

Bullying Prevention 101

A quick guide for middle and high school students

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is typically defined as when:

- A person is being hurt, harmed, or humiliated with words or behavior
- The behavior is repeated or there is a concern that it will be repeated
- The behavior is being done intentionally
- The person being hurt has a hard time stopping or preventing the behavior
- The hurtful behavior is carried out by those who have more power, such as students who are older, are physically bigger or stronger, have more social status, or form part of a group that singles out an individual

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 them stop.”

WHO IS INVOLVED?



Note: “Person” may mean one individual or a group of people.

CAN SOMEONE BE INVOLVED IN MORE THAN ONE ROLE?

YES! It’s often the case that the person being bullied, the person doing the bullying, and the person witnessing bullying are not distinct parts! It’s more common that students play multiple roles throughout the day.

YOU HAVE RIGHTS

It is important for you to know that there is legislation in every state designed to protect students in a bullying situation. These laws vary from state to state, but many express that:

- Students who are bullied should be provided with support and strategies designed to keep them safe and prevent further bullying
- Those who are bullying should be given consequences that are appropriate for the situation and circumstances
- Students who witness bullying should be trained on how to respond to bullying and the role they can play in creating a safe school community

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED OR SEE BULLYING

If you witness bullying, you have the power to stop it. How? Advocacy skills! Learning advocacy skills can help address bullying for yourself and others.

ADVOCACY



Helping others
get what they need

SELF-ADVOCACY



Communicating and taking action
to get what you need

Advocacy skills can empower you to:

- Involve others, especially adults such as parents or teachers
- Gain confidence to take action to stop the bullying and recognize that you have the right to be safe
- Identify what help you need and think of ways you can respond when bullying happens
- Make choices that lead to positive change for you and the bullying situation

If you are being bullied, it's important to tell someone, especially an adult, you trust. Know that:

- No one ever deserves to be bullied
- You have the right to ask for help to stop the behavior
- Your opinion about what to do is important
- You don't have to go through the bullying experience alone

If you see bullying, you can:

- Help the person being bullied get away from the situation
- Change the subject when your peers start tearing someone down
- Say something positive about the person being bullied
- Take the direct route and, if you feel safe, ask the person doing the bullying to stop
- Find an adult who can quickly intervene

If you see cyberbullying, you can:

- Write something positive in response
- Contact the person being bullied and let them know you are there for them
- Take a screenshot of the bullying, report it to a parent or an adult at school
- Report the bullying content to the social media platform and ask to have it removed

STUDENT ACTION PLAN

Ready to take action to address bullying?

Bullying can be prevented with students, parents, and educators working together to take action. This plan is an opportunity for you—along with your parents or teachers—to develop a strategy to change what's happening to you or someone else.

PACER's Student Action Plan includes three steps:

Step 1: Describe the bullying. Include dates, location, who is involved, and details of the behavior.

Step 2: Describe what you would like done. Think about how the situation could be stopped or prevented.

Step 3: What steps can you take to make that happen? Include who could help, and what they and you can do.

Download the **Student Action Plan** template: [PACER.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf)

CYBERBULLYING:

What Kids Need to Know

Cyberbullying is using technology, such as email, texts, social media, online gaming, or pictures, to hurt or harm someone else with unwanted, aggressive, and repeated behavior.

Cyberbullying can happen anywhere and anytime technology is used, such as:

- Sending mean text messages
- Posting unkind comments online, or liking or sharing hurtful posts
- Sharing pictures that are not yours to share
- Spreading rumors or gossip online
- Pretending to be someone else online or by text. This might mean sending messages or making posts using someone else's name, to hide who's really doing the messaging.

BE SAFE, BE RESPECTFUL

Remember, there are real people reading your posts or messages. Talk with your parent or another trusted adult about:

- Rules and guidelines for technology use
- How to handle any cyberbullying that you see or experience
- How positive messages can help others feel good about themselves and negative messages can cause hurt

TELLING IS NOT TATTLING

Kids often don't want to tell an adult about bullying because they don't want to be a tattletale. Telling is NOT tattling! Telling is done to get help to protect yourself or someone else. Tattling is done to get someone in trouble.



IF YOU ARE CYBERBULLIED

- Know that you do not deserve what is happening
- Tell a grownup: a parent, a teacher, or trusted adult, and ask them to help you make a plan to handle it

IF YOU SEE CYBERBULLYING

- Tell the person who is being bullied that they don't deserve to be treated that way
- Help them tell a grownup, or report it to an adult yourself
- If you can, take a screenshot or photo to share with the grownup

Bullying Prevention 101

A quick guide for adults

BULLYING DEFINED

Although definitions vary, most include that bullying is when:

- There is aggressive, unwanted words or action that hurt or harm another person physically or emotionally
- Those targeted by the behavior have difficulty stopping the action directed at them and struggle to defend themselves
- There is also 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
- There is a pattern of bullying behavior, although bullying can occur in a single incident depending on its severity or the history of those involved

Note: For a legal definition, consult your state’s law on bullying.

DID YOU KNOW

...bullying is not the same as conflict

Conflict can be a disagreement or argument that occurs when parties with equal power express their views. While people may not agree, it’s not bullying if both parties can respectfully share what they think without demeaning or intentionally hurting the other person.

...harassment is different from bullying

Bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably when talking about hurtful or harmful behavior. They are very similar, but bullying behavior is considered harassment when it is directed at a protected class – such as a group identified by race, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin.

...the Internet is changing how youth experience bullying

Cyberbullying is often defined as an aggressive, intentional, and repeated act against someone using technology, such as email, texting, social media, or instant messages.

... adults don’t see most bullying

Bullying often takes place outside the view of adults – in the classroom when the teacher leaves the room, on the playground, on the bus, or online. In order for youth to feel equipped to take action, it is important to empower them as advocates for themselves and others.

Advocacy

=

Helping others get what they need

Self-advocacy

=

Communicating and taking action to get what you need

Empowering
Youth

Every child and teen can and should develop advocacy skills to address and prevent bullying.

Advocacy for yourself and others helps youth:

- Feel empowered to help prevent bullying they see or experience
- Identify what help is needed to address bullying
- Ask others to get involved
- Respectfully express disagreement
- Offer their opinions with confidence
- Make a positive difference for themselves and others

HOW TO APPROACH BULLYING SITUATIONS

When a child is *being* bullied...

- Be supportive
- Listen to them without judgement
- Let them know that you are there for them and want to help
- Discuss their ideas on how they want to handle the situation
- Make a plan for next steps
- Identify others who may be able to help, such as a teacher or counselor

When a child *witnesses* bullying...

- Reassure them that telling an adult is a positive first step
- Share that they can make a positive impact on others
- Work together to make a plan that they are comfortable with using to respond to bullying incidents in the future
- Reinforce that they should never participate in or support bullying
- Encourage them to be supportive and kind to the student being bullied
- Explain why telling an adult about bullying is a good idea and is not tattling

When a child is *doing* the bullying...

- Know that bullying is a behavior and behavior can be changed
- Recognize that children bully for many different reasons
- Have a calm conversation to explore the reasons for their behavior
- Help them understand how their behavior affects others
- Make your expectations of appropriate behavior clear and consistent
- Let them know bullying is not okay under any circumstances
- Provide appropriate and meaningful consequences that fit the situation
- Help them think through how they can handle situations more positively
- Give positive feedback for good choices

Three simple steps youth can take to promote advocacy and self-advocacy

- **STEP 1: Describe the experience.**
Youth should think about the bullying they have experienced, seen, or done. Help them describe the situation including where it happened, who was involved, what occurred, and how it made them feel.
- **STEP 2: Reflect on ideas.**
Ask youth to consider how the situation could be different. Include what they would like to see happen, what things could change, and what would help them feel more in control of the situation.
- **STEP 3: Develop potential solutions**
Assist youth in thinking about the steps needed to make those changes. Consider what role they need to take, who should be involved, and what those involved would need to do.

It is important to note here that while it's not up to the child to handle the situation on their own, it's important they feel empowered to share their perspective.

Download PACER's Student Action Plan Template to get started:

[PACER.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-25.pdf)

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"When someone makes you feel less about who you are as a person."