

Bullying 101:

Guide for Middle and High School Students

A guide to the basics of bullying, what it is and isn't, the role of students, and tips on what you can do.



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What Is Bullying?

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A lot of teens describe bullying as, "When someone tries to make you feel less about who you are as a person, and you aren't able to make it stop."

Bullying is different from the typical disagreements or arguments between friends and classmates. What's the difference?

It's bullying if:

- The person is being hurt, harmed or humiliated with words or behavior.
- The behavior is repeated, though it can be a single incident.
- It is being done intentionally.
- The person being hurt has a hard time defending themselves from the behavior.
- The student(s) who are doing it have more power.*

* "Power" can include such things as being older, being physically bigger or stronger, having more social status, or when a group of students "gang up" on someone.



“ How Is Someone Bullied? ”

Bullying can be:

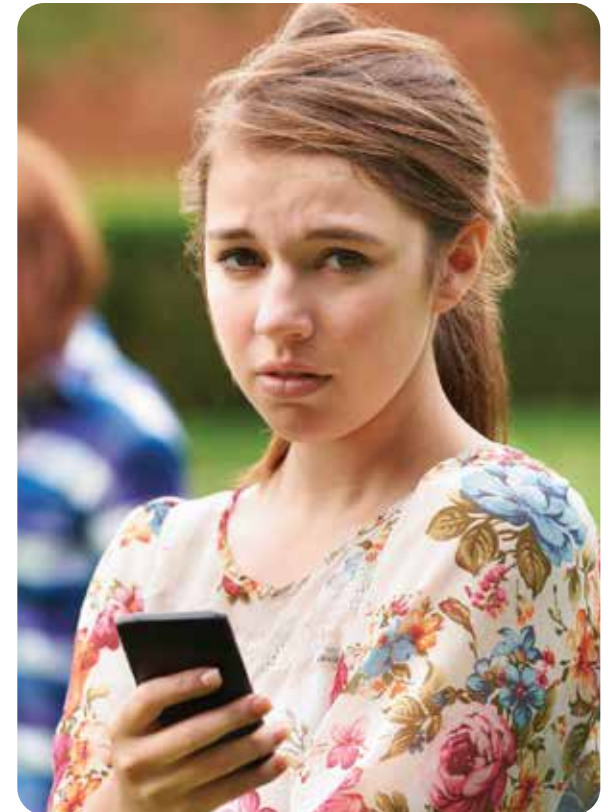
Physical: This one's easy to recognize. Examples include pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, biting, hair pulling, inappropriate touch, breaking objects, and taking or damaging another's stuff.

Verbal: It's really common because it's quick, direct, and easy to do. Examples include teasing, name calling, threats, intimidation, demeaning jokes, rumors, gossip, and slander.

Emotional: This type of bullying is more sophisticated. It's calculated and often done by a group. Nasty stuff. It hurts people on the inside and makes them feel bad about themselves. Examples include leaving someone out on purpose, telling lies to hurt someone's reputation, and humiliating someone publicly.

Sexual: This one is something that not everyone thinks of as bullying. It can include using words that demean someone about their gender or sexuality, inappropriate touching of body parts, unwelcome physical contact, or even posting inappropriate photos online.

Cyberbullying: Using technology is the newest way to bully. Examples include sending mean text messages, posting videos, stories, or photos that ridicule someone, and spreading rumors through social networking sites.



“ Who Is Involved? ”

Bullying can happen to anyone.

Bullying is about someone's behavior. That behavior could be directed at the shy, quiet student, or the class tough guy. Girls bully, boys bully, preschool kids bully, and high school kids bully – there is no one characteristic or aspect that indicates who gets bullied. The one sure thing is that no one **ever** deserves to be bullied, it is **never** their fault, and if someone is being bullied, they have a **right** to be safe.

So who bullies?

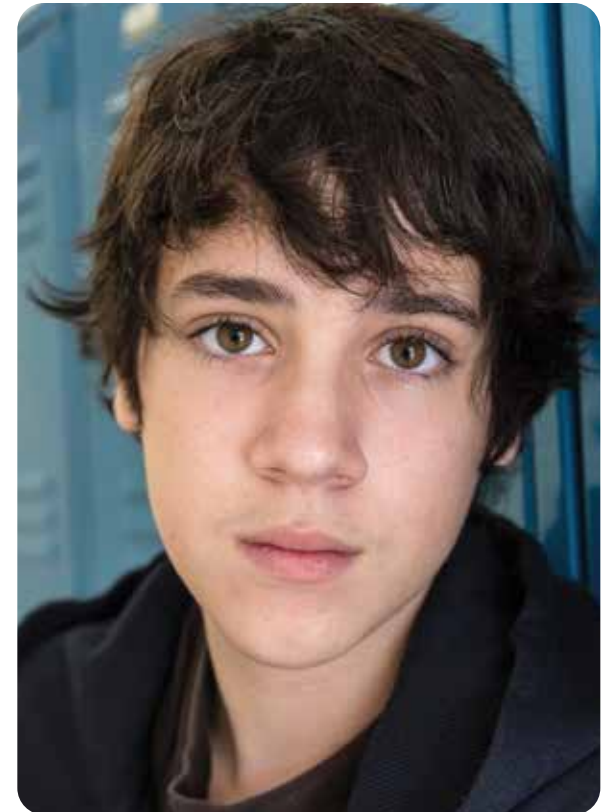
Think the bully is the big guy who wears black, has low self-esteem, and gets mad a lot? Could be, but it can also be the petite cheerleader or the quiet honor student. It's not appearance that defines someone who bullies; it is behavior. Students who bully can be any size, age, grade, or gender.



“ Who Is Involved? ”

Then there is the group, **called the bystanders or witnesses**, who sees the bullying and this group is really important. They may not be getting bullied, they may not be bullying, but their reaction has a direct impact on the situation. Think about it: Have you ever seen a group watching a fight? There are some who look, then walk away; there are others who watch and say nothing; and then there are those who cheer it on. These responses make a huge difference in the outcome of every bullying situation.

And to add to it all, the role that any student plays in a bullying situation often shifts and changes from day to day. Somebody who was bullied one day, might make fun of a younger kid the next day. The kid who laughed with other kids at a fight yesterday, might ask the new kid with no friends to sit with him at lunch today.



“ Why Does It matter? ”

This year in the United States, 13 million students will be bullied. That’s almost one of out every four students. They are often scared to go to school. That means those students lose the opportunity to learn. It is every student’s right to feel safe – and be safe – in school. Students who are bullied may also have lower self-esteem, less self-confidence, increased fear and anxiety, depression, lower grades, and even suicidal thoughts.

It’s not just the targets of bullying who are affected. Students who bully grow up to have a greater risk of getting in trouble with the law. By the age of 25, one in four who have bullied will have spent time in jail.

Those who witness bullying often express that they feel less safe at school. Their feelings about seeing the bullying range from anger to guilt to fear, and they often wish they could help but don’t know how.

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What If I'm Being Bullied?

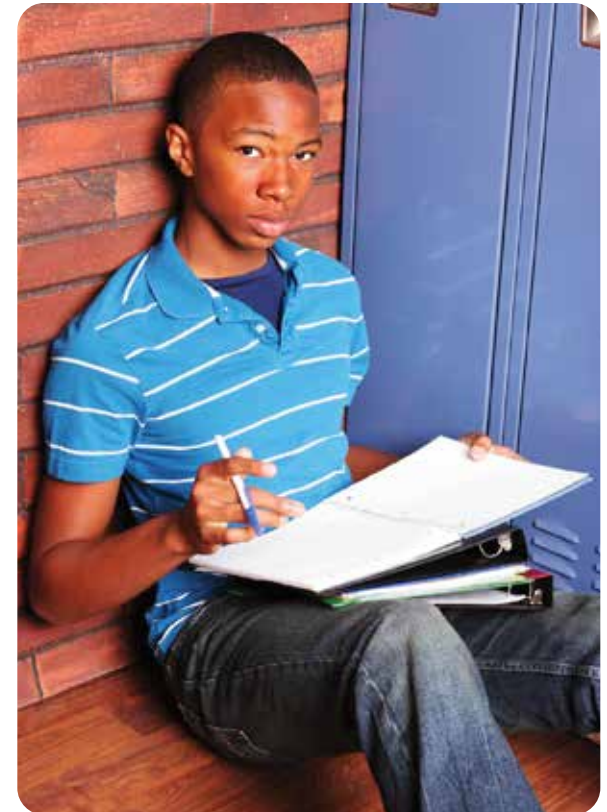
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Be a Self-advocate

Being a “self-advocate” means speaking up for yourself, telling people what you need, and taking action. Bullying can be stopped, but you need a plan. First, think about what you can do to change your situation, and then make an action plan.

In the plan:

- Write down what is happening to you, when and where it takes place, and who is involved.
- List your role in this action plan, who else should be involved, and what they could do.
- Share this information with your parents and an adult you trust at school.



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Assert Your Rights

Every student has the right to feel safe at school. If one adult isn't able to help you, don't give up! It is your right to talk with another adult, such as a parent. When you do speak to a teacher, an administrator, or a person you trust at school:

- Share all of the information in your action plan.
- Ask: “What can be done so I feel safe and other kids do, too?”
- Tell adults that there are laws outlining the school's responsibility in handling bullying situations.

There are federal, state and local laws – and school policy – which provide additional protections from bullying.



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What If I Am Bullying?

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What's so great about hurting someone? Teasing, tripping, punching, kicking, texting, excluding, ignoring, hazing – it really says more about you than them. Think about it:

Think no one cares if you bully someone?

Think again. Parents, teachers, classmates and friends all care, but mostly the person being bullied cares. The bigger question is why don't you care?

Think you'll feel better about yourself if you bully someone?

Jealous, huh? Not as good, smart, attractive or popular as someone? Join the club. Why not try working with or learning from someone as opposed to bullying them and make a friend in the process?

Think you won't be part of the 'in-crowd' if you don't bully?

So, you're okay with being bullied into being accepted? Bully or be bullied? Either way you lose. Stand up for yourself and if people don't like you for who you are, then you really don't want them as friends anyway.

Think its okay to bully someone if you have been bullied?

How does taking out your frustration on someone else make anything better? Talking with a trusted friend or adult would be much more productive than seeking the approval from the person who bullied you.



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Think you'll get attention if you bully?

Think detention! If you bully, you're likely to get caught sooner or later. Who's attention would you rather draw: the detention officer or your skating buddies, your angry parents or your shopping sistas? Why not spend your time with someone you like rather than demanding attention from someone you don't?

Think you're in control?

Think about why you are bullying: to be liked, to get back at someone, to feel better about yourself? Whatever it is, find someone you trust and start talking.



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What If I Witness Bullying?

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“It’s none of my business—I should just ignore it and walk away—right?”

Wrong!

Put yourself in the target’s place. If you were being pushed around, laughed at, gossiped about, made fun of or, ignored on purpose, you’d probably want someone to help you out.

And it doesn’t even take that much to make a difference. The very least you could do is to **NOT** join in. Your non-support of someone bullying sends a clear message that you don’t agree with what’s happening. If you see someone being laughed at, instead of turning your back, help the target to turn his or her back to the bullying by walking to class with him or her or, telling them that they don’t deserve what’s happening to them. Show your support. Kids who are bullied often feel like no one cares—help them feel like they’re not alone.



“What If I Witness Bullying?”

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What else can you do?

If you read cyberbullying, write something nice on the target’s wall or let the person bullying know it’s not cool to make fun of people online, or you can even report in anonymously and many service providers will remove the post.

But if it’s a fight you witness, don’t try to step in the middle. Instead, tell an adult or other authority figure what’s going on so that they can intervene.

You can always let your teachers and parents know so they can help out—bullying is not just about physical fights; words have the power to injure too, both online in and person. Teachers are there to help you out, not just give you homework, and parents care about what happens to you.

What can make an even bigger difference?

Get your friends to help out, too! This is an issue that affects a lot of people and most of them want it to stop too, so get together and start a bullying prevention program at school.



“You’re Not Alone”

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No One Deserves to Be Bullied

Think about what it means to feel all alone, to believe that no one cares, to think that there is no way to change what is happening.

- That’s a lonely place to be.
- When everyone around you looks the other way, ignores you, and maybe even sides with the person hurting you, it’s hard to believe in yourself.
- It’s hard to think that life will ever be any different.



“ We’re Here For You ”

Imagine how all that can be different. Imagine during those times when you feel broken, that someone is there for you.

- They talk to you, they tell you that it will be okay, that you matter.
- They say that you deserve to be treated with respect and kindness.
- They tell you that they will be there for you.
- Imagine how different that feels.
- It doesn’t take away all the hurt, but hope is a powerful medicine for pain.

Consider how simple it is to tell someone that you care, that they matter, that they are not alone. The support is meaningful. It can take someone from feeling hopeless to feeling valued and respected.

