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Look Around...



Who Is Involved?

Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

Bullying involves multiple players. Bullies, victims, and bystanders all play important roles in contributing to bullying—and each can help make bullying stop. Since bullying is primarily learned, it can also be “unlearned”—or conditions can be changed so that it is not learned in the first place.

Bullies... **select** and systematically train their victims to comply to their demands. They seek active encouragement, passive acceptance, or silence from bystanders.

But, bullies can be stopped when victims and bystanders learn and apply new ways to stand up against bullying. Bullies can also learn how to make friends and get what they want by helping, rather than hurting, others.

Victims... **reward** the bully by yielding control and showing signs of intimidation. They often fail to gain support from bystanders and avoid reporting the bullying.

But, victims can learn to defeat the bully by responding assertively, rallying support from bystanders, or reporting the bullying to adults.

Bystanders... **play** an important and pivotal role in promoting or preventing bullying. Often without realizing it, they may exacerbate a situation by providing an audience, maintaining silence, actively encouraging, or joining in.

But, bystanders can neutralize or stop the bullying by aiding the victim, drawing support from other bystanders, or obtaining help from adults.





Look Around...Who Is Involved?

The Bully

BULLYING IS ABOUT THE ABUSE OF POWER. CHILDREN WHO BULLY ABUSE THEIR POWER TO HURT OTHERS, DELIBERATELY AND REPEATEDLY. They are often hot-tempered, inflexible, overly confident, and don't like to follow rules. They often lack empathy and may even enjoy inflicting pain on others. They often desire to dominate and control others, perceive hostile intent where none exists, overreact aggressively to ambiguous situations, and hold beliefs that support violence.

In the preschool years, children who bully often rely on verbal and physical bullying to control material objects or territory. Some children begin to use relational bullying to exclude others from their social groups.

In the elementary school years, children who bully often use physical force and verbal bullying to force victims do things against their will. They also engage in relational bullying to turn their friends against selected classmates. At this age, some children also begin to use the Internet or cell phones to engage in cyberbullying.

In the middle and high school years, children who bully often use cyberbullying to embarrass, humiliate, or attack their peers. Although both boys and girls use verbal bullying, boys tend to rely on physical bullying to enhance their physical dominance and girls tend to use relational bullying to enhance their social status.

Sometimes children bully in **groups**. Children may join in because they look up to the bully and want to impress him or her, or because they are afraid and do not want to be attacked themselves.





Examining the Effects on The Bully

BESIDES HURTING OTHERS, BULLIES DAMAGE THEMSELVES. Each time children bully someone, they become even more removed emotionally from the suffering of their victims. They learn to justify their actions by believing their victims deserve to be bullied. They also learn that the way to get what they want from others is through force. Children who bully often fail to develop the social skills of sharing, reciprocating, empathizing, and negotiating that form the basis for lasting friendships.

As they mature into adulthood, children who have bullied often show higher rates of:

- Aggression
- Antisocial behavior
- Carrying weapons to school
- Dropping out of high school
- Convictions for crime
- Difficulty controlling their emotions
- Traffic violations
- Convictions for drunk driving
- Depression
- Suicide

They also are more likely to permit their own children to bully others, thus raising a new generation of bullies.

EYE OPENER



In a follow-up study of boys in grades 6 through 9, bullies were found to be four times more likely than their non-bullying peers to be convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24. Surprisingly, 60% of these former bullies had committed at least one crime, and 35% had committed three or more crimes.³

Children who bully need not experience these devastating long-term effects if their patterns of behavior are changed before they become habitual and entrenched. Bullying prevention strategies are most effective when applied early to children who are young or have just begun to bully—the earlier the better. Although it's never too late to change a bully's patterns of behavior, these habitual patterns are usually much more difficult to change in later years.

Beginning in the preschool years, adults can teach children important bullying prevention skills and guide children as they practice using these skills. Social skills that form an important foundation for bullying prevention include:

- Showing empathy toward others
- Interacting assertively
- Solving social problems

Bullying control works best when bullying is nipped in the bud—the earlier, the better.



Do your beliefs promote or prevent bullying?

We're not always aware of the ways our beliefs may color our views and influence the choices we make to intervene in—or accept—the bullying around us.

New Eyes on Bullying

- 1** Post the *Bullying Beliefs Questionnaire* (next page) where children can easily see it. Read statement 1.
- 2** Ask children if they agree or disagree with the statement. Young children can respond by answering *Yes, No, or Sometimes*.
- 3** Have children discuss their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing.
- 4** Complete this process for statements 2 through 7. Explain to them how the various ways people think and feel about bullying can make a difference in how they behave. Discuss how each belief contributes to either promoting or preventing bullying.
- 5** Encourage children to add their own bullying prevention statements to the list. Post a revised list of beliefs that everyone agrees may help to prevent bullying.

This activity will help children...

Compare and contrast beliefs that promote or prevent bullying

Identify the benefits of replacing beliefs that promote bullying with beliefs that prepare children to prevent bullying



Bullying Beliefs Questionnaire

DO YOU AGREE?

1	It's fun to boss other kids around.	Yes	No	Sometimes
2	It's O.K. to take advantage of kids who are not as powerful as you.	Yes	No	Sometimes
3	Some kids deserve to be teased or called names.	Yes	No	Sometimes
4	Kids who boss around other kids deserve respect.	Yes	No	Sometimes
5	It's none of your business when other kids get picked on or left out of a group.	Yes	No	Sometimes
6	It takes courage to stick up for a kid who is teased or left out.	Yes	No	Sometimes
7	No matter what people do, bullying is going to happen.	Yes	No	Sometimes



Look Around...Who Is Involved?

The Victim

VICTIMS OF BULLYING INCLUDE GIRLS AND BOYS OF ALL AGES, SIZES, AND BACKGROUNDS. But some children are more likely than others to be victimized because they appear small, weak, insecure, sensitive, or “different” from their peers.

Some children can reduce their risk of being bullied by dressing or acting in ways that make it easier for them to “fit in.” Yet children should not be expected to conform to avoid the threat of bullying. Every child’s individuality should be appreciated for the value it brings to the group, rather than suppressed to reduce the risk of victimization. Furthermore, not all children are able to alter personal characteristics that may place them at increased risk.

Victims tend to share these characteristics and tendencies:

- Low self-confidence
- Anxiety
- Fearfulness
- Submissiveness
- Depression or sad appearance
- Limited sense of humor
- Below-average size, strength, or coordination
- Feelings of helplessness
- Self-blame for problems
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Poor social skills
- Low popularity
- Few or no friends
- Excessive dependence on adults

Children who are repeatedly bullied tend to be passive. They inadvertently reward the bully by crying, giving over their possessions, or running away in fear. Some victims also provoke negative responses from others by behaving in socially inappropriate ways. They may trigger conflict or ridicule and then overreact with anger and exasperation.

Potential victims can reduce their risk of being bullied by learning how to:

- **Exhibit** self-confidence
- **Avoid** the bully’s tactics
- **Respond** with assertiveness
- **Obtain** support from others

Who Is Most at Risk?

- *Children who belong to a minority racial or ethnic group*
- *Children with mental or physical disabilities*
- *Children who are overweight*
- *Children who are new to the community*
- *Children who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered*
- *Children who don’t “fit in”*

Adults need to pay special attention to children who are most at risk. Bullies are especially attracted to passive victims who react by crying or running away or who seem to lack self-confidence. But anyone can be a target.



Examining the Effects on The Victim

VICTIMS OF BULLYING SUFFER A WIDE RANGE OF HARMFUL EFFECTS—BOTH IMMEDIATELY AND FOR YEARS TO COME.

While under the influence of a bully, victims may show many signs of physical, emotional, and social distress. They often feel tense, anxious, tired, listless, and sad. Some children lose their confidence, become socially isolated, do poorly in school, or refuse to go to school. They may also show high levels of:

- Headaches
- Skin problems
- Abdominal pain
- Sleep problems
- Bed-wetting
- Crying
- Depression

In cases of extreme bullying, some tormented victims have resorted to violence toward themselves or others.

Suicide... Some victims of bullying have committed suicide.

Children as young as nine years of age may think about suicide as a way to escape their bullies.⁴

School Shooters... Other victims of bullying have used guns to take violent revenge in schools against their bullies and others who they believe have failed to support them.

Many school shooters were bullied: In 37 incidents of targeted school violence between 1974 and 2000, almost three-quarters of the shooters reported being bullied, persecuted, threatened, attacked, or injured before the incident. Sometimes the experience of being bullied seemed to have influenced the shooter's decision to make an attack at the school.⁵

EYE OPENER



Most adults who were bullied as children maintain vivid memories of the events throughout their lifetime.



Victims' painful memories of having been bullied linger as the victims mature into adulthood. Adults who were victimized as children may continue to show poor self-confidence and problems with depression.



Victims often respond to bullies' demands with either passive submission or retaliatory aggression—rather than with self-confidence and assertiveness.

ASSERTIVENESS means expressing one's feelings and defending one's rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others.

Potential victims can protect themselves by learning to respond assertively. Assertive responses neither provoke the bully nor reward him or her with submission. An assertive manner also provides a child with an air of self-confidence and a sense of control that can deter a bully's approach from the start. Role-playing exercises help children use body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and words to respond assertively to a bully.

Standing Up

- 1** Review the chart *Bullying Actions and Victim Responses* (page 19) in advance. Select one or two examples from the *Bullying* (Provoking) column that fit your children's ages and circumstances. Feel free to adapt and/or embellish the scenarios, or add your own examples.
- 2** Explain that there are three ways to respond to a bully: by *Giving In* (Submissive), *Hurting Back* (Aggressive), and *Standing Up* (Assertive). Define *Standing Up*, referring to the definition of assertiveness above. Explain and discuss why *Standing Up* is usually more effective in preventing or stopping bullying than the other two types of responses. Review *Tips for Standing Up to Bullies* (next page).
- 3** Have another adult assume the role of the Bully while you demonstrate the types of responses. Make sure to exaggerate the differences between them.
- 4** Have the children watch, describe, and imitate your nonverbal communication (e.g., posture, eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice), as well as your words and actions.
- 5** Recruit a child volunteer to role-play the Victim. Encourage the volunteer to use his or her own words and to practice the response several times—each time improving it based on feedback from the group.

This activity will...

Help children understand differences between submissive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors

Give children guidance and practice in responding to a bully's provocations with verbal and nonverbal assertiveness

Look Around...The Victim**Looking Bullies in the Eye:
Tips for Standing Up to Bullies**

- Take a deep breath and let the air out slowly.
- Sit or stand tall, head up.
- Keep your hands at your sides rather than on your hips or folded across your chest.
- Have a relaxed and purposeful facial expression, not angry or laughing.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Speak with a calm voice, loud enough to be heard clearly.
- Use non-provocative words and a confident tone of voice.
- Avoid name-calling or making threats.
- Avoid finger pointing or other threatening gestures.
- Reply briefly and directly.
- Avoid bringing up past grudges or making generalizations (*You always...*).

**EYE
OPENER**

Each day, 160,000 children in the United States stay home from school for fear of being bullied.⁶

One way to help children escape their victim role is to change their outlook from one of *helplessness*—there is nothing that can be done to stop the bully—to one of *confidence*—there are specific things that victims, bystanders, and adults *can do* to stop the bully. Each time a child practices an assertive response, fearful and helpless thoughts are replaced by strong and confident ones.



Bullying Actions and Victim Responses

Bullying (Provoking)	Giving In (Submissive)	Hurting Back (Aggressive)	Standing Up (Assertive)
Bully roughly cuts in line in front of Victim.	Victim steps back, puts head down, and says nothing.	Victim shoves Bully out of line and says, "You jerk!"	Victim stands tall and says, "This is my place. No cutting allowed."
Bully grabs a candy bar that Victim is holding and demands, "Give me that!"	Victim lets Bully take the candy bar and timidly says, "O.K."	Victim screams and kicks Bully.	Victim firmly holds on to the candy bar and says, "This is mine."
Bully laughs and points at Victim and chants, "Loser, Loser, Loser!"	Victim looks upset and starts to cry.	Victim angrily replies, "Your mother is ugly."	Victim calmly looks at Bully and says, "You're just wasting your breath trying to make me mad."
Bully whispers to pals, "If you want to be my friend, you can't play with (name of Victim)."	Victim finds out, sits alone at a table and says, "I guess I have to eat by myself."	Victim finds out and tells a nasty rumor about Bully.	Victim talks privately with Bully and says, "I know you're talking about me behind my back, and I don't like it."
Bully tells Victim, "You stink on first base. I'm taking over. Out of my way, stupid."	Victim says, "Sorry I messed up," and hands his glove to the Bully.	Victim shouts, "Who are you calling stupid, you big bully!"	Victim stays on base and says, "I'm playing first base for the rest of the game."



Look Around...Who Is Involved?

The Bystander

BULLYING SITUATIONS USUALLY INVOLVE MORE THAN THE BULLY AND THE VICTIM. THEY ALSO INVOLVE BYSTANDERS—THOSE WHO WATCH BULLYING HAPPEN OR HEAR ABOUT IT.

An important new strategy for bullying prevention focuses on the powerful role of the bystander.

Depending on how bystanders respond, they can either contribute to the problem or the solution. Bystanders rarely play a completely neutral role, although they may think they do.

EYE OPENER 
In one report, 1/3 of children said they “could join in bullying someone they don’t like.”⁷

Hurtful Bystanders

Some bystanders... *instigate* the bullying by prodding the bully to begin.

Other bystanders... *encourage* the bullying by laughing, cheering, or making comments that further stimulate the bully.

And other bystanders... *join* in the bullying once it has begun.

Most bystanders... *passively accept* bullying by watching and doing nothing. Often without realizing it, these bystanders also contribute to the problem. Passive bystanders provide the audience a bully craves and the silent acceptance that allows bullies to continue their hurtful behavior.

Helpful Bystanders

Bystanders also have the power to play a key role in preventing or stopping bullying.

Some bystanders... *directly* intervene, by discouraging the bully, defending the victim, or redirecting the situation away from bullying.

Other bystanders... *get help*, by rallying support from peers to stand up against bullying or by reporting the bullying to adults.

EYE OPENER 
More than one-half the time, bullying stops within 10 seconds of a bystander stepping in to help.⁸

Bystanders’ actions make a critical difference. Children and adults should think ahead about what they will do when they witness or hear about bullying.



Examining the Effects on The Bystander

Why don't more bystanders intervene?

- They think, "It's none of my business."
- They fear getting hurt or becoming another victim.
- They feel powerless to stop the bully.
- They don't like the victim or they believe the victim "deserves" it.
- They don't want to draw attention to themselves.
- They fear retribution.
- They think that telling adults won't help or it may make things worse.
- They don't know what to do.

*"In the end, we will remember
not the words of our enemies,
but the silence of our friends."*

—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Bystanders who don't intervene or don't report the bullying often suffer negative consequences themselves. They may experience:

- Pressure to participate in the bullying
- Anxiety about speaking to anyone about the bullying
- Powerlessness to stop bullying
- Vulnerability to becoming victimized
- Fear of associating with the victim, the bully, or the bully's pals
- Guilt for not having defended the victim



Preparing Children to Become Helpful Bystanders

ALL CHILDREN CAN BE EMPOWERED TO BECOME HELPFUL BYSTANDERS.

Adults can prepare children for this role by discussing with them the different ways bystanders can make a difference, and by letting them know that adults will support them, if and when they step forward. Adults can also provide examples of how helpful bystanders have shown courage and made a difference in real-life situations and in their own experiences.



The first step in becoming a Helpful Bystander is to understand what we know about this important role.

Eyewitness

- 1** Privately record your own True or False answers to the *Bystander Quiz* (next page). Compare your answers to the explanatory statements, provided after the quiz.
- 2** Discuss with children what it means to be a bystander who witnesses or hears about bullying.
- 3** Read each statement aloud. Have children tell you, with a show of hands, if the statement is True or False. Tally their responses. (Older children can record their own answers.)
- 4** Repeat this process for each statement.
- 5** After you have completed the quiz, read each statement again. Ask the children to explain their answers. Then reveal and explain your own responses, informed by the explanatory statements. Discuss why an accurate understanding of the influence of bystanders is important. Refer to the explanatory statements as needed.

This activity will help children and adults...

Understand the concept of the bystander in bullying situations

Understand key facts about bystander roles in preventing bullying

Discuss how to become helpful bystanders



Bystander Quiz

WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS IS TRUE?

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Bystanders are usually watching when kids get bullied. | True | False |
| 2 | Most kids who watch bullying feel uncomfortable. | True | False |
| 3 | Most kids who watch bullying do nothing to try to stop it. | True | False |
| 4 | Kids who silently watch bullying usually make things worse. | True | False |
| 5 | Kids who laugh at or cheer on bullying usually make things worse. | True | False |
| 6 | Kids who try to stop the bullying often make things better. | True | False |
| 7 | Sometimes grownups don't stop bullying because they don't see it happen, don't hear about it, or don't understand how much it hurts. | True | False |
| 8 | Both kids and adults can learn to become helpful bystanders who stop bullying. | True | False |



Bystander Quiz Explanatory Statements

Research provides evidence for each statement.

- 1 True** Child bystanders were present in 85% or more of the bullying incidents in observation studies of children in playgrounds and classrooms.^{7,8,9,10}
- 2 True** Between 80% and 90% of bystanders reported that watching bullying was unpleasant and made them feel uncomfortable. Many children also felt they should step in to help a child who was being bullied.^{8,10,11}
- 3 True** Bystanders stood up for the victim only 25% of the time. Instead, bystanders acted as silent witnesses 54% of the time and joined the bullying with words or actions 21% of the time.^{7,10,11}
- 4 True** Even when bystanders simply watched bullying without trying to stop it, they made things worse by providing an audience for the bully. Bullying lasted longer when more bystanders were present and when bystanders did nothing to stop it.¹¹
- 5 True** When bystanders laughed at or cheered on bullying, they encouraged the bullying to continue.¹¹
- 6 True** When bystanders intervened to stand up for the victim, they were successful in stopping the bullying more than 50% of the time—usually within the first 10 seconds.¹⁰
- 7 True** Adults are often *not* aware of bullying because it usually happens in areas with little or no adult supervision, such as bathrooms, hallways, playgrounds, cafeterias. However, even when adults directly witness bullying, they often overlook or minimize its harmful effects. In playground observations, adults intervened in only 4% of the bullying incidents they witnessed.⁷
- 8 True** When children and adults learn, practice, and use effective ways for bystanders to stop bullying, incidents of bullying can be significantly reduced.^{3,12,13,14}