



Creating a **Safe and Respectful Environment** in Our Nation's Classrooms

MODULE 1

**UNDERSTANDING
AND INTERVENING
IN BULLYING BEHAVIOR**

Self-Study Workbook

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October 2018

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Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms

MODULE 1

Understanding and Intervening in Bullying Behavior



5 minutes

Overview

This self-study module for *Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms* is the first of two modules designed to equip teachers, other educators, and support personnel who work with students with the tools to reduce the incidence of bullying behavior in the classroom and build a more supportive classroom environment. This workbook has been developed for those for whom a trainer-led group is not feasible. Although the user will miss out on the benefits of group discussion and brainstorming, he or she will have access to all the data and information provided in the live training version.

Learning objectives are interspersed throughout the course to guide you to the major points in the material and to help you track your progress. To obtain maximum benefit, each person pursuing this course of self-study should study the material, write a thoughtful response where asked, and answer the questions for reflection at the end of each section. Each question is designed to address the associated learning objective. Information sheets at the end of the workbook summarize important information or list additional resources for further study.

Goals/Objectives of Self-Study Workbook

Participants will:

- Understand what bullying behavior is and is not.
- Understand what bullying behavior may look like in the classroom.
- Explore ideas for responding to bullying behavior.
- Learn to use specific strategies for addressing, reporting, and following up on bullying behavior when it occurs.

How to Complete This Workbook

1. **Inspect the table of contents** to get a sense of the topics covered in this workbook. By referring to it as you proceed, you can track your progress.
2. **Write thoughtful responses** to questions about your experience. The questions precede some sections and are scattered throughout the material. As you proceed, you will be asked to return to your response and compare it to information provided in the section, and you will likely use your response to augment that information.

3. **Consider the learning objectives** as you approach each section. Objectives indicate important information that you are being asked to master.
4. **Work through the workbook** in sequence. The information is laid out to incrementally build your knowledge and skills. Supply information where you are asked to do so.
5. **Answer the questions for reflection**, which are followed by the correct responses and tied to the applicable learning objective.
6. **Review included information sheets** for additional information.

NOTE: Throughout these self-paced study modules, you will find reference numbers for citations indicated by a number in parentheses—for example, “(2)”—following content based on that reference. For a full list of the sources noted, see the **References** section, pages 35–36.

Self-Assessment 1

The following questions ask you to consider your level of knowledge related to bullying behavior and your confidence in using various skills presented within this training module. Please provide your best self-assessment from your perspective on the following questions as you begin this training.

On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Limited Understanding” and 4 being “Extensive Understanding,” how would you rate your understanding of what constitutes bullying behavior as you begin this training?

Limited Understanding			Extensive Understanding	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Not at All Confident” and 4 being “Highly Confident,” how would you rate your level of confidence in using each of the following 10 skills to prevent bullying behavior as you begin this training?

1. Identifying bullying behavior when I see it.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Describing my school's policy on how to address bullying behavior.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Identifying possible indicators of students who bully.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Recognizing possible warning signs of students who are being bullied.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Knowing how to intervene in bullying behavior when I see it.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Knowing how to de-escalate a situation if necessary.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Knowing how to address bullying behavior that is reported to me.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Knowing how to find out what happened so I can make an accurate determination of whether an incident may involve bullying.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Knowing how to support the student(s) involved, including bystanders.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Knowing how to follow up and report on bullying behavior.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

Define Bullying



Before we get into the research on bullying, take a moment to consider your own experience as you respond to the following questions. The point of this exercise is only to get you started thinking about specific topics associated with bullying.

Your Experience Questions

1. How do you define bullying? _____

2. When you stop and think about it, what sets a behavior apart as bullying? _____

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this section, you will be able to do the following:

1. Define bullying according to an accepted definition.
2. Identify the core elements of bullying.
3. Recognize the significance of bystanders in a bullying episode.

Definition

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among students that involves an observed or perceived imbalance of power. The behavior is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. (15)

How does the definition match or conflict with your own definition in Your Experience Question 1? _____

Three Core Elements of Bullying (3, 15)

Although definitions of bullying can vary somewhat, three specific elements are present:

- Unwanted, aggressive behavior
- An observed or perceived imbalance of power between the student(s) doing the bullying and the student(s) being bullied
- Behavior that is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated

Aggressive behavior is not always negative. Throughout life, we are encouraged to pursue our aims vigorously and to play games competitively. Kids tussle. In some cases, rough play among friends may appear to be bullying, but neither party has the intent of actually hurting the other. Conflict is inherent in living, and we learn to deal with it through experience in the course of growing up. However, when one person is an unwilling participant in an interaction—when it’s **unwanted, aggressive behavior**—the incident may constitute bullying.

A second central element of bullying behavior is an **observed or perceived imbalance of power**, which can include possessing private information about someone. The perception of that imbalance on the part of a student, whether it exists or not, is enough to constitute a bullying situation. If a student feels it, then it exists for that person. (3, 15) Given the sense of unequal power and control, the student or students being bullied may not be able to defend themselves in a specific *context* or type of situation—although they may be able to in other situations.

Students who engage in bullying behavior may target other students they perceive to be different physically. They also may target students they perceive to be different in terms of coordination or athletic ability, intelligence, popularity, social connectedness, or some other characteristic. (5, 15)

Bullying behavior is **repetitive or highly likely to be repeated** between and among the same students over time. The potential for bullying behaviors to be repeated over time is a critical element that differentiates this behavior from other forms of aggressive behavior. It is important to address even a single episode of aggressive behavior among students, when there is a clear imbalance of power, before the behavior becomes repetitive and develops into a pattern of bullying behaviors. (3, 15)

Looking at your response to Your Experience Question 2, in what ways are your instinctive criteria for identifying behavior as bullying the same or different from the elements just reviewed? Might some of the differences indicate an incident other than bullying?

Bystanders

The obvious students directly involved in a bullying episode are the ones exhibiting the bullying behavior and the ones being bullied. However, bullying almost always occurs in front of other students. One study found that peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes but intervened only 10% of the time. Some of these bystanders join in or encourage the bullying; others simply watch, and many—although possibly disturbed by the behavior—do nothing to stop it. The following are four main bystander roles: (15)

- **Students who assist** may not start or lead the bullying behavior, but they join in.
- **Students who reinforce** give bullying an active audience—laughing, clapping, or encouraging the student engaged in the bullying behavior.

- **Outsiders** remain separate from the situation, neither reinforcing the bullying behavior nor defending the student being bullied. Even if they say nothing, their behavior provides passive support to the student doing the bullying.
- **Students who defend** act on behalf of the student being bullied, providing comfort, getting help, or even defending.

Clearly, the first three roles do nothing to help resolve the episode.

Questions for Reflection (Refer back to previous content as needed.)

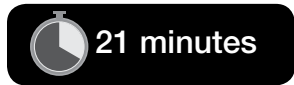
1. (True or False?) When a student punches a student who doesn't hit back, the one throwing the punch is a student who bullies. _____
2. The core elements of bullying include which of the following? (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Size inequality
 - b. Repetition of peer abuse
 - c. Perception of imbalance of power
 - d. Unprovoked aggression
 - e. Encouragement from bystanders
 - f. Unwanted aggressive behavior
 - g. Deliberate exclusion
3. How do passive bystanders make a bullying episode worse? (Choose one.)
 - a. Silence implies approval.
 - b. They provide comfort to the person being bullied.
 - c. Obtaining help makes it end.
 - d. 85% of the time, they are present.

Reflection Answers

Answers to the questions include the number of the objective to which they relate.

1. **False.** There is not enough information to tell if the incident constitutes a bullying episode, and bullying does not necessarily entail hitting. (Objective 1)
2. **b.** Repetition of peer abuse, **c.** Perception of imbalance of power, and **f.** Unwanted aggressive behavior. The other descriptors are not core elements because they may not be present in a bullying episode. (Objective 2)
3. **a.** Silence implies approval of the bullying behavior. Only by actively stepping up or getting help can a bystander help end a bullying episode. (Objective 3)

Describe Bullying



Your Experience Questions

1. What difference could how you talk about bullying make (e.g., whether you refer to someone as a bully or a victim)? _____

2. Using single words or short phrases, describe what bullying behavior has looked like in your experience. Connect or cluster similar forms of behavior. _____

3. Which forms of bullying are most common at your school? _____

4. Where or when does bullying happen? _____
5. How do you think students could be harmed by bullying? _____

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this section, you will be able to do the following:

1. Give two reasons why the terminology used to describe bullying matters.
2. Describe the four types of bullying.
3. Identify various contexts for bullying.
4. Explain the particular dangers of cyberbullying.
5. List three ways bullying can harm participants.

The Importance of the Terms We Use

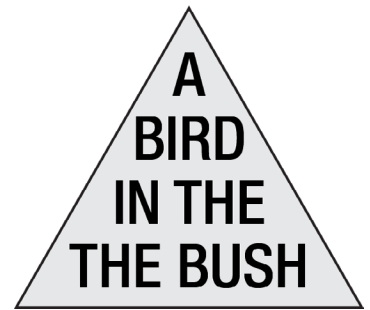
These self-study modules use specific terminology to discuss bullying behavior. Instead of talking about students “being bullies,” we refer to bullying behavior; instead of referring to a student being a “victim of bullying” we speak of a student who is bullied or is the target of bullying. By doing so, we shift the focus from labeling an individual—practically the same as name calling—to describing behavior. Changing the words we use can shift our perspective from one of horror, condemnation, or pity to one of concern for all participants. It can also reduce the shame among participants and promote more productive interaction and resolution.

Compare the information in the previous paragraph with your answer to Your Experience Question 1. What other reasons did you come up with to describe why it matters how you talk about the people involved in a bullying episode? _____

What Do You See?

Read the words of the common phrase in the triangle as quickly as possible.

If it took you a moment to notice that “the” appears twice, you’ll understand that we often see what we expect to see. Because many of us are familiar with the common phrase, we can make unconscious assumptions about what is actually there. When it comes to bullying behavior, it is important that we have a clear sense of what it looks like so that we can avoid making assumptions about why we see or fail to see some forms of bullying behavior.



Core Elements Review

Bullying involves:

- Unwanted, aggressive behavior
- An observed or perceived imbalance of power between the student(s) doing the bullying and the student(s) being bullied
- Behavior that is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated

Four Types of Bullying

With the three core elements of bullying present, the behavior can take many forms and can be grouped into four general types: (3, 15)

- Verbal
- Social
- Physical
- Damage to property

As you read about each type of bullying, compare your list of forms from Your Experience Questions 2 and 3 to the examples provided. Your experience may have taught you to recognize other behaviors, which you can add to each appropriate type.

Verbal bullying involves saying or writing mean things. Examples include taunting, name calling, making inappropriate sexual comments, threatening to cause harm, writing threatening or offensive notes, or saying things to embarrass or humiliate. *Other examples from your experience:* _____

Social bullying (also referred to as relational bullying) involves harming someone’s reputation or relationships. Examples include leaving someone out on purpose, telling other students not to be friends with someone, isolating someone, spreading rumors about someone, embarrassing someone in public, posting embarrassing images publicly or electronically, or making unwelcome contact of a sexual nature. *Other examples from your experience:*

Physical bullying involves hurting a person’s body. Examples include hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting on, tripping, pushing, or making rude gestures. *Other examples from your experience:*

Damage to property bullying involves theft, alteration, or damaging the property of the targeted youth. Examples include taking someone’s personal property and refusing to give it back, destroying someone’s property secretly or in their presence, or deleting personal electronic information. *Other examples from your experience:* _____

REMINDER: By themselves, any of these behaviors may not truly constitute bullying. The three core elements must be present as well.

Context for Bullying

Bullying can happen anywhere. Whether you see the behavior or not, the four types of bullying can take place in any context that puts students together. In addition to at school and during school events, students can be bullied on the way to and from school, in their own neighborhood, and at the mall or park. Online bullying—yet another context—may not be physical, but it can be related to damage to property bullying as well as to verbal and relational bullying.

Look at what you wrote for Your Experience Question 4; did you identify other situations or contexts? _____

Cyberbullying

The online context for bullying, better known as cyberbullying, involves communication that uses cellular technology or the Internet. (3) Because teachers and parents may not see or overhear the bullying behavior, it can be harder to recognize. Cyberbullying uses cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices that run e-mail, social networks, text messaging, game chat, messaging apps, discussion forums, and other applications to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- Send, post, or share negative, harmful, false, or mean content
- Share personal or private information
- Embarrass or humiliate
- Verbally harass
- Socially exclude
- Threaten physical or psychological harm

Cyberbullying imposes some specific dangers resulting from its digital nature. Teachers and parents not privy to student accounts may not observe it. Electronic and social media have become so widespread that anyone can post content at any time, and that content can be viewed by people known to the person being bullied and by strangers. Because digital devices allow 24-hour access, cyberbullying can be unrelenting, making it difficult for the person being bullied to find relief. Cyberbullying material also can be permanent because information can remain electronically and publicly available in perpetuity unless reported to and then removed by managers of the platform. The persistence of negative content online can harm students when they apply for college, jobs, associations, and credentials. (3, 15)

Prevalence of Bullying

In surveys conducted among 24 million students ages 12–18 during the 2014–15 school year, 20% said they had been bullied that year. The following government agencies collect data on youth bullying:

- The 2014–15 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that, nationwide, about 20% of students ages 12–18 experienced bullying. (13)
- The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System indicates that, nationwide, 20% of students in Grades 9–12 report being bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey. (2)

- The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Data Collection collects data from every public school district, including data on harassment and bullying. These data can be found at <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

Common Forms of Bullying

The 2014–15 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey reports that 20% of students surveyed (totaling 5 million students) said they were bullied, about the same number who reported being bullied on school property, and 3.8 million high school students (16%) said they were cyberbullied. (2, 13) Students identified the following most common forms of bullying behavior: (13)

1. Make fun of, insult, or call a student names—3,223,000 students
2. Spread rumors about a student—2,968,000 students
3. Push, shove, trip, or spit on a student—1,235,000 students
4. Deliberately exclude a student from activities—1,220,000 students
5. Threaten a student with harm—941,000 students
6. Try to make a student do things against his or her will—607,000 students
7. Destroy property on purpose—440,000 students

Knowledge Review: Scenarios

Let's take a moment to apply the information covered so far. Four scenarios follow, each outlining a student interaction you might witness. For each scenario, use the information provided up to this point to make your best assessment of which of the four options **best describes** the scenario. Once you have completed all four scenarios, check your answers with those provided on page 35.

Scenario 1

During most of the semester, Steve was part of what had seemed to be a pretty tight group of students who often would sit together in class and volunteer to work as a team on class projects. For the last few weeks, when Steve would sit with the group, the other members would ignore him, acting as if he weren't there. Steve has now started sitting on the other side of the room from the group. Steve's mom has called to express concern that her son is becoming increasingly withdrawn at home and talks about wanting to change schools. The previous evening, she walked into Steve's room and found horrible messages addressed to him on a social media app, which he had left open. She has called you because the messages were from the same group of students with whom Steve had been a friend—students in your class. When she confronted her son about the messages, he broke down and said that the messages have appeared every night for the past few weeks.

Which of the following is likely true?

- a. This is a clear example of bullying behavior; it contains all three core elements.
- b. The behavior would concern me, but it doesn't rise to the level of bullying.
- c. There is no clear indication based on the scenario, and I would need more information.
- d. This is not bullying.

Scenario 2

Angie—usually a friendly, engaged student in your classroom—has started sitting in the back of the room and no longer gets involved much in class discussions. One day you observe that, as she's leaving class, two other students walking out of class right behind Angie are whispering to each other and giggling.

Which of the following is likely true?

- a. This is a clear example of bullying behavior; it contains all three core elements.
- b. The behavior would concern me, but it doesn't rise to the level of bullying.
- c. There is no clear indication based on the scenario, and I would need more information.
- d. This is not bullying.

Scenario 3

Your class is brainstorming a list of topics for a writing project. As the students begin to talk about favorite hobbies as possible writing topics, Benny—a child with autism and ADHD—blurts out loudly that he wants to write about his dance class. Some of the other boys laugh. The next day, Benny comes to school wearing jeans and a dance leotard. You overhear one of the boys say, "Those are girl clothes!" (Adapted from GLSEN's *Ready, Set, Respect! Elementary School Toolkit*, www.glsen.org.)

Which of the following is likely true?

- a. This is a clear example of bullying behavior; it contains all three core elements.
- b. The behavior would concern me, but it doesn't rise to the level of bullying.
- c. There is no clear indication based on the scenario, and I would need more information.
- d. This is not bullying.

Scenario 4

Today is the day your students are presenting posters at the conclusion of their genealogy projects. All students are supposed to stand up and talk about their families and what they

put on their posters. When Rita talks about her two dads, someone in the back of the room yells, “That’s weird!”

Which of the following is likely true?

- a. This is a clear example of bullying behavior; it contains all three core elements.
- b. The behavior would concern me, but it doesn’t rise to the level of bullying.
- c. There is no clear indication based on the scenario, and I would need more information.
- d. This is not bullying.

Harm From Bullying

Whether as a student being bullied, doing the bullying, or witnessing bullying behavior, persons who are **involved in any way** have been known to be harmed. Independent of type, context, and form, recognized effects of bullying include the following: (1)

- Poor school performance, including lower grades and test scores
- Poor classroom attendance
- Negative physical and mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, involvement in interpersonal violence or sexual violence, substance abuse, and poor social functioning

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “involvement in bullying, along with other risk factors, increases the chance that a young person will engage in suicide-related behaviors.” (1) This is not to say that bullying directly causes suicide.

As for the **student being bullied**, the harm or distress can be even broader, including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm—any of which can limit a student’s educational opportunities. (3, 5, 15)

- Students can be physically hurt—from minor bruises to severe injuries such as lacerations, broken bones, and internal organ damage.
- Being bullied by others can lead to health complaints, depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- In the classroom, students may be unable to focus on their work, get poor grades, begin to withdraw from classroom activities, or be increasingly absent—missing, skipping, or dropping out of school altogether.
- A small number of bullied children have been known to retaliate with extreme violence. (15)

The harm caused by bullying also generates some of the warning signs we discuss in the next section.

In your response to Your Experience Question 5, did you think of other ways students can be harmed by bullying? If so, what ways? _____

Questions for Reflection (Refer back to previous content as needed.)

1. List three contexts—locations or situations—in which bullying can take place.

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. List three ways bullying can harm participants.

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Why might a change in terminology be important when we talk about a bullying episode? (Check all that apply.)

- a. It shifts the perspective to one of concern.
- b. Calling it an “incident” sounds too scary.
- c. Bullying audiences must be held accountable, too.
- d. It keeps the focus on behavior.
- e. There is a need to label participants.

4. What is particularly dangerous about cyberbullying? _____

5. For each example, name the type of bullying it represents, if you determine the episode constitutes bullying.

- Shoving in line _____
- Threatening notes _____
- Stealing an inhaler _____
- Excluding from a game _____

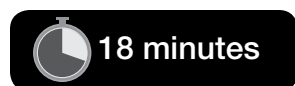
Reflection Answers

Answers to the questions include the number of the objective to which they relate.

1. **Context examples:** school, playground, park, mall, travel to or from school, neighborhood, online, and any other examples you offered in answering Question 6 (Objective 3)
2. **Harm examples:** difficulty escaping cyberbullying, persistence of online material, declining grades and test scores, poor classroom attendance, depression, sadness, loneliness, sleep and eating dysfunction, anxiety, interpersonal and sexual violence, substance abuse, poor social functioning, physical injuries, absenteeism, truancy, violent retaliation, and any other examples you offered when answering Question 8 (Objective 5)
3. **a.** It shifts the perspective to one of concern; **b.** It keeps the focus on behavior. (Objective 1)
4. Cyberbullying is dangerous because it can transpire out of sight of teachers and parents, yet the information is available to strangers and acquaintances around the clock. Also, the situation is unrelenting because the information continues to exist unless it is reported to the managers of the platform and then removed. The information can damage student reputations when seeking jobs, credentials, or college admission. (Objective 4)
5. Shoving in line—**physical bullying**
Threatening notes—**verbal bullying**
Stealing an inhaler—**damage to property bullying**
Excluding from a game—**social bullying** (Objective 2)

SESSION 3

Identify Bullying Dynamics



Your Experience Questions

1. Which characteristics seem to make students more prone to being bullied?

2. What characteristics seem to make students more prone to exhibiting bullying behavior?

3. What sorts of warning signs have you seen that suggest bullying is going on?

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this section, you will be able to do the following:

1. Describe multiple differences that could make a student vulnerable to bullying.
2. List at least five warning signs that suggest a student is bullying.
3. List at least five warning signs that suggest a student is being bullied.

Students who are bullied are often singled out for a characteristic that departs from some norm in the school community. Students who participate in bullying tend to show various characteristics or behaviors that serve as warning signs for intervention.

Perceived Differences

Any student at any age can become a target of bullying. At heightened risk are **individuals** perceived to—but not necessarily known to—differ from school norms. Perceived differences can include the following student characteristics: (12, 15)

- Appearance or body size
- Possible identity as gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- Seeming masculinity or femininity
- Ability in school
- Race, ethnicity, or national origin
- Religion
- Family income
- Disability or special needs

Reliable data reveal a disturbing predictability about **groups of students** who often are targets of bullying. Regardless of type of bullying or context, there tend to be particular trends, including the following: (2, 4)

- Females are bullied more than males.
- Lesbian and bisexual females are bullied more than heterosexual females.
- Gay and bisexual males are bullied more than heterosexual males.
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students are bullied more than heterosexual students.
- Electronic bullying is more common between students who have had sex with each other, whether same sex or different sexes.

Notice that in the last trend in the list, neither gender nor sexual identity is a factor. The important factor seems to be sexual contact of any kind between students and access to electronic media.

Perhaps there are other norms in your school that render a student more susceptible to being bullied. How does the list compare with your response to Your Experience Question 1?

Warning Signs

A variety of warning signs can indicate that someone is a participant in bullying—either bullying others or being bullied. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Look for changes in behavior. Don't ignore problems. (5, 15)

It is important to talk with students who show signs of being bullied or of bullying others. These warning signs can also point to other issues or problems, such as experiencing trauma, depression, or substance abuse. Talking to a student who shows signs can help identify the root of the problem.

Warning Signs for Students Who Bully

Even in combination, the indicators listed do not necessarily describe a student whose behavior constitutes bullying. At the same time, students who bully others frequently present one or more of the following characteristics.

Students may be bullying others if they do the following:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

Have you encountered other characteristics, which you documented in Your Experience Question 2, that seem to suggest a student is engaged in bullying behavior?

Warning Signs for Students Being Bullied

Although not necessarily signs someone is being bullied, the following are red flags to which it is important to attend:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, or scratches
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, homework, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick, or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, such as suddenly skipping meals or binge eating
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Social isolation
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, self-harming, or talking about suicide

Students May Not Ask for Help

According to *Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice*, published by the National Academy of Sciences, more than half of bullied students do not report being bullied. (7) They may withhold information for any number of reasons such as the following:

- Feeling helpless and wanting to handle it on their own to feel in control again
- Wanting to avoid being seen as weak or a tattletale
- Fearing backlash from the student or students who bullied them
- Feeling humiliated and not wanting adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false
- Expecting adults to judge or punish them for being weak
- Seeing themselves as socially isolated, believing no one cares or could understand
- Dreading being rejected by their peers (Although friends can help protect children from bullying, children can fear losing this support.)

From your own experience, can you add any other warning signs to either list that you named in your response to Your Experience Question 3? _____

REMINDER: The warning signs suggest the presence of bullying behavior. They do not diagnose it. As red flags, however, they draw your attention to the possibility.

Myths About Students Who Bully

Barriers to identifying students who bully arise from various myths that could easily lead to overlooking some students. (5)

MYTH 1: Students who bully are loners.

FACT: Students who bully typically have larger groups of friends than other students.

FACT: Students who bully demonstrate more leadership skills than their peers but use those skills to engage in abusive behavior.

FACT: The segment of their friendship group that they control usually supports and encourages the bullying behavior.

MYTH 2: Students who bully have low self-esteem and are insecure.

FACT: Research indicates that students who engage in bullying behavior tend to have average or above-average self-esteem.

FACT: Students who bully are good at controlling and manipulating social relationships.

MYTH 3: Students bully others because they want attention.

FACT: Power and control are the two main motivating factors, and although the behavior may draw attention, it is not the motivating factor.

FACT: Bullying behavior does not stop if adults or peers ignore the behavior.

MYTH 4: Bullying is a normal part of kids being kids.

FACT: Abusing others is not a normal part of childhood, and, if reinforced, such behaviors will often continue into adulthood.

FACT: A strong correlation exists between bullying behavior and later patterns of criminal activity. (15)

MYTH 5: Only boys bully others.

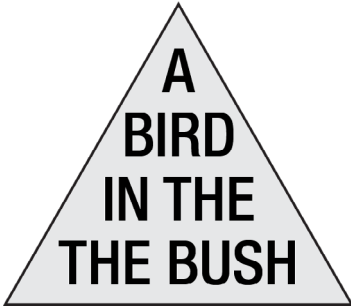
FACT: Girls are as likely as boys to bully their peers.

FACT: Differences lie more in the type of bullying exhibited. Girls are more likely to engage in relational bullying, whereas boys are more likely to engage in physical bullying.

The Relationship Solution

Bullying is a relationship problem involving a complex social dynamic that takes a variety of forms that are heavily influenced by the social context in which it takes place. Simplistic or one-size-fits-all strategies are not effective in reducing bullying behavior in schools. Reducing bullying requires a multifaceted approach that includes prevention, immediate response, and appropriate consequences and support for serious episodes. Integrating these intervention strategies with building a positive school climate through engagement, safety, and improved environment, as covered in Module 2, may help improve the effect and precision of anti-bullying efforts in schools.

Remember This?



Now that you have seen the extra word, it's impossible not to see it a few minutes later. Therefore, the more we learn about bullying (what it might look like at school, which students are most likely to be bullied, and which behaviors may indicate a student is bullying others or being bullied), the better we will be able to properly interpret the information. With this knowledge, we are able to detect bullying and respond to it even when we don't actually see an incident taking place on the playground, in the bus, or online.

Questions for Reflection (Refer back to previous content as needed.)

1. List five warning signs that suggest a student is being bullied.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

2. Which of the following are differences for which a student might be bullied? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> a. Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> e. Athleticism
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Size	<input type="checkbox"/> f. Intelligence
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Race	<input type="checkbox"/> g. Family income
<input type="checkbox"/> d. Gender identity	<input type="checkbox"/> h. Shoes

3. List five warning signs that suggest a student may be bullying others.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Reflection Answers

The answers to the questions include the number of the objective to which they relate.

1. **Possible correct answers for warning signs of being bullied:** (Objective 3)

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, or scratches
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, homework, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick, or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, such as suddenly skipping meals or binge eating
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Social isolation
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, self-harming, or talking about suicide
- Others? _____

2. **All could be true** because any difference from school norms can cause a student to be singled out for bullying. (Objective 1)

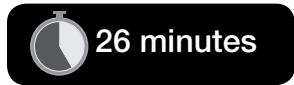
3. **Possible correct answers for warning signs that a student might be exhibiting bullying behavior:** (Objective 2)

- Gets into physical or verbal fights
- Has friends who bully others
- Is increasingly aggressive
- Gets sent to the principal's office or detention frequently

- Has unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blames others for own problems
- Doesn't accept responsibility for own actions
- Is competitive and worries about reputation or popularity

SESSION **4**

Address a Potential Bullying Episode



Your Experience Questions

1. What is the first thing you would do if you witnessed behavior that looked to you like bullying? _____

2. What is the primary guide to your response (i.e., what informs *how* you respond, not *the reason* for your response)? _____

3. In what sorts of situations should you call for professional support to address a bullying situation? _____

4. How do you go about determining what happened? _____

5. Who needs support in a conflict situation that appears to involve bullying? Why? _____

6. If a student appears to be so emotionally charged that he or she has lost control and is seeing everyone as a threat, what might be your most important response? _____

7. What might be the use of preparing a report about a bullying episode?

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this section, you will be able to do the following:

1. Summarize the first three tasks involved in dealing with a possible bullying episode.
2. Ask three questions that will distinguish whether an incident involves bullying.
3. Specify ways to support a student who is being bullied.
4. Specify ways to support a student who is bullying.
5. Specify ways to support bystanders to a bullying episode.
6. Select an appropriate response to a highly agitated student.
7. State the importance of thorough reporting and follow-up.

Strategies to Avoid

Let's start this section with a quick word about some strategies that have been shown to be ineffective, although they are still being used in some schools. **Group treatment** has been shown to create an audience for a student who bullies to brag and negatively role model. **Peer mediation and conflict resolution** requires equals in the conflict, which the power imbalance inherent in bullying renders ineffective. This approach sometimes further harms the student being bullied. **Short-term or one-time approaches** do little to prevent repeated episodes and provide insufficient opportunity to practice prevention and intervention skills. **Zero tolerance policies**, which are typically exclusionary, tend to brand a student more or less permanently as a bully and eliminate important exposure to positive role models in a caring school climate. (5) Effective bullying prevention and intervention call for use of more promising practices, such as those we'll explore next.

REMINDER: Bullying behavior is never tolerated. Every episode is dealt with individually with responses that fit the needs of all participants.

Effective Strategies to Employ

The tasks for addressing a suspected bullying episode are less a sequence and more of a checklist to help you intervene effectively. As we discuss each one, keep in mind that you will likely be performing several tasks at nearly the same time. (15)

1. Stop the behavior on the spot.
2. Find out what happened.

3. Support the students involved.
4. Report and follow up.

1. Stop the Behavior on the Spot

A potential bullying episode offers a teachable moment, and your mature, considered response models appropriate behavior for difficult situations. Acting in accordance with school policy, you must address the person being targeted, the person doing the attacking, and bystanders. (10, 15)

- Stay calm and keep your voice at a normal pitch.
- Reassure the students involved, including bystanders.
- If necessary, get another adult to help.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Separate all participants, preferably to different rooms.
- Ask the person being targeted, “What do you need from me?”
- Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- Focus on student behavior rather than personalities, reputations, or discipline history.

When to Call for Police or Medical Aid (15)

You definitely need help when the following conditions are present:

- A weapon is involved
- A person has been seriously or physically harmed
- A threat of serious physical injury is made
- A threat of violence motivated by hate is made
- A person has been sexually abused
- A person is accused of an illegal act, such as the use of force to get money, property, or services
- A person’s valuable property has been destroyed

Did your response to Your Experience Question 1 talk about or imply the need to stop the episode immediately? _____ If not, and school policy is the primary guide (Your Experience Question 2) to your response, what action would you take to protect the person being targeted? _____

Finally, given the different situations your school might experience, what other situations might call for professional support, according to Your Experience Question 3?

2. Find Out What Happened

As you gather information, stay aware of any tendency to make assumptions about the incident or the persons involved. Listen carefully to as many sources as possible, and write down what you hear and see. Only through careful research can you determine whether the behavior truly constitutes a bullying episode according to the accepted definition. (10, 15)

REMINDER: Be sure to ask the student who was bullied, “What do you need from me?” Then take the time to respond.

Remember those core elements that indicate bullying behavior? Fill in the missing word in each of the following statements. If any have slipped your mind, flip back through the material and refresh your memory.

- _____, aggressive behavior
- An observed or perceived imbalance of _____ between the student(s) doing the bullying and the student(s) being bullied
- Behavior that is repeated _____ times or is highly likely to be repeated

Gather Information About the Incident

Questions tied to the core elements of bullying can help make sure you get the necessary information to make an accurate determination about the nature of the incident. Document what the students say in their own words. You (or another school staff person) may need to track evidence such as text messages, damaged property, or social media images. Get copies of everything you can, and gather them into a folder. (10) Address the following questions:

- Was the aggressive behavior actually unwanted?
- What is the history, including past conflict, between the students involved?
- Is there a power imbalance?
- Has this happened before?
- Is the student who was bullied worried it will happen again?

As always, listen.

According to your response to Your Experience Question 4, what else could you do to determine what happened? _____

REMINDER: Imbalance is not limited to physical strength. A subtler social interaction may be at play; if the targeted student believes there is a power imbalance, there probably is one.

3. Support the Students Involved

Whether or not you determine that this is a situation involving bullying, you must address all participants according to school policy regarding the incident. If you decide that the episode does involve bullying, support for the various participants involves a number of forms. **Information Sheet 1** reiterates the following **Suggestions for Supporting Participants in a Bullying Episode**. (5, 10, 15)

Support the Student Being Bullied

- Listen to and focus on the student. Always ask, “What do you need from me?”
- Assure the student that the abusive behavior is not his or her fault.
- Appreciate and be patient with the fact that students who are bullied may struggle with talking about the situation.
- Work together to resolve the situation, and protect the student.
- Be persistent.
- Follow up.

Support the Student Exhibiting the Bullying Behavior

- Make sure the student knows what the problem behavior is.
- Tell the student that you and the school take bullying seriously.
- Apply consequences to teach in accordance with school policy.
- Involve the student in making amends or repairing the situation.
- Follow up.

Support the Bystanders

Witnesses to conflict often report that they did not know what to do, resulting in a sense of helplessness that can be profoundly troubling and induce an undeserved sense of guilt. However, it is important to reduce this sense of helplessness for future situations because bystander intervention can make a big difference in stopping a bullying episode. Bystander

support includes using what students saw to discuss sensible options for the next time they witness a similar event. Listen to their concerns as you suggest the following options for responding to an encounter that seems to involve bullying:

- Tell a student being targeted that bullying is wrong, and ask what you can do to help.
- Help a student being bullied get away from the situation.
- Help a student being bullied tell an adult.
- Seek help from an adult if you see someone being bullied.

Beyond the bullying episode, bystanders can consider the unfair judgment of the student being bullied and choose to be part of the solution. Adults can help students understand that differences among people make life interesting. Suggest that they can help prevent bullying by doing the following: (5, 15)

- Set a good example by refusing to bully others.
- Be kind to a person who has been bullied.
- Listen to a student who has been targeted.
- Spend time with a student who has been bullied, talk with him or her, sit with him or her at lunch, or play with him or her at recess.
- Look for opportunities to contribute to the anti-bullying culture at school.

What other people does your response to Your Experience Question 5 suggest need support?

Turn Down the Heat

Sometimes student emotions run so high that you risk making the situation worse by the way you step in to stop it. Certainly, a response of some kind is required, but you can't reason with someone who is enraged or hysterical. When adrenalin charges a high-stress or threatening situation, the fight, flight, or freeze response can affect everyone involved. Otherwise capable adults can respond so passively that they may actually ignore the situation. Others can become so aggressive that they heighten the risk of injury. Everyone should practice turning down the heat when appealing to reason is ineffective. (11)

REMINDER: Whatever you do, you must follow school policy.



You can help keep everyone safe and avoid having an incident escalate by practicing a few simple techniques for managing your own behavior and dealing with a student unable to get a grip on his or her emotions. **Information Sheet 2: Turning Down the Heat: Techniques for De-Escalating Student Behavior** can be found at the end of this workbook.

IMPORTANT: If it becomes obvious the person you are trying to calm has a weapon, remain calm and follow your school's procedures for addressing the presence of a weapon to ensure maximum safety for all students and staff members present.

Benefits of Staying Calm

Staying calm reduces the potential for violence, increases the safety of all involved, and establishes a stable situation from which to address the precipitating incident. There is nothing magical about talking someone down. You merely transfer your sense of calm, respect for all participants, and ability to set clear limits to an agitated student in the belief that he or she prefers to respond positively to your respectful attention. Imparting a sense of calm starts with controlling your own appearance and behavior in the situation and proceeds to expressing concern for the agitated student, validating feelings (rather than behavior), and remaining respectful yet firm. (11)



IMPORTANT: An agitated student is hypersensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. Help the student understand that he or she doesn't need to demand respect because you will treat all students respectfully. For additional details on the three key components of de-escalating tension (control yourself, communicate nonverbally, and communicate verbally), see **Information Sheet 2: Turning Down the Heat: Techniques for De-Escalating Student Behavior.**

Does the response you provided to Your Experience Question 6 reinforce the need for a calm approach? _____ How does it differ from the suggested behavior?

A Word About Trauma

Students who participate in bullying episodes have been known to be affected by trauma before engaging in the behavior and sometimes as a consequence of it.

Trauma is the result of an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (8)

Notice that some of these symptoms overlap with some of the indicators that a student may be prone to bullying behavior or to being bullied. (8, 9) Indications may include the following:

- Difficulty paying attention and learning
- Trouble building relationships with teachers and peers

- Spending more time out of class, increasing chances of failing and lower test scores
- Greater likelihood of being suspended or expelled and having higher rates of referral to special education



Particularly vulnerable groups, such as youth who are refugees/immigrants, speak English as a second language, come from high-poverty or low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds, or have a disability are at increased risk of being adversely affected by trauma. **Information Sheet 3: Common Symptoms of Trauma by School Age Group** and **Information Sheet 4: Online Resources About Trauma-Sensitive Practices for Teachers** (located at the end of this workbook) provide additional references for your continued professional development on this topic.

4. Report and Follow Up

Good research and documentation will help you write a thorough, accurate, and helpful report. Only with all the information can you determine the precise nature of the conflict—whether it was bullying or another form of conflict. A thorough report will help determine next steps and follow-up; connect all adults involved, including parents, caregivers, and school officials; and ensure an appropriate response to all participants, including bystanders. Most schools have clear procedures for reporting rule violations so that the incident is tied to reasonable consequences.

Schools should have a system for documenting and tracking issues, individual students, and patterns that reveal systemic problems needing to be addressed at a higher level. (14) Such a system can be used to help manage student behavior or to prepare letters and meetings with parents, students, and other school officials.

If specific forms are required, make sure you complete them fully. Plans for the students involved and for possible monitoring of frequently cited locations in which bullying occurs proceed from the school's reporting system. In accordance with school policy, be sure to do the following: (10, 14, 15)

- Include the names of the students involved.
- Identify the precise location of the incident and the date it occurred.
- Write down what the students said in their own words.
- Avoid editorial comments such as “Suzy is just like her brother.”
- Collect all information that may document patterns involving the same students.
- Track evidence such as text messages, damaged property, and social media images.
- Obtain copies of everything you can, and gather them into a folder.
- Keep reports confidential and private.

In the event that a determination of bullying is made, reports should indicate whether the conduct included anything that may trigger a school's obligations under civil rights laws (e.g., sexual harassment; harassment based on sex stereotypes, race, or national origin; disability) and any impact the conduct may have had on the student who was bullied that could interfere with access to education based on race, sex, disability, or other factors. For example, federal law requires a school to remedy the effects of bullying on the services that a student with a disability receives (special education or other disability-related services) to ensure that the student continues to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

How closely does your sense of the value of a thorough report (in your answer to Your Experience Question 7) align with the preceding information? _____

Follow Up

The follow-up lets all the students involved know they have continued adult support. The act of following up gives you a chance to gather new information as you find out what, if anything, has changed. Also, rigorous follow-up should reveal the effectiveness of bullying and disciplinary policies and efforts to institute a nurturing culture for everyone at your school. Make referrals according to your school policy. (10, 15)

Conclusion



Thank you for your professional commitment to addressing bullying behavior. **Information Sheet 5: Frequently Asked Questions With Additional Resources** provides substantial resources to sustain your efforts to address such behavior when you encounter it. We encourage you to continue with Module 2 of this self-study series, *Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment*, to consider the impact of the classroom environment on bullying behavior.

Questions for Reflection (Refer back to previous content as needed.)

1. Imagine that a ruckus in the middle-school cafeteria reaches peak intensity when a usually quiet boy overturns a lunch table while screaming at a group of laughing students. The boy launches himself at another boy, who easily shoves him off, still laughing.

"You pig! I'll kill you," screams the once-quiet boy (he has no weapon).

"You?" sneers the other boy, turning and nodding to his audience.

By the time you clear the cafeteria, leaving only the agitated child, he has not calmed down. In fact, his wild-eyed rage has turned on you as the enemy. Which might you do first? (Choose one.)

- a. Gently touch his shoulder.
- b. Sit down in a cafeteria chair a few feet away.
- c. Frown at the upturned table.
- d. Tell the student that the police are on the way.

2. As the student spews accusations, saying nobody cares that the other child steals his things and calls him names every day, what do you do? _____

3. Even when the conflict looks lopsided, you can't be sure it constitutes a bullying episode unless your questions elicit the necessary information. Check the three questions whose answers would together reveal the incident as one of bullying.

- a. How many times has something like this happened between you?
- b. [To the perceived target:] Are you okay with this?
- c. Who started this?
- d. What are you trying to work out?
- e. Were the students evenly matched in the encounter, or was one outclassed?

4. (True or False?) Support for a student who is bullying includes consequences tailored to the type of incident. _____

5. The first three tasks for responding to a potential bullying episode are:

- _____
- _____
- _____

6. Who does an effective report connect, besides school officials? _____

7. (True or False?) Support for a student who is being bullied includes assuring the student that the abusive behavior is not his or her fault and working with him or her to understand how unimportant differences inspired the bullying. _____

8. Bystanders can serve as a positive participant in a bullying episode by... (Check all that apply.)
- a. Encouraging the student being bullied to respond in kind.
 - b. Getting other students to help bring the episode to an end.
 - c. Seeking help from an adult.
 - d. Helping the student being targeted escape.
 - e. Asking the student being bullied what they can do to help.

Reflection Answers

Answers to the questions include the number of the objective to which they relate.

1. **b.** Puts you at eye level and indicates your empathy and intent to stay. The other choices take the focus off the needs of the agitated student and could make matters worse. (Objective 6)
2. When the student stops to take a breath, you could calmly tell him you understand why he might think nobody cares and you're sorry that a grown-up didn't see the situation in time to stop it. Validation goes a long way to restoring calm. (Objective 3)
3. **a.** How many times has something like this happened between you? (an indication of *multiple episodes*); **b.** [To the perceived target:] Are you okay with this? (an indication of *unwanted aggression*); and **e.** Were the students evenly matched in the encounter, or was one outclassed? (an indication of *imbalance of power*) (Objective 2)
4. **False.** Consequences are meted out in line with school bullying policy. (Objective 4)
5. **1. Stop it on the spot, 2. Find out what happened, and 3. Support the students involved.** (Objective 1)
6. **Parents and caregivers. It connects the episode with responsible parties who were unable to witness it.** (Objective 7)
7. **True.** (Objective 3)
8. **c.** Seeking help from an adult; **d.** Helping the student being targeted escape; and **e.** Asking the student being bullied what they can do to help. (Objective 5)

Self-Assessment 2

Now that you have completed this module, please assess your learning, using the following questions, from your perspective. Once you have responded to all of the following questions, compare your answers to the ones you gave as you began the training (pages 2–3). What progress do you note?

On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Limited Understanding” and 4 being “Extensive Understanding,” how would you rate your understanding of what constitutes bullying behavior after completing the training?

Limited Understanding			Extensive Understanding	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Not at All Confident” and 4 being “Highly Confident,” how would you rate your level of confidence to use each of the following 10 skills to prevent bullying behavior after completing the training?

1. Identifying bullying behavior when I see it.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Describing my school’s policy on how to address bullying behavior.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Identifying possible indicators of students who bully.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Recognizing possible warning signs of students who are being bullied.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Knowing how to intervene in bullying behavior when I see it.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Knowing how to de-escalate a situation if necessary.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Knowing how to address bullying behavior that is reported to me.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Knowing how to find out what happened so I can make an accurate determination of whether an incident may involve bullying.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Knowing how to support the student(s) involved, including bystanders.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Knowing how to follow up and report on bullying behavior.

Not at All Confident			Highly Confident	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being “Not at All Willing” and 4 being “Highly Willing,” how would you rate how likely you are to use any of the knowledge and skills you have learned in this training, should the opportunity arise?

Not at All Willing			Highly Willing	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

Identify one new strategy for addressing bullying behavior, as presented in this training, that you are willing to employ in your daily work with students, should the situation arise.

Session 2 Scenarios: Answers

Scenario 1: A. The behavior of Steve’s group of former friends is unwanted, socially aggressive, and occurring repeatedly over time. Steve’s efforts to remain connected with the group showed that he was powerless to combat the social isolation it imposed. Steve eventually expressed his isolation in physical form by sitting away from the group. The bullying then continued outside the classroom on the Internet.

Scenario 2: B. Nothing indicates that the two students were whispering and giggling about Angie. The behavior warrants observation, and as a teacher you should reach out to Angie to discuss the changes you have noted. But, unless a pattern persists and is directed specifically at Angie, this situation does not appear to rise to the level of bullying behavior based on what is stated in this scenario.

Scenario 3: B or C. The comments made by the boy toward Benny clearly could be hurtful but suggest immaturity rather than a desire to inflict harm. Also, from the information, this appears to be a single, isolated incident that does not yet rise to the level of bullying. Clearly, you should monitor this situation to ensure that it is not repeated.

Scenario 4: D. Based on the information, there does not appear to be a repeated pattern, nor does Rita seem to have “less power” than other students do. The comment warrants a discussion about the inappropriate response to a classmate’s presentation, but without other indicators it does not appear to be bullying.

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14. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (n.d.). *Staff-level review*.
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Other Resources

What Is Cyberbullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html>

What Is Bullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/index.html>

Facts About Bullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/media/facts/index.html>

Find Out What Happened

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/find-out-what-happened/index.html>

Myths About Bullying

https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/training/pdf/Myths_About_Bullying_Tipsheet.pdf

Respond to Bullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/on-the-spot/index.html>

The Roles Kids Play in Bullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/roles-kids-play/index.html>

Support the Kids Involved

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/support-kids-involved/index.html>

Warning Signs for Bullying

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/warning-signs/index.html>

Who Is at Risk

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/index.html>

Information Sheets

Use any of these sheets for reminders or additional support.

- 1. Suggestions for Supporting Participants in a Bullying Episode**
- 2. Turning Down the Heat: Techniques for De-Escalating Student Behavior**
- 3. Common Symptoms of Trauma by School Age Group**
- 4. Online Resources About Trauma-Sensitive Practices for Teachers**
- 5. Frequently Asked Questions With Additional Resources**

Suggestions for Supporting Participants in a Bullying Episode

Support the Student Being Bullied

- Listen to and focus on the student. Always ask, “What do you need from me?”
- Assure the student that the abusive behavior is not his or her fault.
- Appreciate and be patient with the fact that students who are bullied may struggle with talking about the situation.
- Work together to resolve the situation, and protect the student.
- Be persistent.
- Follow up.

Support the Student Exhibiting the Bullying Behavior

- Make sure the student knows what the problem behavior is.
- Tell the student that you and the school take bullying seriously.
- Apply consequences to teach in accordance with school policy.
- Involve the student in making amends or repairing the situation.
- Follow up.

Support the Bystanders

Listen to their concerns and suggest the following options for responding to an encounter that seems to involve bullying:

- Tell the student being targeted that bullying is wrong, and ask what you can do to help.
- Help a student being bullied get away from the situation.
- Help a student being bullied tell an adult.
- Seek help from an adult if you see someone being bullied.

Also, suggest that bystanders can help prevent bullying by doing the following:

- Set a good example by refusing to bully others.
- Be kind to a person who has been bullied.
- Listen to a student who has been targeted.
- Spend time with a student who has been bullied, talk with him or her, sit with him or her at lunch, or play with him or her at recess.
- Look for opportunities to contribute to the antibullying culture at school.

Adapted from *Right to Be Safe*, <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>.

Turning Down the Heat: Techniques for De-Escalating Student Behavior

Control Yourself

- Present a calm, centered, and self-assured appearance. This will help everyone calm down.
- Use a modulated, low tone of voice.
- Act unsuspecting.
- Remain aware that the issue is not about you.
- Avoid speaking defensively about yourself or anyone else, regardless of comments, insults, curses, or misconceptions about roles.
- Be respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help.
- If you need help, call on a colleague, an administrator, security, or the police.

Communicate Nonverbally

What you do is as important as what you say. The following techniques have been shown to help restore a modicum of safety to a person who sees only danger.

- Stand at an angle to the agitated student.
- Keep an open pathway to the door.
- Leave extra physical space between you and the student—about four times your usual distance. Anger and agitation seem to fill space.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets and available to protect yourself.
- Place yourself at the student's eye level, and maintain eye contact. Allow the student to break his or her gaze and look away if he or she needs to.
- Avoid pointing or shaking your finger.
- Refrain from touching the student, even if touch is generally culturally appropriate and customary. Physical contact can easily be misinterpreted as hostile or threatening.

Communicate Verbally

- Remember that there is no content to the discussion, except whatever helps to calmly reduce arousal to a safer level.
 - “You seem upset.”
 - “Your fists are clenched, and you're breathing fast. What is happening?”
 - “How can I help you?”

- Wait until the student takes a breath, and then speak calmly at your normal volume. Avoid trying to yell over a screaming person.

“Given what you just told me, it makes sense that you’re really mad.”

- Respond selectively, answering only informational questions no matter how rudely asked—for example, “Why do I have to do what you say?”
- Ignore abusive questions; say nothing—for example, “Why are all teachers jerks?”
- Explain limits and rules in a firm and respectful tone.
- Give choices when possible, as long as the alternatives are safe.

“Would you like to continue our meeting calmly, or would you prefer to stop now and come back tomorrow when things can be more relaxed?”

“Would you like to change seats?”

- Validate feelings without excusing the behavior.

“You have every right to express your anger. I need you to do it without threatening me or anyone else.”

- Explain the consequences of inappropriate behavior without using threats or showing anger.
- Explore potential resolutions.

“Who can I call to come be with you?”

“How can we work this out?”

- Present consequences as institutional requirements rather than personal decisions.
- Do not ask how the student feels or interpret feelings in an analytic way.
- Refrain from arguing or trying to convince.

Adapted with permission from Skolnik-Acker, E. (2008). *Verbal de-escalation techniques for defusing or talking down an explosive situation*. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts Chapter, Committee for the Study and Prevention of Violence Against Social Workers.

More De-Escalation Tips and Strategies

How To: Calm the Agitated Student: Tools for Effective Behavior Management

http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavior_calm_agitated_student

Dodging the Power-Struggle Trap: Ideas for Teachers

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/challenging-students/dodging-power-struggle-trap-ideas-teachers>

Common Symptoms of Trauma by School Age Group

Elementary Students

Evidence of Emotional Distress

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others (more clingy with teacher or parent)
- Worry about recurrence of violence
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., agitation, sleep disturbances, tendency to startle)
- Statements and questions about death and dying
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)
- Reexperiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)

Changes in Behavior

- Increase in activity level
- Withdrawal from others or activities
- Angry outbursts and/or aggression
- Absenteeism
- Overreacting or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Increased physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomach aches, overreaction to minor bumps and bruises)
- Recreating an upsetting event (e.g., repeatedly talking about, “playing out,” or drawing the event)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind him or her of the event)

Changes in Social Interaction

- Distrust of others, affecting how children interact with both adults and peers
- Increased difficulty interpreting and responding appropriately to social cues

Changes in School Performance

- Decreased attention and/or concentration
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Decline in work quality or completion, diminished classroom contribution

Middle School Students

Evidence of Emotional Distress

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Irritability with friends, teachers, events
- Discomfort with feelings (e.g., troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)
- Repeated discussion of event and focus on specific details of what happened
- Reexperiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)

Changes in Behavior

- Increase in activity level
- Angry outbursts and/or aggression
- Withdrawal from others or activities
- Absenteeism
- Overreacting or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Increased physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomach aches, chest pains)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind him or her of the event)

Change in School Performance

- Decreased attention and/or concentration
- Decline in work quality or completion, diminished classroom contribution

High School Students

Evidence of Emotional Distress

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Discomfort with feelings (e.g., troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)
- Reexperiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Discussion of events and reviewing of details

Changes in Behavior

- Increase in activity level
- Withdrawal from others or activities
- Angry outbursts and/or aggression
- Absenteeism
- Overreacting or underreacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Increased impulsivity, risk-taking behavior
- Increased risk for substance abuse
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind him or her of the event)

Change in School Performance

- Decreased attention and/or concentration
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (e.g., expression of suicidal thoughts; writing, art, or notebook covers about violent or morbid topics; suggestive Internet searches)

Change in Social Interaction

- Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others
- Irritability with friends, teachers, events

Adapted from the *Child Trauma Toolkit* by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

Online Resources About Trauma-Sensitive Practices for Teachers

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers a collection of materials for building trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive practices in schools. The page for accessing this collection of materials is called *Responding to Trauma in K–12 Schools* and can be found at <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/hot-topics/responding-trauma-k-12-schools>.

Other important resources include the following:

National Child Traumatic Stress Network has material for school personnel, including toolkits for schools and educators for responding to a school crisis. There also are materials on how to appropriately respond to trauma, bullying, and other school safety-related issues. Access these materials at <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel>.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention offers a technical assistance bulletin with strategies for creating trauma-informed classrooms. The bulletin describes what trauma looks like in the classroom and describes effective strategies to employ. Find the bulletin at http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/NCJFCJ_SJP_Trauma_Informed_Classrooms_Final.pdf?ed2f26df2d9c416fbddddd2330a778c6=avuttvejtl-ayrokrko.

U.S. Department of Education has a helpful brochure called *Tips for Helping Students Recovering From Traumatic Events*. The brochure contains tips for educators, students, and parents. Download it at <https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/recovering.pdf>.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration provides tips for parents, caregivers, and teachers on supporting children through trauma. Access *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event* at <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4732/SMA12-4732.pdf>.

Trauma affects educators, too. Download a short *Teacher Self-Care Tip Sheet* at <http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/natural-disasters/resources/tip-sheet-teacher-self-care.pdf>.

Frequently Asked Questions With Additional Resources

Law and Policy Resources

1. How do I know if my state has laws and policies addressing bullying?

State and local lawmakers have taken action to prevent bullying and protect children. Through laws (in their state education codes and elsewhere) and model policies (that provide guidance to districts and schools), each state addresses bullying differently.

Bullying, cyberbullying, and related behaviors may be addressed in a single law or may be addressed in multiple laws. In some cases, bullying appears in the criminal code of a state that may apply to juveniles.

Find out how your state refers to bullying in its laws and what they require of schools and districts at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html>.

Look at the 11 key components state bullying laws have in common: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/key-components/index.html>.

2. How can I help my school have good policies and rules to prevent bullying?

Many schools have rules and policies that work to prevent bullying. Sometimes bullying is also dealt with under a school's code of conduct. For more information about what model policies and codes of conduct look like, how to integrate them into your school's culture, and how to establish clear procedures for a reporting system, go to <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/rules/index.html>.

Additional Bullying Details

3. What is the difference between bullying and harassment?

Bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment when it is based on race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability, or religion. When bullying and harassment overlap, federally funded schools have an obligation to resolve the harassment.

At present, no federal law directly addresses bullying. In some cases, bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment, which is covered under federal civil rights laws enforced by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). No matter what label is used (e.g., bullying, hazing, teasing), schools are obligated by these laws to address conduct that is:

- Sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent that it interferes with or limits a student's access to the school's programs and activities from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school.
- Targeting a student's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion are covered under federal civil rights laws.

- Although ED, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, does not directly cover religion, often religion-based harassment is based on shared ancestry of ethnic characteristics, which is covered. DOJ has jurisdiction over discrimination based on religion under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

State and local laws may offer additional protections from discriminatory harassment.

To find out more, go to <https://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/federal/index.html>.

4. **Does bullying cause suicide?**

In its report, *The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What It Means for Schools*, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that:

- Bullying behavior and suicide-related behavior are closely related. This means youth who report any involvement with bullying behavior are more likely to report high levels of suicide-related behavior than youth who do not report any involvement with bullying behavior.
- Enough is known about the relationship between bullying and suicide-related behavior to make evidence-based recommendations to improve prevention efforts.
- It is not known if bullying directly causes suicide-related behavior. Research shows that most youth who are involved in bullying do NOT engage in suicide-related behavior. It is correct to say that involvement in bullying, along with other risk factors, increases the chance that a young person will engage in suicide-related behavior.

To read the full CDC report, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>.

5. **Where can I learn more about cyberbullying?**

This landing page at [stopbullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html) leads you to a variety of sources: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html>.

Here are tips for teachers: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/tips-for-teachers/index.html>.

6. **Where can I learn more about bullying prevention and evidence-based programs?**

Note: Definitions of “evidence-based” vary between organizations. Review these resources closely, and undertake due diligence to ensure that you are identifying resources that align with your community’s needs and the population(s) you serve.

An extremely comprehensive report called *Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice* that covers data, consequences, prevention interventions, and laws and policies can be downloaded for free at <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/23482/preventing-bullying-through-science-policy-and-practice>.

Additional information on preventing bullying is at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html>.

The federal government's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) can be found at <https://knowledge.samhsa.gov/ta-centers/national-registry-evidence-based-programs-and-practices>.

Youth.gov provides a directory of evidence-based programs identified by various federal agencies at <https://youth.gov/evidence-innovation/evidence-based-program-directories>. These directories contain resources beyond the topic of effective bullying prevention programs.

The National Institute of Justice's Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI) provides resources designed to increase safety in schools nationwide.

A list of programs and practices can also be found at <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/Programs.aspx>.

Population-Specific Resources

7. **Where can I find resources on protecting different groups of children and creating safe environments for them?**

Stopbullying.gov is a good source for information. Check out:

Diversity, race, and religion at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/index.html>.

LGBTQ youth at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/index.html>.

Youth with disabilities and special health needs at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/special-needs/index.html>.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, which includes information on how federal civil rights laws apply to harassment and bullying at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/pro-students/protectingstudents.html>.

Other good sources include:

Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit at <https://www.glsen.org/readysetrepect>.

A Framework for School Wide Bullying Prevention and Safety from the National Association of School Psychologists at <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/bullying-prevention>.

8. How can I learn more about intervening in bullying that is linked to teen dating violence?

CDC has a great deal of information and links to resources about teen dating violence and how to address it at https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html.

See also information provided by the Office of Adolescent Health about teen dating, including bullying, dating violence, and healthy relationship information, at <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/healthy-relationships/index.html>.

Futures Without Violence also has information on *5 Signs of a Healthy Teen Relationship* at <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/5-signs-of-a-healthy-teen-relationship/>.

Involving and Informing Parents

9. What can I give parents if they ask me for information on cyberbullying?

Digital awareness for parents at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/digital-awareness-for-parents/index.html>.

Establishing rules at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/establishing-rules/index.html>.

10. How can I get parents more involved in our school efforts to prevent bullying and protect students?

Engaging parents and youth at <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/engage-parents/index.html>.