

# Harassment/Bullying/Cyber-bullying

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of emotional or physical abuse that has all three of the following defining characteristics:

- 1. Intentional**—a bully is deliberately trying to hurt someone
- 2. Repeated**—a bully often targets the same victim again and again
- 3. Power Imbalanced**—a bully chooses victims he or she perceives as vulnerable

Bullying occurs in many different forms, with varying levels of severity. It may involve:

- **Physical Bullying**—poking, pushing, hitting, kicking, beating up
- **Verbal Bullying**—yelling, teasing, name-calling, insulting, threatening to harm
- **Indirect Bullying**— spreading rumors, telling lies, getting others to hurt someone, getting others to exclude someone

## What is Harassment?

Harassment can look very similar to bullying. However it does not have all three of the defining characteristics of bullying

## What is Cyber-bullying?

**Cyber-bullying is a growing form of bullying that is especially hard to see.** Cyberbullying involves sending or posting hurtful, embarrassing, or threatening text or images using the Internet, cell phones, or other digital communication devices. Using these technologies, cyberbullies can reach a wide group of people very quickly. Their goal: to damage their victim's reputation and friendships.

### Cyber-bullying can involve:

- Spreading rumors or posting false or private information
- Getting other people to post or send hurtful messages
- Excluding someone from an online group

Young people cyberbully for many reasons. Some do it to deal with their anger, seek revenge, or make themselves appear better than their peers. Others do it for entertainment or for the pleasure of tormenting others. Still others do it simply because they can. By remaining anonymous and avoiding face-to-face contact, cyberbullies may not realize the consequences of their actions. As a result, they are more likely to say and do things they might hesitate to say or do in person. And young people are often hesitant to report cyberbullying because they are afraid that doing so will lead to restrictions on their own Internet or cell phone use or they believe nothing can be done to stop it.

## Bullying Basics

We now know that:	
<b>Bullying is NOT</b>	pre-wired, harmless, or inevitable
<b>Bullying IS</b>	learned, harmful, and controllable
<b>Bullying SPREADS</b>	if supported or left unchecked
<b>Bullying INVOLVES</b>	everyone—bullies, victims, and bystanders
<b>Bullying CAN BE</b>	effectively stopped or entirely prevented

## What should you do if you are being bullied?

Being bullied can be embarrassing, scary and very hurtful, but you should know that you don't have to put up with being bullied. It is **NOT** a normal part of growing up. **Bullying is wrong.** Bullying is something some people learn, that means it is something we can change and there are things we can do to deal with bullying. Here are some things we all can do to stop bullying:

- **Ignore the people who bully.** Try to ignore a bully's threats. If you can walk away, it takes a bullies power away because they want you to feel bad about yourself. Don't react. Don't let the people who bully win!
- **If ignoring them won't work, tell the people who are bullying to stop,** say "Cut it out!", "That's not funny!", "How'd you like it if someone did that to you?" Let the people who bully know that what he or she is doing is stupid and mean.
- **Avoid engaging in verbal and/or written insults** with the bully. This could lead to more aggression from the bully and may confuse the situation.
- **Seek out an adult or peer immediately** if you feel unsafe. The peer should help you to get out of the situation and find an adult to help you. The adult should show support, help you develop a response strategy and follow-up to make sure the bullying does not continue.
- **Write down what happened.** Who was bullying? Where did it happen? Who did what? Who saw it?
- If you continue to be bullied, **keep telling adults** until the situation is resolved. Being quiet will not make the problem go away. In fact, it can make it worse.
- **You need to know** that you are **NOT alone** in being bullied. Being bullied is embarrassing, scary and hurtful, it is normal to feel scared if you are being bullied, but being bullied is **NOT normal** and you shouldn't have to live with being bullied!
- **You need to know** that being bullied is **NOT your fault.** Bullies might tell you mean things about yourself, but don't believe them. Bullies will say whatever they can to try and have power over you. Don't let them!

- **Telling is not tattling.** Telling is what we do to help make things safer and better. Tattling is what people do when they want to get someone else in trouble on purpose.
- **Involve as many people as possible,** including other friends or classmates, parents, teachers, school counselors, and the principal.

## What should you witness someone being bullied?

If you see someone being bullied, you are known as a bystander. Being a bystander can be scary. You may be afraid the bully will begin to pick on you if you help the victim. Here are some things you could do as a bystander to help stop bullying:

- **Stand up, don't stand back.** Kids can stand up for each other by telling people who bully to stop teasing or hurting someone else. You shouldn't try and fight the people who bully. This almost always makes things worse. Walk up to the person being bullied, talk with them and then walk away together.
- **Refuse to join in** and don't just sit back and watch. The bully wants an audience. You give bullies power when you watch. If you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem.
- **Be a friend.** Kids who are being bullied can sure use a friend. Walk with a friend or two on the way to school or recess or lunch or wherever you think you might meet the bully. Offer to do the same for someone else who's having trouble with a bully. Look out for kids who are new to school, or those kids who always seem to be alone.
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## Warning Signs

**A culture of silence often surrounds bullying. Many children who are bullied never tell anyone.** Most bullying is **not** reported because children:

- Don't recognize it as bullying
- Are embarrassed
- Don't want to appear weak
- Believe they deserve it
- Want to belong
- Fear retaliation
- Don't know how to talk about it
- Don't have a trusted adult to confide in
- Think adults won't understand
- Think nothing can be done about it

**Just because you don't see it, and others don't talk about it, doesn't mean bullying isn't happening.** Even when children fail to report bullying, they often show warning signs.

What are some warning signs of bullying?

- Unexplained damage or loss of clothing and other personal items
- Evidence of physical abuse, such as bruises and scratches
- Loss of friends; changes in friends
- Reluctance to participate in activities with peers
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Unusually sad, moody, anxious, lonely, or depressed
- Problems with eating, sleeping, bed-wetting
- Headaches, stomachaches, or other physical complaints
- Decline in school achievement
- Thoughts of suicide

**Some things YOU can do to help prevent cyber-bullying and to help you from being a cyber-bully:**

- Use the Internet and cell phones in a safe and responsible manner.
- Do not to share any personal information online.
- Tell your parent or another responsible adult if you are being cyberbullied or know others who are.
- Think before you click "send." Walk away for a while and then come back and re-read your message. It is very easy to misunderstand e-mails and cyber-communications. Be cautious and if you have any doubt - **Don't Send It!**
- Don't attack others online, say anything that could be considered insulting or that is controversial.
- Don't respond to a message when you are angry. Take a time-out to think.
- **Remember, once you send it, you can't get it back!**

*Some information provided by [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org) and [www.eyesonbullying.org](http://www.eyesonbullying.org)*