

TOGETHER WE CAN BE BULLY FREE[®]

A MINI-GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS BY ALLAN L. BEANE, PH.D.

BULLYING . . .

- Creates a fearful school climate.
- Leads to absenteeism.
- Causes loneliness, depression, anxiety problems, and eating disorders.
- Increases the risk of suicide.
- Hurts everyone: victims, bullies, and bystanders.

Bullying is one of the most severe and widespread problems facing today's schools. As an educator, you know children who are bullied daily or weekly. You've witnessed the bullying yourself, or you've heard the reports or rumors. And much bullying goes undetected—though its effects on student health and learning are no less serious.

And bullying will NOT stop without adult intervention.

Bullying isn't a "normal" part of growing up. Bullying is a learned behavior, and it can be unlearned with the help of a caring school staff taking positive steps to intervene and prevent bullying in all its forms. School needs to be a safe, nurturing environment where all students are able to learn, achieve, and be their best. Working with other school personnel, students, parents, and community members, you can help to ensure that the classrooms, halls, bathrooms, playgrounds, and gathering areas in our school are peaceful and safe. Our school is committed to stopping the problem of bullying. This brochure offers information and strategies you can use.

Together we can be bully free!

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of overt and aggressive behavior that is intentional, hurtful, and repeated. With bullying, there is an imbalance of strength: bullied children are taunted, harassed, rejected, and assaulted by one or more individuals.

WHAT DOES BULLYING LOOK LIKE?

- **PHYSICAL:** pushing, shoving, tripping, kicking, hitting, slapping, pinching
- **VERBAL:** racist, sexist, or bigoted remarks; threats; name-calling; teasing
- **EMOTIONAL:** intimidation, coercion, exclusion, spreading rumors or lies
- **CYBERBULLYING:** mean email or texts, impersonation, hateful websites

SIGNS THAT A STUDENT MAY BE A TARGET OF BULLYING

- Decreased interest in schoolwork or quality of work
- Erratic school attendance, goes to recess late and returns early, drops school activities he or she enjoys
- Difficulty concentrating in class or sudden changes in mood or behavior
- Seems isolated, withdrawn, anxious, fearful, self-blaming
- Uses "victim" body language—hunched shoulders, head down, avoids eye contact
- Poor or few social skills; no friends or few friends
- Lacks sense of humor or uses inappropriate humor
- Prefers company of adults during lunch or free times
- Suddenly starts to bully other students
- Frequent illness or unexplained scratches, bruises, or damage to clothes or belongings
- Appears ashamed of trait that separates him or her from other students
- Low or no self-confidence, self-esteem
- Talks about running away, committing suicide, or other alarming behaviors

IF YOU WITNESS BULLYING . . .

Take immediate action. Do not ignore the behavior. Instruct the student to STOP the hurtful behavior NOW and to move away from the target.

Follow up, regardless of the nature and severity of the bullying. Keep a record of all conversations and steps taken. Clearly document **what happened, when and where it occurred, and who was involved.** Consult the school or district policies on bullying incidents before proceeding. As general guidelines:

- Talk to the bullying student and the target separately soon after the incident occurs. Interview witnesses of the bullying individually as well.
- Talk with other school staff, including administration, about the bullying incident and your pursuant conversations with all students involved.
- Follow established policy on contacting and meeting with parents of both the target and the student who bullied. When talking to parents, focus on the problem behavior rather than portray a child as a “problem student.”
- Maintain contact with school personnel and parents until the situation is clearly resolved.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO STUDENTS WHO REPORT BULLYING

Do:

- Send a clear message that the bullying is not the victim’s fault.
- Listen closely without interrupting. Maintain eye contact and demonstrate attentive body language.
- Ask questions for clarification and to be encouraging.
- Empathize and occasionally mirror the student’s emotions in your own face.

Assure the student you’ll do everything in your power to ensure the bullying ceases, including follow-up with students involved, their parents, and school personnel.

DON’T:

- Blame the target for the bullying.
- Act as though the bullying is no big deal.
- Interrupt the student.
- Challenge or interrogate the student.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HEAR ABOUT BULLYING

There are times when you will hear about bullying, or suspect it, but not personally witness it. Always investigate further and document your findings.

- Closely observe both the target and the person bullying.
- Speak with each of them separately, trying to determine how truthful their responses are.
- Talk to any students who may have witnessed the bullying.
- Talk with other school personnel who have interactions with the students involved.
- Follow school policy for reporting and following up.

RULES FOR A BULLY FREE CLASSROOM

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.

WHAT TO TELL BYSTANDERS

Bullying involves not only kids who bully and their targets but also bystanders. Enlist this important group to be “bully busters.” Make it clear that you—and the school—want every student to do the following when others are bullied:

- Refuse to join in.
- Do not ignore bullying you see or know about. By doing nothing, you are participating in the bullying.
- If possible, stand up for the bullied student. Tell the bully, “Don’t treat him that way!” “Stop hitting her.”
- Report all bullying to a teacher or school official.
- Never fight the person who bullies. It’s not safe and it will make the bullying problem worse, not better.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The New Bully Free Classroom[®]: Proven Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Teachers K–8 by Allan L. Beane, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2011). Strategies teachers can start using immediately in the classroom.