

# Facts About Bullying for Middle School Students

## What Is Bullying?

- Bullying is when someone is being mean or hurtful to another person who has a hard time defending him/herself. It is directed towards a specific student by someone with more power and is intended to cause, harm, distress and/or create fear.<sup>1</sup>
- Bullying usually happens over and over.<sup>2</sup>
- Bullying can be:
  - Physical acts that hurt people such as hitting, kicking, punching or shoving.
  - Verbal acts that hurt people such as calling people names.
  - Acts that are indirect but still hurt people. Examples are ganging up on someone, excluding, spreading rumors or gossiping.
  - Cyberbullying (using computers or cell phones to post pictures or rumors to cause harm)<sup>3</sup>
- Bullying abuse is *not* where two people have a disagreement or misunderstanding. It is different from playful teasing where both people see it as fun.

## How Often Does Bullying Happen?

- Students have reported that about 1 out of 3 children and adolescents report bullying others or are victims of bullying.<sup>4</sup>
- Bullying occurs more in middle school and when students move to new schools.<sup>5,6</sup>
- Students see 85% of bullying! Bystanders sometimes join in or ignore what is happening. A small number stand up!

## What Do Bullies Do?<sup>2</sup>

- They may say mean things such as calling others a wimp or loser.
- They may lack empathy or understanding for others.
- They may need to get their own way.
- They are easily angered and use their power to hurt others.
- They may refuse to admit that they bullied or blame others.

## What about Children Who Are Bullied?

- Children can be bullied for anything that makes them seen as *different* or *easily hurt*. They may be different in how they look or think. They may be different in how they act or practice their religion.
- Children who are bullied are more likely to become sad and nervous.<sup>3,7</sup>
- They may think that they are different, powerless or alone.
- They may not want to go to school or be around other children.
- They may have headaches or stomach problems.
- Sometimes students who are bullied will bully others.

## How to Prevent It from Happening

- Treat others with respect - use kind words.
- Think before you speak, type or text.
- If you are feeling angry and want to be mean, think about something else, talk to a friend or adult, write down how you feel.
- If you have hurt someone else, be responsible and try to make up for it.

## Help Yourself if It Is Happening to YOU

Although everyone is different, you can try one of these actions:

- Reach out for help. Be responsible - report it to a trusted adult.
- Try not to show if it makes you upset as that can make it worse - Make a joke of it.
- Stand up straight, look the person in the eye. In calm, clear voice say “Stop,” “Get a life,” “Enough,” or “Give it a rest.”
- Stay close to adults and trusted friends - talk to a teacher, parent, counselor, or school psychologist.

## Help Others if It Is Happening to Them - Be an Upstander!

- Don’t join in... speak up if it is safe to do so.
- Band together as a group against bullying. Say, “That’s not OK”, “Just stop already,” “Hey, he’s cool- don’t bother him,” or “We don’t do that here.”
- Tell an adult about the bullying. Telling and reporting are important because someone is acting in an unsafe or hurtful way to another. Telling is different from tattling when someone just wants to get another in trouble.
- Reach out to someone who is bullied. Say something such as “I am sorry that happened,” “Want to hang out?” or “Don’t believe what they say”. Be an Upstander!

## For Help, Here Are Some Local Resources

- Catholic Charities | (716) 218-1400
- Child & Adolescent Treatment Services Intake | (716) 835-7807
- Child & Family Services | (716) 842-750
- Prevention Focus/Teen Focus | (716) 884-3256
- Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol & Substance Abuse | (716) 831-2298
- Mental Health Association of Erie County | (716) 886-1242

## Hotlines and Referrals for Students in Crisis

- 1-800-273-TALK (Suicide Lifeline)
- 1-866-4-U-Trevor (LGBTQ Youth Suicide Hotline) [www.crisischat.org](http://www.crisischat.org) (Text)
- 1-800-246-7743 (LYRIC Youth Talkline)
- 716-834-1144 or 1-877-KIDS-400 (Buffalo Crisis Services Hotline)

## References

[1] Reach Out.com

[2] [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

[3] Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. W. (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[4] Robers, S., Zhang, J., & Truman, J. (2010). *Indicators of school crime and safety*. Jessup, MD: National Center for Education Statistics.

[5] Espelage, D. L., Bosworth, K., & Simon, T. R. (2000). Examining the social context of bullying behaviors in early adolescence. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78, 326-333.

[6] Eslea, M., & Rees, J. (2001). At what age are children most likely to be bullied at school? *Aggressive Behavior*, 27, 419-429.

[7] Nickerson, A. B., & Slater, E. D. (2009). School and community violence and victimization as predictors of suicidal behavior for adolescents. *School Psychology Review*, 38, 218-232.

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