

Enhancing Career Development

Among adolescents, work and leisure often relate to school experiences and learning in preparation for career development. The work and leisure domain of the Wheel of Wellness represents the opportunity for individuals to creatively and productively express skills that in turn, produce enjoyment and fulfillment (Myers et al., 2000). Correspondingly, Lockhart and Hay (1995) suggested that healthy self-efficacy in adolescence relates to work-related accomplishments such as performing duties, engaging in vicarious learning, and exerting control over physiological reactions to life events. Leisure, as a vital part of the human experience from youth into adulthood (Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997), has been related to the development of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-worth (Mackey, 1996), and the freedom to participate in role experimentation, a significant factor in transitioning from youth into adulthood (Caldwell & Darling, 1999).

Large Group Guidance to Enhance Career Development. According to the ASCA National Model for School Counseling (2003), school counselors are responsible for delivering career development programs through large group classroom guidance curricula that address three broad standards: (1) helping students develop career awareness and employment readiness; (2) learning to employ strategies to achieve career goals; and (3) understanding the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work. The work and leisure domain of the Wheel of Wellness indicates that career development is an essential life task that corresponds to creativity, enjoyment, and fulfillment (Myers et al., 2000).

Thus, exploring students' strengths, interests, and curiosities when developing career development classroom curricula is essential, not only to enhance career development, but also to encourage growth in areas such as self-esteem and self-efficacy which mitigate bullying behaviors among both victims and perpetrators (Patton et al., 2004; Prinstein et al., 2001). In schools, career education lays the groundwork for future career development by helping students become knowledgeable about their own personal characteristics, interests, aptitudes, and skills, while developing a positive attitude toward work. Other competencies include increasing adolescent students' awareness of and respect for the diversity of the world of work, as well as understanding how educational achievements can affect their future career choices (Benz, 1996). Within classroom guidance, school counselors can facilitate students exploring their self-perceived strengths and interests through the work and leisure domain on the Wheel of Wellness; thus, impacting all other areas of students' wellness including the inclination to bully or predisposition to be bullied (Eisenberg et al, 2003).

Small Group Counseling to Enhance Career Development. The Wheel of Wellness as an intervention paradigm specifically incorporates career development as an essential component of well-being, corresponding to the ASCA National Model (2003) mandate that school counselors promote career development among students. Using wellness-based career development interventions to address the problem of female bullying also provides school counselors with a way to meet ASCA standards while doing so. The following wellness-based, small group counseling intervention focuses on career development an intervention within a group of adolescent girls who have been victims of girl-to-girl bullying.

The main focus of the activity is to allow the students the opportunity to explore careers that might interest them by encouraging them to share their ideas first in a dyad, later with a group of classmates. Discussions should follow after the students have had time to create a chart, collage or short narrative consisting of pictures, listing responsibilities and/or identifying quotes from people in a career of interest. Several follow-up activities would undoubtedly arise from the students sharing with one another, leading to deeper questions about the careers discussed as well as excitement about possibilities never considered prior to this type of exploration. Subsequent discussions also may lead students to discover types of careers that had *not* been chosen for discussion, thus leading to further exploration. This type of processing is virtually open-ended and can be adapted to include exercises designed to improve self-esteem and self-efficacy (i.e., “What I am good at,” “Places I’ve been,” or “Things I do well”), and respect for gender roles and diversity in careers, etc. Because this type of exploration has been found to play a significant role in helping young people make a healthy transition into adulthood (Caldwell & Darling, 1999), it follows that the work and leisure domain of the Wheel of Wellness will be strengthened and will help girls build more positive peer relationships, resulting in fewer incidents of bullying behaviors as well as mitigating the effects upon academic performance as a consequence of being bullied.

Intentionally attending to and enhancing wellness among adolescents appear to not only be important factors in promoting optimal adolescent personal and social development, academic success, and career development in conjunction with the ASCA National Model, but also interventions to treat girl-to-girl bullying within high schools for perpetrators and victims of bullying.

Concluding Thoughts: The End of Adolescent Girl-to-Girl Bullying?

The good news is that the public, school personnel, and school counselors are increasingly aware of and attending to the problem of girl-to-girl bullying within schools. Various interventions and school-based programs have been proposed. However, as previously discussed, many existing interventions do not account for the unique gender-specific factors that underlie the problem of female-to-female relational aggression, for both perpetrators and victims. Additionally, most of the current interventions do not develop or enhance strengths as a way of promoting empowerment, appropriate assertiveness, and healthy coping skills to prevent bullying on the part of perpetrating females and the victims of bullying. Wellness-based interventions provide an alternative to present models. Using the Wheel of Wellness (Myers et al., 2000), wellness-based interventions for either perpetrators or victims are created with consideration of the developmental and gender-specific elements of the problem and existing strengths that can be utilized in forming a unique, personalized goals for the student.

Research clearly indicates that both psychological and physical wellness is adversely affected by girl-to-girl bullying within the schools, whether for the perpetrator or the victim. While the increase in awareness and the attempts to address the problem are positive steps, there remains a need for new, alternative interventions to combat this growing problem in American culture. Wellness-based interventions are viable alternatives. The problem of female relational aggression is deeply rooted in our socialization processes and cultural norms. As such, alleviating the problem inevitably will take time. In the meantime, it behooves school counseling professionals to seek new options with the ultimate goal of helping girls build healthy relationships and effectively manage the interpersonal connections that are essential to optimal female's academic, career, and personal and social development.