

BULLY PREVENTION 101

Middle and High School Resource Guide



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Bullying Prevention 101:

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Section One: Definition and Roles

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SLIDE 1

Introduction

Section One: Definition and Roles

A guide to the basics of bullying, what it is and isn't, and the roles students have in bullying situations

Slide #2: Did You Know? How many students are bullied?

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SLIDE 2

Did You Know...How many students are bullied?

Objective: Help students understand the scope of the issue. Begin each section with a classroom question, followed by insight and education into the answer.

Talking Points:

Ask students to respond either (1) in class, or (2) online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/howmanystudentsbullied>

How many students are bullied?

- 1 in 2
- 1 in 3
- 1 in 5
- 1 in 10
- 1 in 20

Answer: 1 in 5. About 20 percent of middle and high school students reported being bullied at school in the past year.

Discussion Questions

- Did this number surprise you? Did you think it was higher or lower?
- Do you think bullying is under reported at schools? Why?

PACER's NBPC resources for presenter

Reference: National Center for Educational Statistics (2015). Student reports of bullying and cyberbullying: Results from the 2013 school crime supplement to the National Victimization Survey. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015056>

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SLIDE 3 | What is bullying?

Objective: Give students a definition about what bullying is to help recognize it.

Talking Points:

This is a good definition for helping students understand what bullying is – but this is NOT a legal definition. The definitions will vary from school to school and from state to state.

Note: Schools may want to substitute the definition used within their own district.

What is bullying? At first glance, many people might think this behavior is easy to define. Their first image of bullying might be of a physically intimidating boy beating up a smaller classmate. While that can still be considered bullying today, bullying behavior can be much more complex and varied than the stereotype. For example, harmful bullying can also occur quietly and covertly, through gossip or rumors, causing emotional damage.

Most definitions have these components:

1. The behavior hurts, harms, or humiliates another person physically or emotionally
2. Those targeted by the behavior have difficulty stopping the action directed at them, and struggle to defend themselves
3. There is a real or perceived “imbalance of power,” which is described as when the student with the bullying behavior has more “power,” either physically, socially, or emotionally, such as a higher social status, or is physically larger or emotionally intimidating
4. Many definitions indicate that the bullying is “repeated,” but the reality is that bullying can be circumstantial or chronic. It might be the result of a single situation, such as being the new student at school, or it might be behavior that has been directed at the individual for a long period of time.

Many students define bullying anecdotally: ***“As when someone makes you feel less about who you are as a person.”***

Discussion Questions

- What is your definition of bullying?
- How does it feel to see bullying?

PACER’s NBPC online resources for presenter:

To learn more about how bullying is defined, visit:

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/questions-answered/how-is-bullying-defined.asp>

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SLIDE 4 | How is someone bullied?

Objective: Explore the types of bullying a student may experience.

Talking Points:

Note: *Sexual bullying is often listed as a “type” of bullying. Instead of listing separately, various examples of sexual bullying are listed under each type.*

Verbal: Verbal bullying is the most common type of bullying and the easiest to inflict on other children. It is quick and direct. Children learn at a very early age how to bully other children verbally. It begins with unsophisticated name calling, usually using words that adults tell children are forbidden or unacceptable. As children mature, they begin to understand how words can be used in powerful ways to hurt one another. Boys generally like to name-call and use threats, while girls use slander and gossip to gain social power. Generally, verbal bullying peaks in middle school and begins to decrease as children become more socially conscious and accepting of others’ differences.

Examples of Verbal Bullying:

- Teasing
- Name calling
- Making threats against the target
- Intimidating
- Making demeaning jokes about someone’s differences
- Spreading rumors
- Gossiping
- Slandering (spreading false, negative information)
- Sexually-charged comments
- Targeted sexual jokes

Emotional/Social: Emotional bullying is the most sophisticated type of bullying because it is generally very calculated and is often done in groups. It can be the most difficult behavior for children to define as bullying because they may feel as if they did something to deserve it. They may not recognize the behavior as bullying because it is typically not physical, or they may not understand why it is happening to them. Emotional bullying is generally difficult for the casual observer to detect, since he or she doesn’t have full knowledge of the social nuances or social structures surrounding the behavior.

Examples of Emotional/Social Bullying:

- Exclusion
- Social manipulation
- Telling someone who they can and cannot be friends with
- Spreading rumors
- Humiliation
- Inappropriate or lewd glances

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Physical: Physical bullying can be the easiest type of bullying to recognize, since it is the most visible behavior. This type of bullying includes perceived intent to harm, such as threats or “pretending” to physically harm the target (e.g., flicking fingers or extending hands close to the target’s eyes or face to cause a withdrawal reaction). Physical bullying can begin in children as young as 4 or 5 years old. This behavior is not considered bullying until the child realizes his or her actions cause another person pain.

Examples of Physical Bullying:

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Throwing items at someone
- Taking or damaging property
- Forced or unwelcomed contact

Cyber: The evolution of technology and social media has led to a new, very serious form of bullying: cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when the internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

Examples of Cyber Bullying:

- Sending harassing, embarrassing, or otherwise unwelcome emails or text messages
- Threats
- Sexual harassment
- Hate speech
- Ridiculing someone publicly online
- Posting lies, rumors or gossip about the target and encouraging others to distribute that information

Discussion Questions:

- What type of bullying do you think happens most often?
- Which type of bullying hurts the most? Emotional or physical?

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SLIDE 5

Key distinctions of cyberbullying

Objective: Provide comparison of how cyberbullying is distinguished from other forms of bullying.

Talking Points:

With today's students who have access to technology 24/7, it's important to focus in on the online (cyber) behavior and talk about how using technology to bully is different from other types of bullying behavior.

Note: Schools may want to substitute the “cyberbullying” definition used within their own district.

A Definition to Share:

Cyberbullying is an aggressive, intentional act distributed by an individual or group, using contact in an electronic medium, continuously and relentlessly against someone who cannot stand up for himself or herself easily.

Cyberbullying involves:

1. Electronic forms of contact, including, but not limited to: personal websites, blogs, email, texting, social media sites, group chats, instant messages, photographs, video games, and any online medium where people can interact with one another.
2. Cyberbullying involves aggressive acts that hurt or harm another person- either emotionally or physically threatening.
3. As with offline bullying, there is an imbalance of power between the person cyberbullying and their target, such as popularity, more friends, and anonymity. The target has difficulty defending himself or herself.
4. Similar to offline bullying, many cyberbullying definitions claim cyberbullying is repetitive, relentless, and continuous. However, one incident of cyberbullying can do great damage; it can have a wide audience, go viral, and have permanence.
5. Overall, if a child online feels hurt, threatened, unsafe, and/or less of a person – and is not able to make it stop – it could be cyberbullying.

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While there are a lot of similarities between online and offline bullying, these are the key distinctions of online bullying:

1. **INDIRECT:** Targets might not know who the bully is or why they are being targeted, as cyberbullying can happen anonymously; it can be harder for parents and adults to manage cyberbullying.
2. **REACH:** The audience for online bullying can be much larger than offline bullying. A single cyberbullying post/message can be forwarded and re-posted, having the potential to go viral.
3. **PERMANENCE:** There can also be more permanence with cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying; nearly everything on the internet is available to everyone, everywhere. It can be challenging to erase information once it goes on the internet.
4. **PROXIMITY:** It is often easier to be cruel using technology because of greater physical distance and the person bullying doesn't see the immediate response by the target - they might not recognize the serious harm caused by their actions because they lack seeing the target's response.
5. **AVAILABILITY:** Technology is accessible 24/7, meaning cyberbullying can happen anytime of the day: in the morning, afternoon, and evening – not just while children are at school. It happens while at home or in the community.
6. **ACCESSIBILITY:** Anyone with access to technology can cyberbully someone, even targets who aren't using or have access to technology. A cyberbully can target someone online, and the target might have no idea that they are being cyberbullied. Someone does not need to have a computer or cell phone to be a target.
7. **EVIDENCE:** Although cyberbullying is harmful, it does leave tangible evidence. That's why it's important to document evidence of cyberbullying, such as taking screenshots of websites or saving text messages where cyberbullying occurred. These documents can be provided to schools as verification that cyberbullying is occurring.

Discussion questions:

- Which type of bullying occurs most often?
- Which type is most harmful?

PACER's NBPC online resources for presenter:

To learn more about how online and offline bullying differ, visit:

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/cyberbullying/>

Article, "Does bullying happen more often than people think?" Visit

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/questions-answered/bullying-happen-more-often.asp>

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Conflict vs. Bullying: What's the difference?

Objective: Provide understanding of when behavior moves from conflict to bullying

Talking Points:

Bullying is different from conflict.

Conflict looks like:

- Disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views
- Equal power between those involved
- Behavior usually stops when one child realizes they are hurting another

While bullying looks like:

- Intent of behavior is to hurt, harm, or humiliate
- Person bullying has more “power” such as being more popular or physically stronger
- Negative behavior continues even when hurt or harm occurs

Bullying is done with a goal to hurt, harm, or humiliate. With bullying, there is often a power imbalance between those involved, with power defined as elevated social status, being physically larger, or as part of a group against an individual. Students who bully perceive their target as vulnerable in some way and often find satisfaction in harming them.

In **conflict** situations, children self-monitor their behavior. They read cues to know if lines are crossed, and then modify their behavior in response. Children guided by empathy usually realize they have hurt someone and will want to stop their negative behavior. On the other hand, children intending to cause harm and whose behavior goes beyond normal conflict will continue their behavior even when they know it's hurting someone.

Think about it this way:

- Conflict, while sometimes uncomfortable, can be an opportunity for equal partners in the situation to learn how to solve problems. This will happen by both people working the problem out through healthy and positive means.
- Bullying is done by someone perceived to be more powerful than the target and is unwanted, negative, and meant to cause harm to the bullying target through physically or emotionally damaging means that are repeated or threatened to be repeated.

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The next time you are in a conflict with someone (and there will likely be a next time!), try and remember that inside every conflict is a hidden opportunity to make your relationship better by learning to speak up for yourself and express your needs. Remember that conflict between two human beings is normal and is bound to happen.

The questions to ask yourself when you are unsure about the tone of a certain conversation or encounter to determine if it is bullying include:

- Are we equals in this situation?
- Do I feel victimized or targeted by an individual or a group?
- Do I feel safe?
- Do I feel that the person or group has intentionally hurt or humiliated me?

Sometimes, it can be easy to minimize a bullying situation because you don't really want to deal with the realities of what is happening to you. It is easy to get into a pattern of qualifying bullying as conflict in order to avoid facing the actual problem, when really it is something that you don't deserve and something that requires outside intervention. It can be helpful to ask these questions to yourself, as it can help you sort out the reality of your particular situation.

PACER's NBPC online resources for presenter:

To learn more about conflict vs. bullying, visit <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/questions-answered/conflict-vs-bullying.asp>

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Video: Conflict vs. Bullying: What's the difference?

Objective: This video shows the direct comparison and distinctions between conflict and bullying.

Talking Points:

1. Provide the below video description

Description: Sometimes people think that bullying and conflict are the same thing, but they aren't. In one way or another, conflict is a part of everyday experience, in which we navigate the complexities of how we interact. Typically, minor conflicts don't make someone feel unsafe or threatened. Bullying, on the other hand, is a behavior with intention to hurt, harm or humiliate and the person targeted is not able to make it stop.

2. Show the video (4 minutes)

Access video through these locations:

Website: www.pacer.org/bullying/video/player.asp?video=104

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMmL1Mo2SNI>

3. Follow up with discussion questions:

- What are the differences between conflict and bullying?
- What are ways to resolve and work through conflict?

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SLIDE 8

Opinion Poll: Which type of bullying happens most often?

Objective: An opportunity to engage in classroom wide or online poll in questions relevant to the audience

Talking Points:

Ask students to respond either (1) in class, or, (2) online at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MostOften>

Which type of bullying happens most often?

1. Physical
2. Verbal
3. Emotional
4. Cyberbullying

Discussion Questions

- Did the results surprise you?
- Why do you think one type of bullying is more common than another?

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SLIDE 9 | Who is involved?

Objective: Provide an understanding of the roles students have in a bullying situation.

Talking Points:

There are three basic roles in a bullying situation:

TARGET	PERSON WHO BULLIES	WITNESS OR BYSTANDER
<i>The person targeted by the behavior</i>	<i>The person(s) directing the behavior toward the target</i>	<i>Those witnessing the behavior</i>

A person often does not have just one role! The role that any student plays in a bullying situation often shifts and changes from day to day. Somebody who was bullied on the bus in the morning might be the one who makes fun of a younger kid that afternoon. 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.

1. TARGET: The person targeted by the behavior

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. 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.

2. PERSON WHO BULLIES: The person(s) directing the behavior toward the target

So, who bullies? Think the person bullying is the big guy who wears black, has low self-esteem, and gets mad a lot? Could be, but it can also be 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.

3. WITNESS OR BYSTANDER: Those witnessing the behavior

Note: Schools may have different terms for this group such as witness, bystander, advocate, and more. StopBullying.gov also provides more details about the roles of bystanders at What are the Roles? <https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/roles-kids-play/index.html>

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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.

Discussion Questions

- Which group/role do you think is the largest?
- Which group/role do you think is the smallest?
- Which group/role has the most power in bullying situations?

Online Resource for Presenter

What are the Roles? <https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/roles-kids-play/index.html>

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SLIDE 10

Why do we use “target” vs. “victim” and “child who bullies” vs. “bully”

Objective: When referring to those involved in bullying situations, avoid stereotyping them into categories. Focus on behavior, not on labels.

Talking Points

You’ve likely heard statements such as “She is a victim of bullying” or “That student is a bully.” Though these phrases are commonly used, and usually with good intentions, are they the best terms to use when describing someone and their behavior?

At PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, we believe that:

- Language used to describe students and their roles in bullying situations is an important part of how bullying is viewed
- Terminology has the potential to influence the view and perception of the issue and, in the best cases, direct ideas or beliefs that promote positive change
- Bullying is about someone’s behavior, and that behavior is something that can be changed through awareness, education, and support

The terms and labels we use when describing bullying have an impact.

Expectations are powerful forces on behavior. Often, they make decisions according to what the adults and peers in their life expect them to do. Labels influence how youth perceive or think about themselves and how others see them, too.

- When a child is labeled a “bully,” that can send the message to peers and adults that they are children or students who:
 - always behave in negative ways
 - always get in trouble
 - don’t respect the feelings of others
 - don’t know how to appropriately handle social interactions
- When a child is labeled a “victim,” that can send the message to peers and adults that they:
 - are helpless
 - can do nothing to change their situation
 - are kids who will be teased
 - are easily manipulated
 - are in need of pity

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The labels “bully” or “victim” send the message to youth that they have a permanent trait that cannot be changed.

The focus should be on behavior and not on the label.

When the language is framed to focus on behavior, it sends the message that the child is developing and learning, and with support they can change their situation.

Avoid using terms which LABEL an individual	Use terms which focus on an individual's BEHAVIOR	WHY is language used important? <i>Being labeled a victim or bully can become someone's identity. Focusing on the behavior, shows that they can change their situation.</i>
VICTIM For example: “He’s a bullying victim.”	Replace with: “He’s a target of bullying.”	When a someone is labeled a “victim,” it can send the message that they are powerless to change their situation.
BULLY For example: “She’s a bully.”	Replace with: She’s someone who bullies.	When someone is labeled a “bully,” it can send the message that everyone expects them to always only behave in that stereotypical way.

“Target” versus “Victim”

Students who are targets of bullying are often called victims. The term “victim” can imply that someone has no power and is helpless to change what has happened to them. Although those targeted by bullying can feel powerless to stop it, labeling someone as a victim suggests that person was, is still, and will continue to be helpless and without options.

Using a more neutral term, such as “target,” implies the possibility of change in the bullying situation and empowers the person being bullied to feel that they can do something to alter their situation.

When youth are labeled as victims, this can send the message that they are weak or deserving of pity from others. Actually, they may need help to stop the situation and manage the bullying and need the tools and support to advocate for him or herself.

“Child Who Bullies” versus “Bully”

Bullying is a behavior, not an identity. As with “victim,” labeling a child as a bully implies that his or her behavior is fixed and unlikely to change. In reality, behavior can and does change. A child might make fun of other kids in fifth grade, but stops this behavior after transitioning into sixth grade. The child bullied on the bus in the morning, may be the student who bullies someone in the afternoon.

However, the label of a kid being a bully might stick with the child and could be associated with him or her throughout school.

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With the help of parents, teachers, peers, and the community, bullying behaviors can change for the better. It's important for adults seeking to resolve a bullying situation to avoid labeling the child engaging in bullying behavior as a "bully." Those who bully should be held accountable for their actions and be given appropriate consequences, but it's equally important to find out why they are engaging in that behavior. By addressing the behavior and the reasons for it, adults can help children make lasting, positive changes.

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Why does bullying prevention matter?

Objective: Provide important research about the impact bullying can have and why it matters to take action.

Talking Points

Bullying impacts everyone involved, not just those targeted.

The research shows:

- Students who experience bullying are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and poor school adjustment. [Center for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control \(2015\)](#)
- Students who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood. [Center for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control \(2015\)](#)
- Compared to students who only bully, or who are only victims, students who do both suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems. [Center for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control \(2015\)](#)
- Students who experience bullying are twice as likely as non-bullied peers to experience negative health effects such as headaches and stomachaches. [Gini and Pozzoli, 2013](#)
- Youth victimized by their peers were 2.2 times more likely to have suicide ideation and 2.6 times more likely to attempt suicide than students not facing victimization. [Gini & Espelage, 2014](#)
- Students who are both bullied and engage in bullying behavior are the highest risk group for adverse outcomes. [Espelage and Holt, 2013](#)
- There is a strong association between bullying and suicide-related behaviors, but this relationship is often mediated by other factors, including depression, violent behavior, and substance abuse. [Reed, Nugent, & Cooper, 2015](#)

Discussion question:

- Ask students why they think it's important to be talking about the issue?

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Handout: Common Points of View About Bullying

Objective: Insight into statements that are commonly shared about bullying.

Talking Points

Our society has many well-known expressions that characterize, describe, and portray bullying; some are accurate and true, while others are outdated and don't reflect the realities of bullying. This handout contains a few of those often repeated phrases, followed by a response to each statement and insight into the real story.

Steps:

1. Provide each student a copy of the handout "Common Points of View About Bullying"
 - Alternate: view online at <https://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/bullying-defined/common-views/>
2. Ask a student to read each statement, and another to read through the insight.

Discussion Questions:

- Ask students if they have other feedback into any of the points of view.
- Ask students if they can identify, accurate or not, other common of points about bullying.

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Checklist: Are you being bullied?

Objective: A checklist in which each student can understand roles and think through how often behaviors are being directed toward them.

Talking Points:

1. Print copies of the handout and distribute to each student
 - I. An interactive version is available on the Teens Against Bullying website at <https://pacerteensagainstabullying.org/bullying-defined/are-you-being-bullied/>
 - II. Note: Students should complete this privately. Let them know that they will not be required to share their results with the class. This activity is to help students with understand they roles in bullying, the intent in this context is NOT to identify which students are being bullied.
2. Share with students that bullying can happen to anyone—and it's not always so simple to recognize. Go through each of the questions and encourage students to consider if any boxes might apply to them.
3. Share that next there will be a list about bullying behaviors.

The goal of the checklists is to help students understand roles, to help them recognize their own situation and circumstances, but should NOT be used to label or identify a student.

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Checklist: Do you bully?

Objective: A checklist in which each student can understand roles and think through how often they are directing these behaviors toward other students.

Talking Points:

1. Print copies of the handout and distribute to each student

An interactive version is available on the Teens Against Bullying website at <https://pacerteensagainstabullying.org/bullying-defined/do-you-bully/>

Note: Students should complete this privately. Let them know that they will not be required to share their results with the class. This activity is to help students with understand they roles in bullying, the intent in this context is NOT to identify which students are showing bullying behavior.

2. Share that there is no one stereotype depicting someone who bullies. It can be anyone: the shy kid, the smart student, someone who is well-liked. Bullying is about behavior, not a label that the person wears. If you are bullying, it's time to stop. Know that your behavior is something you have the power to change. Read each of the following questions and check any boxes that you think might apply to you. Go through each of the questions and encourage students to consider if any boxes might apply to them.

Again, the goal of the checklists is to help students understand roles, to help them recognize their own situation and circumstances, but should NOT be used to label or identify a student.