

## Case Study - Bradley

Lydia is on yard duty when Dana, a student in her year 3/4 class reports to her that she has been kicked in the leg by Bradley, a student in the 3/4 classroom next door. Being a restoratively minded teacher, Lydia resists the *quick flick* to yard detention for Bradley. She instead listens empathically while Dana tells her story, and then asks Dana what will help.

Dana thinks for a few seconds and then says that she wants to tell Bradley that she won't be a friend if he's going to '*go psycho*' every time she suggests that they play with others. Dana says that she just wants to talk to Bradley wants him to say sorry. Dana doesn't want Bradley to get in trouble. With this understanding of Dana's wishes, Lydia's intention is to firstly get Dana and Bradley together to talk about what happened and then to proceed from there.

Lydia knows Bradley quite well because he is often at the time out desk in her room on buddy time out from next door. Bradley's yard behaviour is often the topic of staffroom discussions. This isn't the first time that young Bradley has lost his cool and struck out angrily at others.

Lydia and Dana head over to Bradley for a chat. Bradley has taken himself to an out of bounds corner of the schoolyard and is angrily digging in the ground with a stick. As Lydia approaches, she notices that Bradley is muttering angrily to himself. Lydia hears Bradley saying "*I hate myself, and I hate this stupid school*". Bradley sees Lydia and Dana both approaching. He stands, throws his stick to the ground and begins to walk further into the out of bounds area (shoulders hunched, fists clenched at his sides, head down).

Lydia calls out in a light tone "*Hey Bradley, Dana just wants a chat with you about what happened*". Bradley calls back in an angry voice "*I only talk with friends, not things...suspend me. I don't care what you do*". Lydia looks at Dana to gauge her response to Bradley's insult. Dana looks at her and shrugs, rolling her eyes. Lydia decides that to continue the pursuit is pointless and that a restorative chat with Bradley in his current mood will possibly end up making things worse, not better for Dana and Bradley. Lydia also can't guarantee that she'll be able to keep her own cool with Bradley throwing off so much anger. Lydia turns to Dana and says, "*Hey, do you think it's best to let him cool off before we have a chat with him?*" Dana says "*yeah, he'll just lose it if we try to do it now*".

Lydia knows that pushing Bradley now will result in a power struggle, another suspension or take home for Bradley and yet another reason for him to feel hard done by and to blame the school for his behaviour.

Lydia calls out to Bradley "*Hey mate, we can see you want to be alone, we'll catch up with you later. For now, you need to come back in bounds ...thanks Bradley*". With that, Lydia and Dana turn and walk away from Bradley, leaving him where he is and tactically ignoring whatever he might be muttering. Lydia decides that if Bradley doesn't engage in a conversation with her and Dana this time, she will refer him to yard time out, and try to get him and Dana together for a chat again after that. If that can't happen, she'll ask Greg, the School Counsellor to take the issue on when he can.

Lydia is quietly determined to deal with this, one way or the other, for Bradley's sake as well as Dana's.

# Bradley's Life

Bradley is a boy who struggles in many areas of his work at school. He often acts out during any lessons where writing is involved and spends about 3 out of 5 maths lessons a week in the time out room or the front office because his behaviour is so disruptive during these lessons. Bradley has significant difficulty with making and keeping friends. He is often involved in heated arguments about *whose friend is whose* and regularly complains to teachers and peers (anyone who will listen) that others are *stealing friends* from him.

Bradley likes to hang around one or two other friends most of the time and appears to feel quite vulnerable in larger groups. In larger groups, Bradley has difficulty because he can't control what happens. He seems unable to keep up with games and misses lots of the social cues in these bigger groups that other kids pick up on naturally. When Bradley feels vulnerable - as though he is *losing his friends* - he engages in a range of unhelpful behaviours like sulking on his own, pretending to be hurt or showing off and trying to be the 'tough guy' in the group by playing roughly or using put downs to try to sound smart. This 'over the top' behaviour can frustrate other kids and when they ignore this or try to get away from him, Bradley resorts to name calling, threatening violence toward those he sees as a threat to his friendships, threatening his friends that he'll bash them if they play with somebody else, or alternatively, promising gifts to coerce friends to stay with him.

During the short lived moments when Bradley feels secure with one or two other students he can be delightful and cooperative in the yard and classroom. However, when he feels that he is losing friendships or that he's on the outer of a group, his behaviour deteriorates remarkably. He can become aggressive toward other students and extremely sullen and uncooperative with adults. He acts out in a range of ways in the classroom, mostly attention seeking behaviour (making noises, clowning, wandering, or even belching in other student's faces) in desperate attempts to get noticed. This invariably lands him in time out, or out of the classroom, which perpetuates his feelings of exclusion and escalates his attention seeking behaviours.

Bradley's current teacher, Shane is inexperienced. He is so challenged by Bradley's aggressive and disruptive behaviour that he cannot see the underlying reasons for Bradley's actions and feels that his only option is to deal with Bradley's behaviour in increasingly severe ways including keeping Bradley in more and more at recess and lunch time and isolating Bradley from others in the classroom. To

Shane's despair, this just seems to be making Bradley's behaviour worse. Shane is at the point where all he feels he can do is try to keep other students safe from Bradley's verbal and sometimes physical outbursts. Bradley has been referred to a behaviour consultant.

Bradley lives at home with his mother Suzie, and step father Rick and three other younger children. Suzie does her best to give Bradley as much time as she can but she is kept very busy with the younger children (6, 3 and 6 months old). Rick tries hard with Bradley but gets quickly frustrated with reports of Bradley's at school behaviour and struggles say anything that is encouraging to Bradley. Suzie and Rick are concerned about Bradley's behaviour at school and are mostly supportive of Shane and the leadership staff at the school. Bradley's negative behaviour is a source of shame for Suzie and Rick as they feel they are failing as parents in the eyes of the school. They are worried because lately Bradley has been crying himself to sleep, complaining that he has no friends and that he wants to change schools.

	<b>Withdrawal responses</b>	<b>Attack Self responses</b>	<b>Avoidance responses</b>	<b>Attack Other responses</b>
<b>Bradley's behaviours following him kicking Dana</b>	<p>Taking himself away to the out of bounds area</p> <p>Walking away when approached by Dana and Lydia</p>	<p>Saying he hates himself</p> <p>Inviting suspension</p>	<p>Saying "I don't care..."</p> <p>being sullen and defiant when approached</p>	<p>Kicking Dana</p> <p>Putting Dana down</p> <p>Calling the school stupid</p>
<b>Bradley's history</b>	<p>Sulking</p> <p>Running and hiding</p> <p>Escalating himself to suspension</p>	<p>being defiant with his teacher</p> <p>Negative self talk when friends want to play with other</p>	<p>clowning behaviour</p> <p><i>attention seeking</i></p> <p>being sullen and defiant with his teacher</p>	<p>name calling</p> <p>threatening others when he thinks he is losing friends</p> <p>being sullen and defiant with his teacher</p>