe and address their concerns. When they talk about concerns with their family they need you to support them to consider actions that are constructive, safe and build their communication with family members. As a trusted adult, you need to be mindful of the child's situation, their safety, and the reality of the risks they may face.

### Support safety

If, when you talk to the young person, you find out that they are unsafe in their home, you must tell them that their safety is important to you and that you have to take action to address their safety – which will include speaking to other people. Teachers must be aware of their obligations regarding mandatory reporting.

### Identify support people

One of the great things that adults can do is assist children to identify and build their support networks, in particular identifying the trusted adults in their lives, and the qualities that each of these trusted adults has that make them trustworthy.

### Don't ask 'why' questions

It is really important that you don't fall into the trap of asking 'why' questions. Questions like:

- Why did you yell at him?  
'Because I was angry and sick of him not listening.'
- Why did he threaten you with the knife?  
'Because I made him so angry that he just had to let it out.'

You will notice that these 'why' questions lead the child to take

responsibility. They lead the child to believe that everything happened because of them, and that had they not spoken up everything would be alright. The child's rights to safety and respect are no longer important. The perpetrator being responsible for his behaviour and his choices is no longer a focus. The impact of violence is no longer attended to. Supports are not needed; it will all just go away if the child learns to tread more carefully around the perpetrator.

'Why' questions can also lead the child to block or blame others.

Instead of asking 'why' questions, you can ask open questions such as: What happened? How did you feel? etc.

### Good and bad secrets

Clarifying the difference between good and bad secrets assists children to make decisions that are protective of themselves and their friends.

A good secret is fun to share and does not harm anyone. A bad secret is when someone or something is being hurt.

Children are often very confused about what they can tell others, especially if they believe or have been told that something should be kept secret. Children might be scared of getting hurt or in trouble if they tell a secret. They might believe they can't talk about things that happen at home. They may also love the person who is the perpetrator. They may have been asked by them to keep the 'bad secret'. You need to discuss with children the importance of sharing bad secrets with trusted and supportive adults. Just sharing a bad secret with a friend will not solve the problem. Children should be told to keep 'naming' bad secrets to safe adults until some action is taken that addresses the problem.

### Whose behaviour can you change?

Children need to know that only they can control and change their behaviour. They can tell someone how their

behaviour affects them and they can tell them what they would like them to change, but only the other person will decide if they are going to change.

## Adult business and kids' business

Sometimes it is really helpful to assist children to clarify the difference between adult business and kids' business. For example, the things parents fight about are adult business but the impact their fighting has on the child is kids' business. Children can be supported to tell their parents the effect their fighting has on them as children. Support from a trusted adult must always be mindful of the child's situation and safety. Do not ever encourage a child to name something that would endanger them.

## Assertive Communication

Young people can be assisted to identify their feelings and to identify actions they can take to address their concerns. When you encourage a young person to own how they feel about a situation and what they would like to change, you assist them to take responsibility for what they can change and to move from being a victim that is powerless to do anything. Encourage young people to use 'I' statements. For example:

- 'I felt very sad when you told Susie you weren't going to see us anymore. I felt sad and hurt because it means I won't get to spend time with you.'
- 'I haven't seen you for a couple of weeks. I miss talking to you, watching movies with you and just normal stuff with you. I'm sorry we missed your birthday. I didn't mean to.'

Help children to identify the difference between 'I' statements and 'You' statements.

- 'You're a big liar and you don't keep your promises.'
- 'You don't care about us.'

'You' statements are often accusations

and blaming about the whole person. 'You' statements reinforce the idea of one person being the victim and the other the perpetrator. 'You' statements talk about the person not the behaviour.

## Avoid speculating

One of the traps adults fall into is not talking to a child directly but speculating about the reasons that a child is upset, angry, shy, violent etc. If you assume a story, 'He's sad today because his mum's in hospital', this may resolve your concerns but is of no help to the child. It is far more helpful to simply ask the child how they are and what's happening. You can say things like 'I've noticed that you have been very quiet today, is there something you would like to talk about?' This is respectful of the child, their story and experience; it may help the child give voice to their concerns, clarify their feelings and may lead to some useful actions being identified.

## Support notes for teachers, welfare staff and other trusted adults in children's lives

### Casey's story

#### Background briefing for teachers

When Casey tells the class about a violent incident with her dad, she says he picked up a knife. Bernadette clarifies the situation by asking 'then what did he do?' and 'how did he pick up the knife?'. These important questions check information, add detail and clarify for everyone in the room what actually happened. Without these questions, all the children and adults in the room could be speculating and imagining all sorts of scenes depending on their personal experience and imaginations. Bernadette then reminds the class about confidentiality. In the Jigsaw group, the class has discussed confidentiality as one of their group rules. Confidentiality is talked about in terms of:

- Whose story is it?

- Who can tell this story?
- What's the impact of someone else telling the story outside the room?

Don't confuse confidentiality with good and bad secrets.

In the office, Casey tells Bernadette what happened and how she felt. She identifies that she could talk to her mum about it and that she could also tell her dad how his violent behaviour affected her. Casey is also linked up with the Assistant Principal as a support person that Casey identified she could trust in the school.

Casey really loves her dad, but she can still recognise that he used violent and threatening behaviour and she felt really frightened and scared and that this was not an appropriate release of his anger. This can lead off to looking at what anger is (an emotion) and what are positive and negative ways of dealing with anger. However this should not be the primary discussion as it removes the focus from the key conversation about violence, bullying and misuse of power in relationships and how this affects the safety of other people, in this case Casey.

The following week, Bernadette catches up with Casey to check how she is going and what has happened. Bernadette talks with Casey about the patterns of behaviour that we learn and challenges Casey to think about the patterns of her own behaviour.

### Kacee's story

#### Background briefing for teachers

Notice that, in Kacee's story, Bernadette asks Kacee questions that help her clarify what has happened, the types of violence that were used, and the impact this had on Kacee. During the class, Bernadette focuses the class attention on considering what they can do to support Kacee, she then suggests that Kacee meet with her later. In the office, Bernadette checks how often this has happened, where her stepdad is now, where her mum is now, what



was happening the next day? These questions are important because they help Kacee clarify the situation; they also provide a safety check so that the school is able to assess the safety of Kacee and her family. Bernadette also helps Kacee identify what she would like to say to her mum and clarify that it is not her fault when her parents fight. She talks to Kacee about whether her stepdad used his power wisely.

You will notice the facilitator does not try to get Kacee to talk to her stepdad directly. This is because Kacee has said she is really scared and frightened of him coming back. He is not with the family anymore. Do not ever encourage a child to name something that would endanger them.

In Kacee's story, it is important to explore whether she can let her mum know how she is feeling and how the violence has affected her. This is important because children who witness/experience violence can blame themselves, become parentified (protective of their parent or siblings), they can also become compliant – 'the good child' – in an effort to make everything alright. Kacee might think that she can't tell her mum how she is feeling because this will only upset her mum. It is important to assist Kacee to identify the trusted adults in her life and to realise that these people can support her and that it is really important to let these people know what she is thinking and feeling. One of the things that teachers can do is assist children to identify and build the child's support networks; in particular identifying the trusted adults in their lives, and the qualities that each of these trusted adults has that makes them trustworthy. It is also great to talk to children about the value of getting support and talking to someone when things are getting you down. In this case, Kacee is being encouraged to break the silence about violence. It is equally important for children to break the silence about depression, anxiety, bullying, and their fears. When you talk about something with a trusted adult it can lighten your load, you may feel better, you may see more options and you may feel that you are no longer alone.

After this incident, Kacee's stepdad sought medical and counselling support. He made apologies to family members. Four years later, when he saw the documentary, Kacee's stepdad was very moved. He said he wanted this story to be told because men need to understand how their use of violence hurts their children. He said he wanted other men to know that you can get help and change your behaviour.

If the violence continued in Kacee's home you would need to continue to report this to the Child Protection Unit and you could also make contact with Kacee's mum to offer her support and links to family violence support services. This is not an invasion of privacy, women and children have the right to be safe from violence and we as community members also have a responsibility to break the silence about family and domestic violence. Violence is not OK and we all need to play our part in speaking out and supporting each other to say no to violence. Teachers are obligated to report when they believe a child's safety is at risk.

### **Vanessa's Story**

#### Background briefing for teachers

The 'power in groups' activity works because the groundwork has been done to develop trust, support and safety in the group. The class need to be practised in listening to each other, violence and bullying need to have been discussed. The group needs to have discussed the misuse of power to control and silence others. The teacher needs to be a trusted and reliable adult who takes a strong stand against violence and bullying, including the more subtle but equally damaging behaviours such as excluding, giving put downs and using negative body language.

Once the groundwork has been done, meaningful work can be done within peer groups to develop communication skills, to support children / young people to talk about how they feel, to ensure that they are listened to and

that their experiences are validated and to make commitments about the changes that can be made.

The most effective approach is to support victims of bullying and excluding behaviours to 'break the silence' and speak out about how they feel and what they would like to change. For most children, it will help if the teacher helps them to identify at least one of their peers who could also support them. It can also help when other children identify that they have also experienced being excluded and how this made them feel. Sharing these stories helps build empathy within the group. This can be a great opportunity, as happens in the documentary, to write up some group agreements/commitments about what they will do in the future and check in with them, especially the victim, about how things are going.

### **Hayden's Story**

#### Background briefing for teachers

Hayden has received consequences for bullying another child. The consequences include internal suspension, and writing a 'sorry note' to everyone and saying sorry for missing Jigsaw. The consequences are important because they place responsibility for bullying behaviour clearly with Hayden. Hayden talks about his behaviour in front of the whole class. This allows Hayden to make a commitment to change his behaviour in the future and allows everyone in the class to learn from Hayden's story. Bernadette also takes the opportunity to remind Hayden of his much improved behaviour over the year, encouraging him to learn from this incident.

### **Jacob's Story**

#### Background briefing for teachers

In all situations involving conflict between parents and children, it is most important to keep your focus on the child and the issues as the child sees them. Bernadette focuses on hearing

Jacob's story and clarifying or challenging him if necessary. You will notice that Jacob is supported in talking about what's upsetting him and to think about and work out what he would like to say to his dad. He is supported to own how he feels and what he would like to happen. He is encouraged to do this in a non-blaming or accusing way. Bernadette does not take sides or make any judgements about Jacob's dad. She stays focused on Jacob's needs and building his relationships within his family. After checking in with Jacob, Bernadette engages family support to assist Jacob to talk to his dad on the phone. In this way, Jacob is empowered to talk directly to his dad. He learns about his own capacity to take action and to communicate directly with his dad.

## Matthew's Story

### Background briefing for teachers

The most important thing is to listen to what Matthew is saying and support him to address his concerns with his dad. In Matthew's case, this means encouraging him to write a letter to his dad to let him know how he feels. This encourages Matthew to take responsibility for his feeling and not just feel like a victim and that he is powerless to do anything about it. It is important that Matthew is the one taking the action. If the teacher or Matthew's mum had a word to his dad this would be rescuing Matthew and taking the power away from him. Matt chooses a new solution of his own. Bernadette is respectful and complimentary of his ingenuity. Bernadette's suggestion was a starting point for Matthew to think about ways to approach his dad. Insisting that Matthew take her suggestion would have disempowered Matthew.

## Hayley and Jessica's Story

### Background briefing for teachers

As a teacher, you can be most helpful if you support the girls to tell their

stories, clarify what is happening, and check their thinking about the reality of the situation. Help them separate what is parents' business, for example the family feud, and what issues are theirs. Ask them how they feel and what they need to tell their parents. Ask them to think about how and when they would do this. Check what they have agreed to do and then follow up with them to see how things have gone.

Always look for the realistic things that children and young people can do that aim to strengthen relationships with their parents, carers and family.

Warning! Don't start speculating about the parents' reasons for not taking the girls to see their great-grandad. Your speculations will be more about you and your life experiences and not necessarily of any relevance to the girls' situation. It is not your role to either start justifying or condemning the parents' position. The goal is to assist the girls to clarify their experiences and feelings and to respectfully express their concerns to their parents.

## The writers

### Carla Meurs

Carla is the co-ordinator of the 'Solving the Jigsaw' program. She has worked on the development and implementation of 'Solving the Jigsaw' since its inception in 1997.

Carla hopes that *Kids' Business* and the accompanying study guide will inspire children, parents, families, teachers and school communities to celebrate the integrity of children and young people. She hopes that school communities will strive to play a profound role in the care and nurture of children and young people. Carla believes in the capacity of schools and the importance of training and resourcing teachers with the skills to be significant, trusted, responsive and reliable adults in the lives of children and young people.

Carla has seven years experience as the co-coordinator of a regional domes-

tic violence service (EASE) and eight years experience as a secondary school teacher. Carla is a dedicated advocate for the rights and needs of children and young people and the capacity of communities to work in partnerships to support the well-being of children.

## Cath South

Cath South is co-director of People Pictures – the producers of *Kids' Business*. People Pictures' documentaries reveal our community and explore our values and priorities. These films have won awards and screened nationally and internationally. Cath spent a year, as co-director and sound recordist, observing the class featured in this documentary. She then spent another year in the edit suite immersing herself in the seventy-plus hours of footage. She has degrees in filmmaking and film theory from Monash University and Swinburne Film and Television School. She has taught at universities in Melbourne, on Aboriginal communities in Warpiri country and with youth in Castlemaine, Victoria, near where she lives. As the mother of three children, she passionately believes that our society should look critically at how we raise and support our children.

## Acknowledgements

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## Help lines, support services and websites

**Kids Help Line** 1800 55 1800  
<http://www.kidshelp.com.au>  
24-hour telephone and online counselling available for children and young people in Australia. Online newsletter, support, information and resources.

**Life Line** 13 11 44  
<http://www.lifeline.org.au>  
24-hour telephone counselling – for getting through tough times.

**Violence Against Women**  
1800 200 526  
Confidential 24-hour help line and referral

**Child Abuse Prevention Service**  
1800 688 009  
24-hour crisis support services for parents

**Relationships Australia** 1300 364 277  
<http://www.relationships.com.au>  
For couples and abused and abusive partner counselling

**Men's Line** 1300 78 99 78  
<http://www.menslineaus.org.au>  
For men struggling with emotions.

**beyondblue** 1300 22 46 36  
<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>  
beyondblue is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders in Australia.

**Domestic Violence Resource Centre**  
<http://www.dvirc.org.au>  
This website provides information about violence and abuse for adults, young people and family and friends. It is user-friendly and a great resource for anyone seeking assistance and information. The site also provides a listing of contact and support services in every state.

**Resilience Foundation**  
<http://www.resilience.org.au>  
This website provides practical ways to use a resilience-building framework with children and adolescents.

**Raising Children**  
<http://raisingchildren.net.au>  
Great resources for all parents, including separating parents.

**Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service**  
[http://www.rch.org.au/mhs/pubs/index.cfm?doc\\_id=993](http://www.rch.org.au/mhs/pubs/index.cfm?doc_id=993)  
This website has excellent fact sheets on fears and anxieties, eating disorders, depression, chills and adolescent mental health, challenging behaviours and ADHD.

**Measuring Domestic Violence**  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/ViolenceAgainstWomen.htm>  
Parliamentary library: Measuring domestic violence and sexual assault against women: a review of the literature and statistics. This is a comprehensive source of current research.

**Domestic Violence Victoria**  
<http://www.dvvic.org.au>  
The domestic violence Victoria website provides information about

family violence, training, policy and legislation, resources, research and links.

**Domestic Violence Clearing House**  
<http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au>  
This website has many links to various articles and sources of information for family violence issues. It also provides a source for references for students and counsellors.

**Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse**  
<http://www.asca.org.au>  
Information, education, advocacy, support and other links.

**Australian Institute for Family Studies**  
<http://www.aifs.gov.au>  
For those who want to read articles pertaining to childhood sexual abuse.

**Kids First**  
<http://www.kidsfirst.com.au>  
Website with basic information about child abuse.

**Child and Youth Health**  
<http://www.cyh.com>  
The Child and Youth Health website provides great information about all aspects of health and well-being.

**Bullying No Way**  
<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au>  
This website provides comprehensive information and resources for everyone in the school community.

**Bursting the Bubble**  
<http://www.burstingthebubble.com>  
This website is for teenagers and is about abuse by family members. It provides quizzes, stories, advice and more.

**Solving the Jigsaw**  
<http://www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au>  
'Solving the Jigsaw' is a multi-award-winning and accredited best-practice program that works with students, teachers, parents and the whole school community to change the culture of violence and build a culture of well-being.



BERNADETTE CATCHES UP WITH HAYLEY'S NEWS REGARDING THE AILING OF HER GRANDFATHER.



To purchase the *Kids' Business* DVD, visit <<http://www.peoplepictures.com.au>>.

For more information on 'Solving the Jigsaw', visit <<http://www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au>>.

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