

BULLYING ABUSE: THE ROLE OF PEERS



Did You Know?

- **Peers see 85% of bullying!**
 - Students report that bullying happens much more often than school staff and parents
 - When students see bullying, most join in, some ignore, and a small number intervene.
- **Common reasons peers do not intervene include:**
 - Fear of retaliation and being bullied themselves
 - Fear of losing their social status
 - Lack of knowledge about the incident and the individuals involved
 - Not knowing how to intervene and stop bullying

The Bystander Experience

- The “Bystander Effect”
 - Described by psychologists as a diffusion of responsibility; when surrounded by others, one person is less likely to take responsibility or action in a negative situation
 - A bystander is someone who witnesses one child bully another
- More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop within 10 seconds when a peer intervenes⁴
 - Bystanders can suffer consequences from witnessing bullying (e.g., anxiety, depression, and guilt)²
- Friends can help protect against the negative effects of bullying³

Bystander Behaviors

- **Hurtful Bystanders:**
 - Encourage the bully
 - Join in the bullying
 - Watch the bullying and do nothing
- **Helpful Bystanders (Upstanders):**
 - Directly intervene by defending the target or discouraging the bully
 - Report bullying to peers or adults
 - Reach out to the targets of bullying to make sure they are ok

Five Steps of Bystander Intervention^{5, 6}

1. Notice the bullying
2. Interpret the situation as one that requires help
3. Accept responsibility for intervening
4. Know how to help
5. Implement the decision made about intervening

Every step is necessary, but not sufficient, for taking action. Upstanders must be prepared for all 5 steps⁶

REFERENCES

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How Adults Can Help Students take a Stand Against a Peer who Bullies



- **Maintain an open, supportive, and trustworthy relationship;** Children who defend their bullied peers are more likely to describe having an open, supportive relationship with their mother⁷
- **Help the child recognize the difference between bullying and everyday conflicts** by role- playing different bullying and non-bullying situations
- **Encourage the child to do or say something when he or she sees bullying!** Teach the child to tell an adult, say something to the bully, or reach out to the child who was bullied
- **Teach the child how to defend!** Help improve their self-efficacy in the five steps to defending others^{5, 6}

Helpful Resources

Stop Bullying Now Youth Leaders' Toolkit:

stopbullying.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/youth-leader-toolkit.pdf

The Power of Bystander Intervention in Bullying Resources:

bornthisway.foundation/power-bystander-intervention-bullying/

STOMP Out Bullying:

stompoutbullying.org/