

1 A New Look...



In a U.S. national study with youth in grades 6 through 10, almost 30%—more than 5.7 million—were involved in moderate or frequent bullying during the current school term, as a bully, victim, or both.¹

Each year millions of children and youth experience the humiliation and devastating effects of bullying.

Bullying damages the physical, social, and emotional well-being of its victims. It also hurts the children who bully, as well as those who watch it happen. In fact, bullying creates a climate of fear, callousness, and disrespect for everyone involved.

Bullying begins in the preschool years, peaks in early adolescence, and continues, but with less frequency, into the high school years. But bullying does NOT have to be a part of growing up.

Over the past two decades, what we know about bullying—who is involved, where, when, and why it occurs, and the situations that allow it to spread—has increased tremendously. This knowledge has helped researchers develop new and useful strategies that both children and adults can use to intervene effectively and, better yet, prevent bullying before it ever occurs.

Bullying Basics

We now know that:

- Bullying is **NOT** pre-wired, harmless, or inevitable
- Bullying **IS** learned, harmful, and controllable
- Bullying **SPREADS** if supported or left unchecked
- Bullying **INVOLVES** everyone—bullies, victims, and bystanders
- Bullying **CAN BE** effectively stopped or entirely prevented



What Is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of emotional or physical abuse that has three defining characteristics:

- 1 Deliberate**—a bully's intention is to hurt someone
- 2 Repeated**—a bully often targets the same victim again and again
- 3 Power Imbalanced**—a bully chooses victims he or she perceives as vulnerable

Bullying occurs in many different forms, with varying levels of severity. It may involve:

- **Physical Bullying**—poking, pushing, hitting, kicking, beating up
- **Verbal Bullying**—yelling, taunting, name-calling, insulting, threatening to harm
- **Relational Bullying**—excluding, spreading rumors, getting others to hurt someone
- **Cyberbullying**—Sending hurtful messages or images by Internet or cell phone

Understanding what bullying looks like will help you stop it *before* it escalates.



Do your beliefs promote or prevent bullying?

Can you remember times when you were repeatedly teased, humiliated, or shut out of a group? When you were forced to do something you didn't want to do by someone you considered more powerful than you? When YOU intentionally hurt someone who was vulnerable, or witnessed this happening to someone else? If you are like most people, you remember... and these memories can last a lifetime.

Story Swap

Talking about bullying can help. Children may be reluctant to share their experiences because they believe their situation is unique, embarrassing, or shameful. They may think adults can't understand or help. But hearing a story about an adult's bullying experiences may move a child to reveal his or her own experiences.

- 1** Remember your own childhood story of initiating, experiencing, or witnessing bullying.
- 2** Share your story with the children in your care and explain how it made you feel then and now.
- 3** Ask children to share their own bullying story. (When in a group, have children substitute fictional names for real ones.) Acknowledge that children might feel embarrassed or afraid to recount their experience in front of others.
- 4** Discuss how the stories made them feel—to tell and to hear.
- 5** Tell children that bullying should not happen. Brainstorm suggestions for things children can do to stop or prevent bullying, using the stories they told as examples. You may want to write down their responses. Later, after they have worked through the toolkit, return to this exercise to see how their responses may have changed.
- 6** Invite children to write a story about a bullying experience. Encourage young children to draw pictures. These may be the preferred options for children who are uncomfortable sharing their experiences aloud.

This activity will...

Let children know that bullying affects everyone and that they are not alone

Help children understand that bullying is not acceptable

Establish the groundwork for future conversations about bullying