



What is Bullying? How to Protect Yourself

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What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated physical, verbal, or social behaviors intended to hurt another person.

- **Physical** bullying: examples include punching or kicking, practical “jokes” resulting in injury, or stealing a belonging and ruining it.
- **Verbal** bullying: examples include calling mean names, making hurtful statements, or telling “jokes” about a person’s looks, beliefs, or abilities.
- **Social** bullying: examples include spreading rumors, sharing private information, or deliberately excluding a person.

How do you know if it’s bullying?

Sometimes friends tease one another – is this bullying? A good rule of thumb is that bullying makes a person feel bad, whereas playful teasing should make a person feel good. It is not enough to treat others how you want to be treated: you must treat others how **THEY** want to be treated.

Who is involved in bullying?

There are three roles in a bullying situation: the bully, the victim, and the bystander.

- **Bully**: the person who is being mean.
- **Victim**: the person who is being hurt. It is **NEVER** a victim’s fault!
- **Bystander**: any person who observes the bullying.

Why would a person bully others?

There are many reasons why a person might bully:

- They might think *it’s just harmless teasing...* but if a victim is being hurt, it’s bullying!
- They might think that *adults won’t care...* but adults do care!
- They might think that *some kids just ask for it...* but no one deserves to be bullied!
- They might feel *upset with someone else...* but bullying will not make them feel better!
- They might want to *fit in with a group...* but who wants to be part of a group like that?
- They might want *attention...* but there are better ways to get attention!
- They might be *victims of bullying themselves...* but hurting another person will not fix their problem!



What can you do if you are a victim?

There are a few different strategies you can use to stay safe from bullying:

- **Don't give the bully the reaction they are looking for!** Bullies who are looking for an emotional response will not get what they want if you pretend that they don't bother you.
- **Stick to the facts, and then walk away!** Bullies who are insecure will look for someone who is different. If bullies are making fun of you for something that makes you different, show them that you don't think the difference is a big deal. Acknowledge your difference for what it is ("yup, I have glasses") and then leave.
- **Don't get even!** Bullies are already looking for reasons to attack you – don't give them any reason to come back! If you try to hurt them like they hurt you, they will want revenge. It's not worth it!
- **Tell an adult!** Bullies want victims to stay silent so that they can continue their behavior without getting in trouble. Telling an adult what's going on isn't tattling! You aren't telling to get them in trouble, you're telling to keep yourself – and others – safe.
- **Stay with others!** See above – bullies don't want to get in trouble! Hang out with other kids, or make sure there is an adult nearby, and they won't be able to pick on you without a witness to their behavior.

What can you do if you are a bystander?

If you see someone being bullied, you can either be part of the problem (by doing nothing or by joining in), or you can be part of the solution. Here are some ways you can help:

- **Ask the bully to knock it off.** Show the bully that you don't think their behavior is cool.
- **Help the victim get away.** Cause an interruption that will help the victim leave the situation.
- **Tell an adult.** Sometimes victims are scared to ask for help, so make sure you let an adult know what is going on. You can help stop the bully from hurting others!
- **Tell the victim no one deserves to be bullied.** Some victims believe they did something to deserve the way the bully treats them. This is NOT true! The bully is the one doing something wrong, not the victim. No one ever deserves to be bullied!
- **Ask others to help prevent bullying.** Talk to your friends about bully behaviors you have seen and make an agreement about what you will do about it. Does your school have an anti-bullying program? Maybe you can start one!

References

- "Bullying Awareness Lessons, Activities, and Resources" (2010-2011). Kentucky State 4-H Council. University of Kentucky College of Agriculture. Retrieved 16 December 2012 from http://www2.ca.uky.edu/4h-files/STC11_Bullying_Program.pdf
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