

TOGETHER WE CAN BE BULLY FREE[®]

A MINI-GUIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS BY ALLAN L. BEANE, PH.D.

POP QUIZ!

1. What's one of the biggest problems in schools today?

- a. Teachers from outer space
- b. Mutant insects in the bio lab
- c. The homework monster in Room 107
- d. Bullying

If you chose “d. bullying,” you’re absolutely right. And while teachers, lab experiments gone wrong, and even homework can be pretty funny at times, bullying is no laughing matter. A school that has a bullying problem isn’t safe. It’s not a good place for students to learn or have fun.

- Maybe you’ve been bullied. Then you know how much it hurts to be the target of bullying.
- Maybe you’ve bullied someone else. If you have, it’s time to stop.
- Maybe you’ve watched someone else be bullied. You might have felt bad but been afraid to speak up.
- Maybe you’ve been in all three situations. Lots of people have.

No matter where you fit when it comes to bullying, this mini-guide has ideas for you. Every student has the right to feel safe, respected, and accepted. Our school wants to stop the problem of bullying, and you can help. Join in and be a “bully buster.”

Together we can be bully free!

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when a person or group of people hurts, embarrasses, or frightens another person on purpose over and over again.

WHAT DOES BULLYING LOOK LIKE?

- Name-calling
- Hitting, kicking, pinching, tripping, shoving
- Sexual harassment
- Rude hand gestures
- Mean or false email messages
- Spreading rumors
- Teasing
- Stealing or breaking someone’s things
- Mean text messages
- Intimidation from gangs
- Put-downs
- Threats
- Leaving someone out
- Mean websites

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BULLIED

Do:

- **If you are in real danger, walk (or RUN!) away.** Get away as quickly as possible.
- **Tell an adult you trust.** An adult can help make the bullying stop. Remember: Telling isn’t tattling—it will help keep you safe!
- **Buddy up!** Kids who bully usually go after kids who are alone. If someone bullies you on the way to or from school, start walking with someone. At school, join a group of other kids.
- **Avoid kids who bully.** Think about where and when you usually get bullied and try to stay away from those places at those times. If it’s a place you have to go, take along a friend.
- **Stand up for yourself.** If you feel safe, stand up straight, look the person in the eye, and say in a confident voice, “Leave me alone!”

DON’T:

- **Fight back.** If you fight, threaten, or call the person names, he or she might try to hurt you even worse. Plus, you will have become someone who bullies.
- **Cry.** Kids who bully like having power over people and making them cry. It’s best to stay calm, walk away, and find someone who can help.
- **Ignore the bullying situation and hope it will stop.** The bullying is not going to stop on its own. Decide whether to stand up for yourself or get help from an adult who can help solve the problem.

MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

Some people deserve to be bullied. False. No one ever deserves to be bullied or “asks for it.” Kids might target people who are different in some way. Being different is not a reason to be bullied.

Bullying is a normal part of growing up. False. Getting teased, picked on, pushed around, threatened, harassed, insulted, and abused is not normal.

The best way to deal with bullying is by fighting or trying to get even. Not true! Fighting can only get you hurt or in trouble. It only makes things worse.

People who are bullied will get over it. Don't believe it. Bullying hurts for a long time. Some kids have dropped out of school because of bullying. Others have become so sad, afraid, and depressed that they committed suicide.

WHAT TO DO WHEN OTHERS ARE BULLIED

- **Refuse** to join in.
- **Speak out.** Use words like these: “Don’t treat him that way.” “Stop hitting her.” “I’m going to report this right now.”
- **Distract** the person who is bullying so he or she stops.
- **Report** all bullying to a teacher or another school adult.
- **Be a friend** to the person being bullied.
- **Make an effort** to include students who are left out most of the time.



IMPORTANT! Never fight someone who bullies. It’s not safe and it won’t solve the bullying situation. Fighting can only make things worse.

A lot of the time kids who bully actually want friends and want to be liked, but bad feelings they have inside make it hard for them to show it. If a kid who has bullied is trying to change and it is safe for you, be a friend to the person. Your friendship can help him or her be bully free.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BULLYING OTHERS

People who bully are not bad people. It is their behavior that is bad. It’s never too late to make a change. How?

- Stop the bullying right now!
- Start showing all people respect.
- Talk with adults you trust (parents, teachers, youth leaders) about the bullying. Tell them about any strong feelings (like anger or stress) that you have.
- Always keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- If you start to feel upset or angry, **STOP** and **THINK**. Take a deep breath. Don’t bully someone. Instead, think about your choices. What might be the consequences of each one?



REMEMBER! YOU decide your actions. YOU are in charge of what you do. YOU can decide to stop the bullying and help yourself and our school be bully free!

RULES FOR A BULLY FREE CLASSROOM

If you see others breaking these rules, speak out—be a bully buster! Help our school be a safe, fun place for everyone.

1. Bullying is not allowed in our classroom. (Or anywhere else in the school.)
2. We don’t tease, call names, or put people down.
3. We don’t hit, shove, kick, or punch.
4. If we see someone being bullied, we speak up and stop it (if we can) or go for help right away.
5. When we do things as a group, we make sure that everyone is included and no one is left out.
6. We make new students feel welcome.
7. We listen to each other’s opinions.
8. We treat each other with kindness and respect.
9. We respect each other’s property. (School property, too.)
10. We look for the good in others and value differences.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Stick Up for Yourself! *Every Kid’s Guide to Personal Power and Positive Self-Esteem* by Gershen Kaufman, Lev Raphael, and Pamela Espeland (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1999). Ideas for standing up to bullying or if you’re being bullied.

KidsHealth (www.kidshealth.org) Information on many topics, including bullying and handling strong emotions and tough times. Enter the “Kids” section and click on “Dealing with Feelings.”