



Bullying: Recognizing the Signs

Participant Guide

We are all either bullies, bullied, or bystanders.

– Dr. Richard Gross,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology



Workshop Objectives

- Understand what bullying is and what it is not
- Recognize the signs of bullying
- Identify the characteristics of bullying and victimization
- Know the steps you can take to ensure your children are not involved in bullying – either as perpetrators, targets, or bystanders, as well as what to do if they are involved

Workshop Agenda

1. Icebreaker/Discussion
2. What is Bullying?
3. Effects of Bullying
4. Characteristics of Bullies and Targets
5. Who Else is Involved?
6. Warning Signs
7. What Can You Do?
8. Reflection and Planning
 - Next Steps
 - Q + A
 - Evaluation



What is Bullying?

Bullying is any ongoing physical or verbal mistreatment where there is an imbalance of power and the victim (target) is exposed repeatedly to negative actions on the part of one or more students.

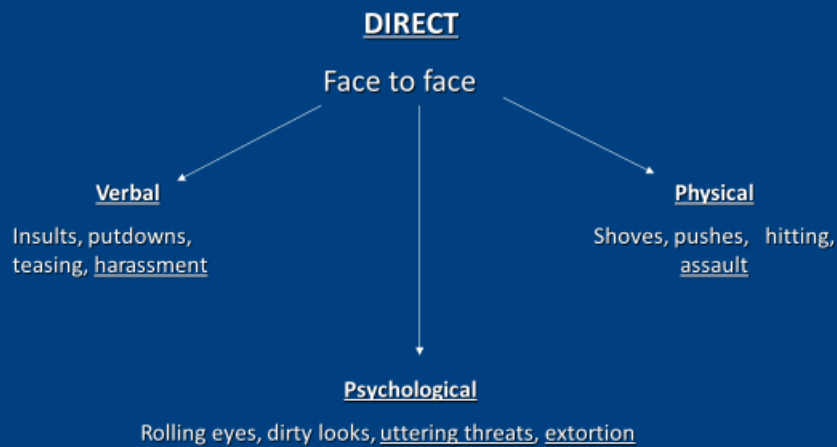
Notes on Bullying

Characteristics of Bullying

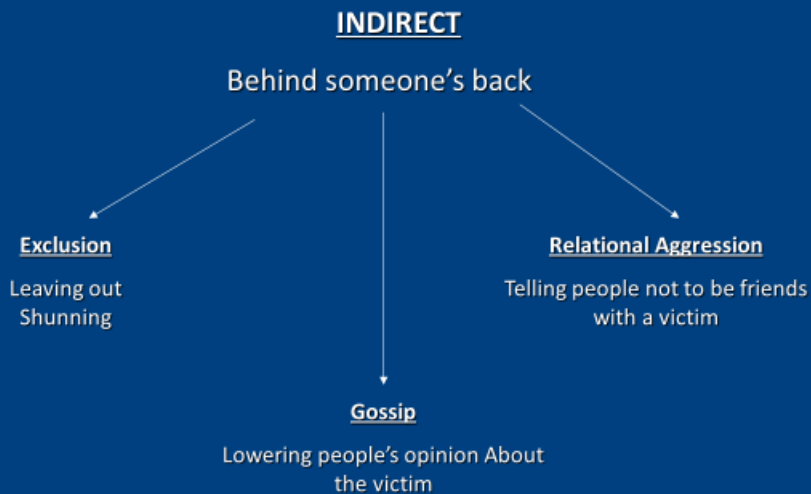
- Unwanted aggressive behavior
- Observed power imbalance
- Repetition of behaviors
- Can be **direct** or **indirect**
- Can be **physical, verbal, relational**, or include **damage to property**



Bullying can be:



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Types of Bullying

Physical Bullying	Verbal Bullying	Relational Bullying	Reactive Bullying

Cyberbullying

Electronic bullying or *cyberbullying* involves primarily verbal aggression (e.g., threatening or harassing electronic communications) and relational aggression (e.g., spreading rumors electronically). Electronic bullying or cyberbullying can also involve property damage resulting from electronic attacks that lead to the modification, dissemination, damage, or destruction of a youth's privately stored electronic information.

Notes on Cyberbullying



Characteristics of Bullies and Targets

With a partner, list some characteristics of bullies and targets. Also, jot down some ideas about characteristics they may have in common

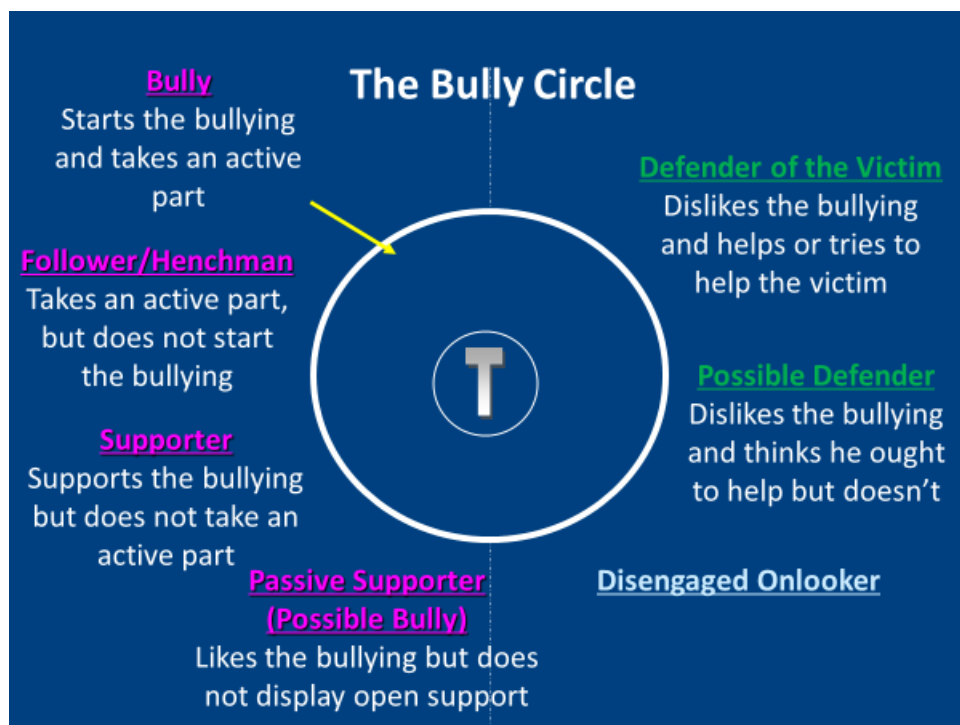
Bullies	Targets

Similarities between Bullies and Targets

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The Bully Circle



The Role of the Bystander

- The term “bystander” suggests a person is present at an incident, but does not get involved.
- Research shows that 85% of bullying takes place in front of others.
- Perpetrators NEED targets and the collusion of bystanders to continue bullying.
- When targets and bystanders are taught how to effectively respond to perpetrators, the power shifts and bullying stops.

Types of Bystanders

- Followers – Unlike actual perpetrators of bullying, followers actively take part in bullying behavior, but do not initiate bullying
- Supporters – Enjoy watching bullying incidents, but do not take part in actual bullying behavior
- Disengaged Onlookers – May watch bullying take place, but don't feel that it is their concern
- Potential Defenders – Dislike bullying and/or believe the target should be defended, but don't take action often out of fear that they will become the target of bullying
- Defenders – Dislike bullying and/or believe the target should be defended; as such, they attempt to help the target, get help and/or report the incident



Collusion

A **spoken or unspoken agreement** between two or more parties for the purpose of committing a fraudulent, illegal, deceitful, or aggressive act.

How would you explain collusion to your child?



Warning Signs for Bullying

Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs.

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- 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, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

Signs Your Child is the Bully

Kids may be bullying others if they:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to 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



What to do when you think your child is being bullied

If your child shows any of the above signs, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is being bullied, but it is a possibility worth exploring. What should you do? Talk with your child and talk with staff at school to learn more.

Talk with your child. Tell your child that you are concerned about him or her and that you'd like to help. Here are some questions that can get the discussion going:

- "I'm worried about you. Are there any kids at school who may be picking on you or bullying you?"
- "Are there any kids at school who tease you in a mean way?"
- "Are there any kids at school who leave you out of things on purpose?"
- "Do you have any special friends at school this year? Who are they? Who do you hang out with?" "Who do you sit with at lunch/on the bus?"
- "Are there any kids at school who you really don't like? Why don't you like them? Do they ever pick on you?"

Talk with staff at your child's school. Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child's teacher. He or she will probably be in the best position to understand the relationships between your child and peers at school. Share your concerns about your child and ask the teacher such questions as:

- "How does my child get along with other students in his/her class?"
- "With whom does he/she spend free time?"
- "Have you noticed or have you ever suspected that my child is bullied by other students?"



What to do when you are certain your child is being bullied

1. Focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying.

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying. What the child may “hear” is that you are going to ignore it. If the child were able to simply ignore it, he or she likely would not have told you about it. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.
- Don’t blame the child who is being bullied. Don’t assume that your child did something to provoke the bullying (“What did you do to aggravate the other child?”)
- Listen carefully to what your child tells you about the bullying. Ask him/her to describe who was involved and how each bullying episode played out.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics being used, and when and where the bullying happened. Can your child name other children or adults who may have witnessed the bullying?
- Sympathize/empathize with your child. Tell him/her that bullying is wrong and that you are glad he/she had the courage to tell you about it. Ask what he/she thinks can be done to help. Assure him/her that you will think about what needs to be done and you will let him/her know what you are going to do.
- If you disagree with how your child handled the bullying situation, don’t criticize him/her.
- Do not encourage physical retaliation (“Just hit them back”) as a solution. Hitting another student is not likely to end the problem, and it could get your child suspended or expelled.
- Check your emotions. A parent’s protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, a parent is wise to step back and consider the next steps carefully.

2. Contact your child’s teacher and/or principal. Parents are often reluctant to report bullying to school officials, but bullying probably won’t stop without the help of adults at your child’s school. Keep your emotions in check. Give factual information about your child’s experience of being bullied—who, what, when, where, and how. Emphasize that you want to work with the staff at school to find a solution to stop the bullying, for the sake of your child as well as others.

- Do not contact the parents of the student(s) who bullied your child. This is usually a parent’s first response, but sometimes it makes matters worse. School officials should contact the parents of the child or children who did the bullying.
 - Expect the bullying to stop. Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see if the bullying has stopped. If the bullying persists, contact school authorities again.
- ### 3. Help your child to become more resilient to bullying from others.



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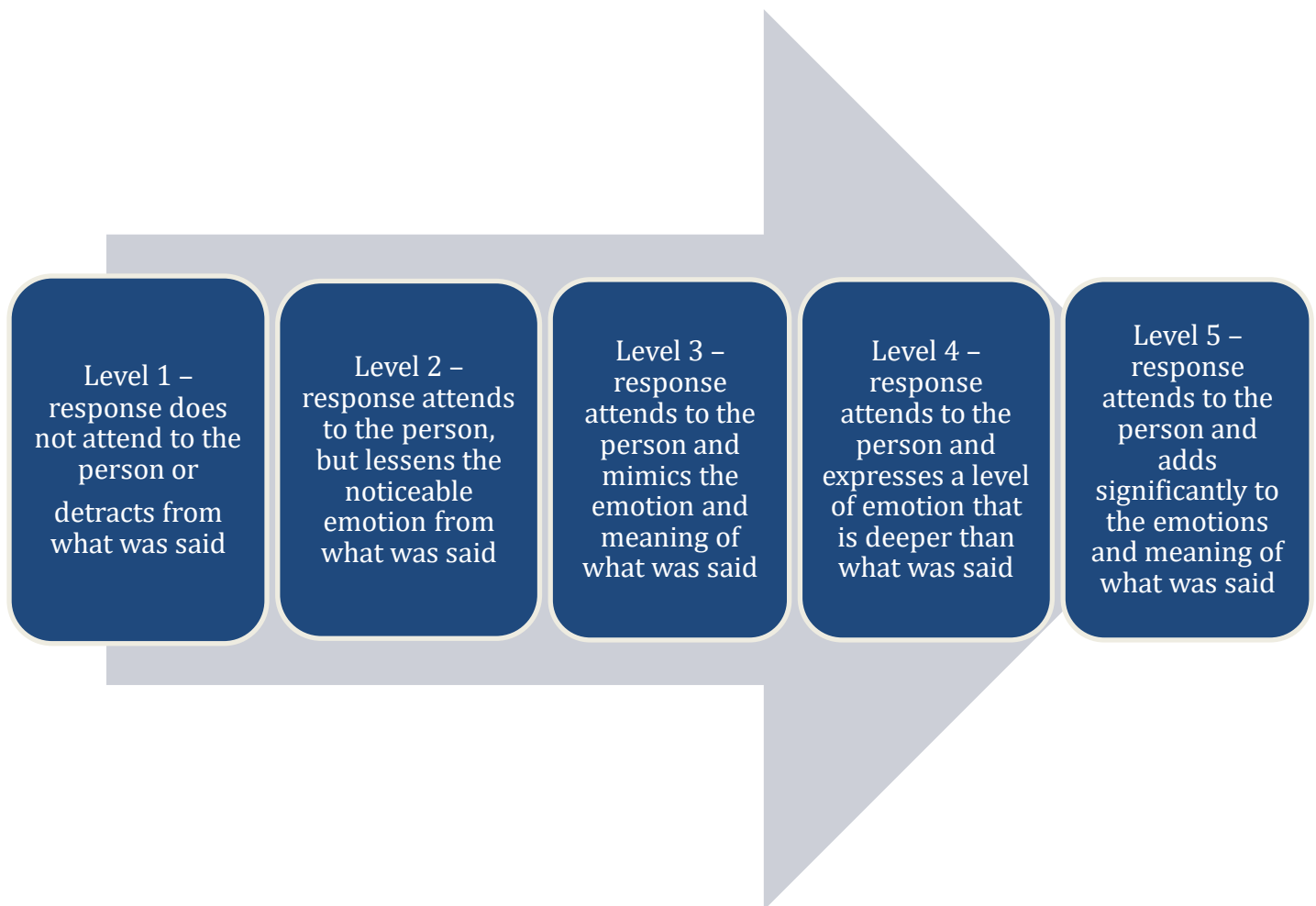
- Help to develop your child's talents and positive attributes. Doing so may help your child be more confident among his/her peers.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in class. Your child's teacher may be able to suggest students with whom your child can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on work.
- Help your child meet new friends outside of the school environment. A new environment can provide a "fresh start" for a child who has been bullied over and over by classmates.
- Teach your child safety strategies. Teach him/her how to seek help from an adult when she/he feels threatened. Talk about whom she/he should go to for help and rehearse what to say. Assure your child that reporting bullying is not the same as tattling.
- Ask yourself: Is my child being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills? If your child is hyperactive, impulsive or overly talkative, the child who bullies may be reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your child is being bullied. If your child easily irritates people, seek help from a counselor so that your child can better learn the informal social rules of his/her peer group.
- Home is where the heart is. Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment where he/she can take shelter, physically and emotionally. Keep the communication lines open!



Empathy

- Step into another person's shoes – Let go of your personal opinions
- Understand the other person's situation, as if it is happening to you

Levels of Empathy





Reflection and Planning

Think of a time when your child has come to you with a problem related to bullying (or a problem they are having at home and school). What was your level of empathy? Did you show empathy at all? In the organizer below, describe the situation. Then, explain what your response might be for each of the levels of empathy listed on the previous page.

Problem:

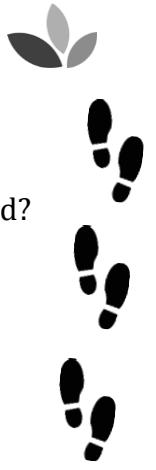
Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

Level 4:

Level 5:



What Would You Do?

What would you do if your child came to you and said s/he was being bullied or cyberbullied?

How would you handle it if you found out your child was a bully?



References

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