

Sticks and Stones May Break Your Bones, but Words Can Also Hurt You

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## Take a Stand Against Bullying



# Michael's Story

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Michael, age 10, is bullied at school nearly every day. Boys punch and kick him on the playground (just out of the sight of teachers). They steal his lunch money and call him names. Michael frequently complains to his parents and the school nurse about stomach pains and headaches. He often stays home from school, but for months he has said nothing about the bullying.

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# Nakeesha's Story

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Nakeesha, age 14, is a new student at a middle school. Although she'd had quite a few good friends at her old school, she feels lonely among her new classmates. For reasons she doesn't understand, she is on the "outs" with several popular girls and boys in her class. They roll their eyes and laugh whenever she tries to speak up in class. They exclude her from the lunch table and tape mean notes and drawings of her on her locker. For Nakeesha, the final straw comes when a classmate takes an unflattering picture of her on his cell phone and then sends the picture to other students in their class with the heading, "Ugliest girl in school!"

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# Annie's Story

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When Annie broke up with her boyfriend, Sam, he sent her many angry, threatening, pleading messages. When Annie blocked his e-mail account, Sam continued to send messages either by anonymous e-mail or text message. Sam also sent messages to people he knew were Annie's friends, describing her in offensive language. Sam also posed as Annie in a sex-oriented discussion group and posted a sexually suggestive picture Annie had given him, along with her e-mail address and cell phone number.

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# Simply stated, bullying...

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- ❑ Is an intentional written, verbal, or physical act
  - ❑ Is intimidating or subjecting a person to hostility or ill treatment
  - ❑ Involves actions which cause another person to feel afraid, humiliated, embarrassed, threatened, or shamed
  - ❑ Occurs in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power
  - ❑ Is repeated over time
  - ❑ Is compounded by technology (cell phone, Internet, computers, blogs, MySpace, Facebook, etc.)
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# Bullying Can Occur in Five Ways

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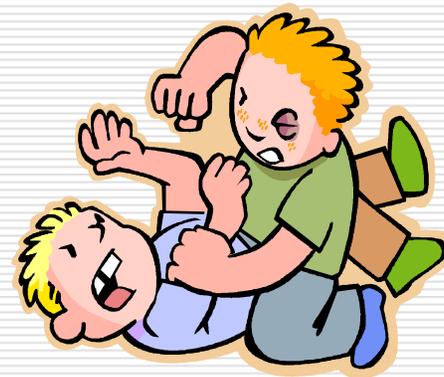
- Verbal
  - Teasing, jokes, gossip, threats, name-calling
- Physical
  - Hitting, kicking, pinching, choking, hazing
- Emotional
  - Ostracizing, rumors, exclusionary behavior
- Sexual
  - Touching, teasing, threatening
- Cyberbullying
  - MySpace, text messaging, instant messaging, etc.



# Bullying is NOT...

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- A normal childhood activity
- A rite of passage
- The target's fault



# Why Focus on Bullying?

## Troubling Answers From Research

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- ❑ Increased acts of school violence are linked to bullying (Sullivan, 2004).
  - ❑ A class and a school with a bullying culture will make significantly less academic progress than a comparable bully-free group (Cleary, 2001).
  - ❑ Addressing bullying actually increases student achievement by reducing fear in students (Feinstein, 2004).
  - ❑ Pepler (1998) found that two-thirds of students in schools believe that schools respond poorly, infrequently, or ineffectively to bullying incidents.
  - ❑ Bullies are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as drinking, drug use, and smoking (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001).
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# Why Focus on Bullying?

## Troubling Answers from Research

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- ❑ Girls report that emotional bullying is as damaging psychologically as physical bullying (Galen, 1997).
  - ❑ Students are less likely to intervene in bullying situations in schools that tolerate bullying (Jeffrey, 2001).
  - ❑ In an extensive study of middle and high school students who identified the three worst things to ever happen to them in their life, the death of a parent was first followed by bullying (Lind, 1996).
  - ❑ Strong links exist between school bullying and future domestic abuse (Cullingford, 1997).
  - ❑ A 2001 survey by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence found that 39% of parents feared for their child's safety at school.
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# Why Focus on Bullying?

## Troubling Answers from Research

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- A survey of middle school students conducted by i-Safe America found that:
    - 35% had been threatened online
    - 42% had been bullied online
    - 58% had not told a parent or an adult about being bullied online
  - Research reveals various forms of bullying behavior (Harris, 2000)

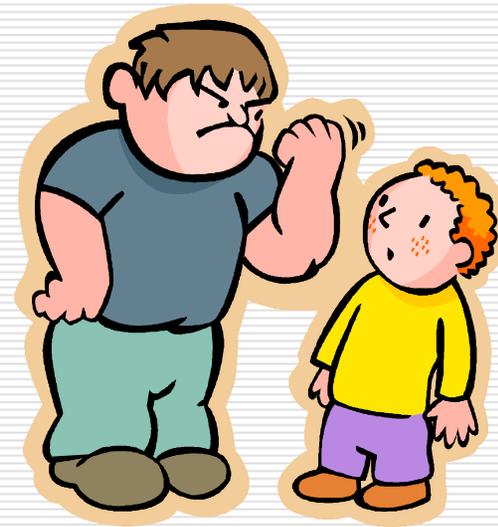
■ Name calling	75%	Hit/Kicked	46%
■ Teasing	62%	Being left out	67%
■ Threatened	42%	of activities	
  - Research reveals the location that bullying takes place varies widely (Harris, 2000)

■ Classroom	83%	Lunchroom	75%
■ Going to school	30%	Coming home	39%
■ Extra-curricular events	64%	Initiation into clubs/teams	50%
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# Physical Effects of Bullying on the Victim

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- Stomach aches
- Weight loss/gain
- Headaches
- Drop in grades
- Drug or alcohol use
- Sexual activity
- Physical aggression
- Suicidal
- Homicidal



# Emotional Effects of Bullying on the Victim

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- Alienation
- Low self-esteem
- Insecurity
- FEAR
- Depression
- Withdrawn
- Aggression
- Anger
- Vengeful





# Gender and Bullying



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## □ Similarities

- Boys & girls engage in frequent verbal bullying.
- Boys & girls engage in relational bullying.

## □ Differences

- Most studies: boys bully more than girls.
  - Boys are more likely to be physically bullied.
  - Girls are more likely to be bullied through social exclusion, rumor-spreading, cyber bullying, and sexual comments.
  - Boys are bullied primarily by boys; girls are bullied by boys and girls.
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# Warning Signs

That Your Child May be the Target of Bullies

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- Frequently teased, taunted, belittled, ridiculed, intimidated, threatened, dominated, or subdued
  - Has a derogatory nickname
  - Regularly has bruises or injuries that can't be explained
  - Has belongings taken or damaged
  - Few or no close friends at school
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# Warning Signs

That Your Child May be the Target of Bullies

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- Frequently isolated socially
- Less assertive or lacks the skills to respond to others' teasing or harassment
- Appears weak or easily dominated
- Tries to stay close to a teacher or other adult at recess or breaks



# What to Do

## If you suspect your child is being bullied

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- Talk with your child
    - If your child is being bullied, they need to have a voice in how the situation is handled.
  - Contact the school
    - Set up a meeting with your child's teacher(s) or counselor.
    - Develop a plan for keeping your child safe, particularly during vulnerable times (class breaks, lunch, recess).
    - Find out what activities or counseling options are available for your child.
  - Contact the police or school resource officer
    - If the actions are criminal (assault, theft, serious threats, vandalism)
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# Recommendations

If you suspect your child is being bullied

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- Don't encourage your child to fight back—two wrongs don't make a right!
  - Listen to your child; do not ignore your child's plea for help.
  - Don't confront the parents or the other child directly.
  - Avoid bringing your child and the bully together to elicit an apology or to resolve the issue.
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# Contributing Factors Associated with Bullying

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- Family Factors
    - Lack of attention and warmth
    - Modeling of aggressive behavior at home
    - Poor supervision
  - Individual Factors
    - Active, impulsive personality
    - Lack of empathy for others
    - Craves attention and approval from others
  - School
    - School climate is perceived as uncaring or indifferent
    - Teachers/staff unaware or unclear of bullying definitions or how to respond
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# What motivates a bully?

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- They may be seeking attention.
  - They need to make themselves feel more important.
  - They need a particular reaction from the other members of the group.
  - Bullies believe their behavior is exciting and makes them more popular.
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# What motivates a bully?

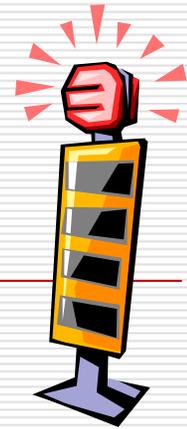
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- They may be coping with a loss.
  - They may have an active and impulsive temperament.
  - They may be victims of bullying or abuse.
  - They may see violence modeled at home or elsewhere in their lives.
  - They may have low self-esteem.
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# Warning Signs

That your child may be bullying others

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- Frequent name-calling
  - Regular bragging
  - A need to always get his/her own way
  - Spending more time with younger or less powerful kids
  - A lack of empathy for others
  - A defiant or hostile attitude; easily takes offense
  - Frequent misbehavior at school (e.g., name-calling, teasing, intimidating, physical aggression)
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# What to Do

## If you suspect your child may be bullying others

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- ❑ Talk with your child
    - Never condone bullying behavior; speak up and tell your child that the behavior they are engaging in is considered bullying.
  - ❑ Encourage empathy for others
    - Remind your child that everyone has a right to be themselves, to choose their own friends, and to feel safe at school.
  - ❑ Review consequences of bullying behavior
    - Both discipline consequences and relationship consequences
  - ❑ Reinforce respectful behaviors at home
  - ❑ Help your child deal with feelings in positive ways
  - ❑ Contact the school for help
    - Set up a meeting with your child's teacher(s) or counselor.
    - Develop a plan for change.
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# Cyberbullying Defined

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Bullying through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through digital messages or images sent to a cell phone.

(Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008)



# Examples of Cyberbullying

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- ❑ Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages.



# Examples of Cyberbullying

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- ❑ Distributing or posting derogatory information about another person.



# Examples of Cyberbullying

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- ❑ Posting or sending digitally altered photos.
- ❑ Impersonating another and sending offensive messages.
- ❑ Tricking someone into revealing embarrassing information and forwarding it to others.



# Communication Modalities for Cyberbullying

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- Instant messaging
  - E-mail
  - Text messaging
  - Social network sites Chat rooms
  - Blogs
  - Web sites
  - Bash boards
  - Internet gaming
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# The ABC's of Bullying Prevention

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- ❑ Bullying is a pervasive school problem that can have serious consequences for students.
  - ❑ Fortunately, it's a problem that schools can do something about.
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# #1 Focus on the Environment

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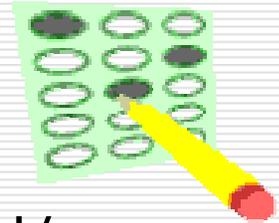
- ❑ What is required to reduce bullying in schools is a change in the school climate and in the norms for behavior.
- ❑ This requires a comprehensive, school-wide effort involving the entire school community.



## #2 Assess Bullying at Your School

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- ❑ Administer an anonymous survey to students
- ❑ Benefits of a survey:
  - Findings may help to motivate staff and/or parents to address the issue
  - Findings will help to target specific interventions
  - Will provide important baseline data from which to measure improvement



# #3 Seek Out Support for Bullying Prevention

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- ❑ Early and enthusiastic support from the principal is critical.
- ❑ Commitment from a majority of classroom teachers is important.
  - Teachers who are committed to bullying prevention are more likely to fully implement programs



## #4 Form a Group to Coordinate Efforts

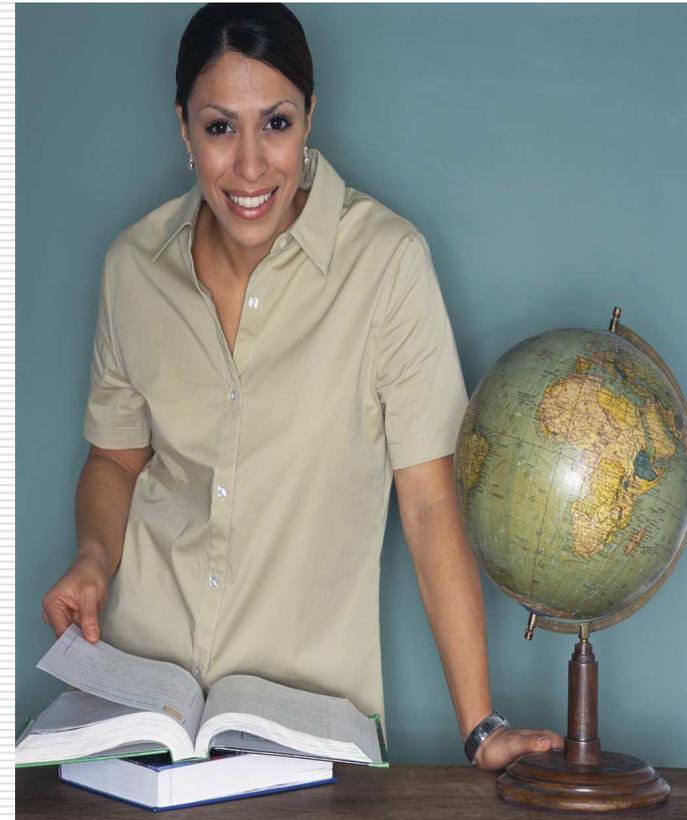
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- Should be representative of the school community:
    - Administrator
    - Teacher from each grade
    - Counselor
    - Non-teaching staff (e.g. bus driver)
    - School-based health professional
    - Parent
    - Community member
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# #5 Train All Staff

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- Administrators
- All Teachers
- Health & mental health professionals
- Support staff
- Custodians
- Bus drivers
- Lunchroom supervisors
- Playground aides



# #6 Establish & Enforce School Rules and Policies

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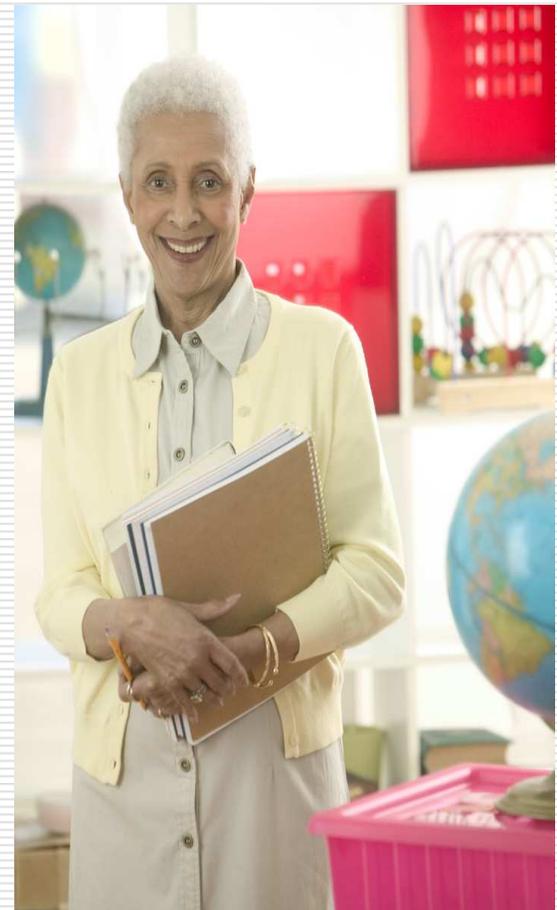


- Many schools do not have explicit rules against bullying.
  - Rules should guide the behavior of children who bully AND children who witness bullying.
  - Follow up with positive and negative consequences.
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# #7 Increase Adult Supervision

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- ❑ Focus on “hot spots” for bullying that are identified by students.
- ❑ All adults in a school community should be vigilant to bullying.



## #8 Intervene Consistently and Appropriately

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- Are *all* adults prepared to intervene appropriately *on-the-spot*, whenever they observe bullying?
  - Do we have a plan for *follow-up interventions* with children who bully, for those who are victims of bullying, or for the parents?
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# #9 Focus Classroom Time on Bullying Prevention

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- ❑ Set aside a small amount of time each week.
- ❑ Discuss bullying and peer relations.
- ❑ Use videos, story books, role-playing, artistic expression
- ❑ Integrate bullying prevention throughout the curriculum



# School Interventions/Consequences for Bullying

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- Warning
    - Verbal and written
    - Permanently documented
  - Coaching/Intervention
    - Anger Management; Conflict Resolution, Communication, or Problem Solving Skills; Diversity Training during Saturday School or before, during, or after school detention
    - May be provided by administrators, teachers, counselors, school psychologists, or school resource officers
  - Suspension/Expulsion
  - Referral to Law Enforcement (if applicable)
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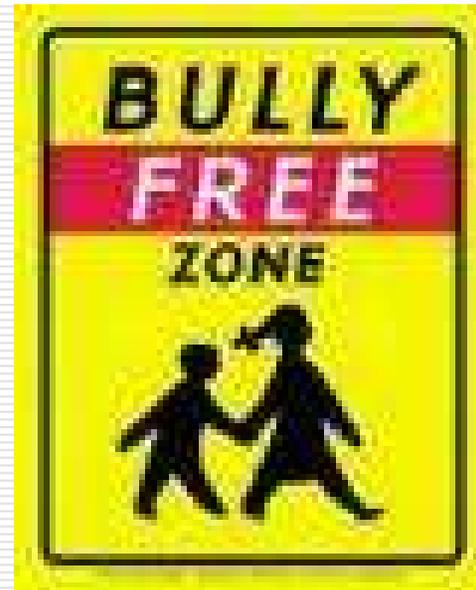
# Declaration of Independence from Bullying

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We, the students at  
\_\_\_\_\_ School

In order to grow to be  
our best selves  
and to shape a future  
free of abuse,  
Declare our  
independence from  
bullying by saying "No"  
to bullying in our school.

\* adapted from  
*Preventing Bullying at  
School* by James Bitney



# Declaration of Independence from Bullying II

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We have discovered that bullying is a problem that those who are bullied cannot solve on their own.

We realize that they need and deserve our help and the help of everyone in the school.

We now declare that we say "No" to bullying and we promise to work to make our school a place where no one is picked on, but where everyone is part of our school family.

*\*adapted from Preventing Bullying at School by James Bitney*



# Together, students, staff, and parents...

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Taking a stand  
against bullying to  
promote safe,  
respectful,  
nurturing learning  
communities.

