

2 Look Out...



Finding Bullying Where It's Hidden

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

But just because you don't see it, and children 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

PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THESE RED FLAGS. WATCH AND LISTEN CAREFULLY, ESPECIALLY IF THE WARNING SIGNS ESCALATE. Some children may withdraw, while others may get angry and seek revenge. Don't assume the problem will go away on its own: Invite children to talk about what is bothering them. If you find out a child is being bullied, show support, help develop a response strategy, and follow up to make sure the bullying does not continue.

(For more information on how to respond, see Look Strategically, p. 25.)



Cyberbullying

CYBERBULLYING 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.

Cyberbullying 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.

Some things adults can do to help prevent cyberbullying:

- Keep computers in visible places so that you can monitor use.
- Talk with children about safe and responsible use of the Internet and cell phones, and about the dangers of cyberbullying.
- Discuss what to do when cyberbullying occurs, such as ignoring the posting or calmly, but firmly, telling the cyberbully to remove the harmful material.
- Remind children not to share any personal information online.
- Encourage children to tell you if they are being cyberbullied or know others who are. Assure them that you will help them deal with the problem.



GINA'S STORY

Gina was horrified when she discovered that some of her "friends" had created a website rating the popularity and attractiveness of the girls in her afterschool program. Gina was listed as "the biggest loser in school." Other girls had continued the humiliation by posting the names of boys whom Gina liked. When the afterschool teacher found Gina crying, she immediately contacted Gina's parents. Together, they worked with the school to shut down the website and find out who was responsible.



More than one-third (36%) of teenagers and more than one-sixth (17%) of children (ages 6 to 11) have mean, threatening, or embarrassing things said about them online. Teenage girls are more likely (44%) to experience this form of online bullying than teenage boys (28%).²

 Look Out...

Many behaviors that seem harmless, such as teasing or excluding, can escalate into bullying.

Look out for these behaviors so you can prevent bullying *before* it happens.
Help children look for these behaviors, too.

Be a Detective

- 1** Make an enlarged copy of *What Is Bullying?* (next page). Review the examples on the circle and ask children to add their own. Encourage children to include both actions and words that are delivered face to face (directly) and behind people's backs (indirectly). Add their answers to the circle in the appropriate areas. Use pictures to help young children understand the examples and ask them to share pictures of their examples.
- 2** Explain that not all these behaviors will lead to bullying (but that doesn't mean they're acceptable, either).
- 3** Explain that a behavior is considered bullying when done on purpose (deliberately), more than once (repeatedly), and by someone who uses power unfairly (power imbalanced). Ask children what it means to be powerful. Is being powerful good? Can it also be bad? Explain that by recognizing bullying-related behaviors early, they can help to stop them before they turn into bullying.
- 4** Ask children why some kids might not want to report bullying.
- 5** Discuss strategies adults and children can use to make it easier for kids to report bullying. Suggestions might include helping kids and adults take the problem seriously, and ensuring confidentiality.

This activity will help children...

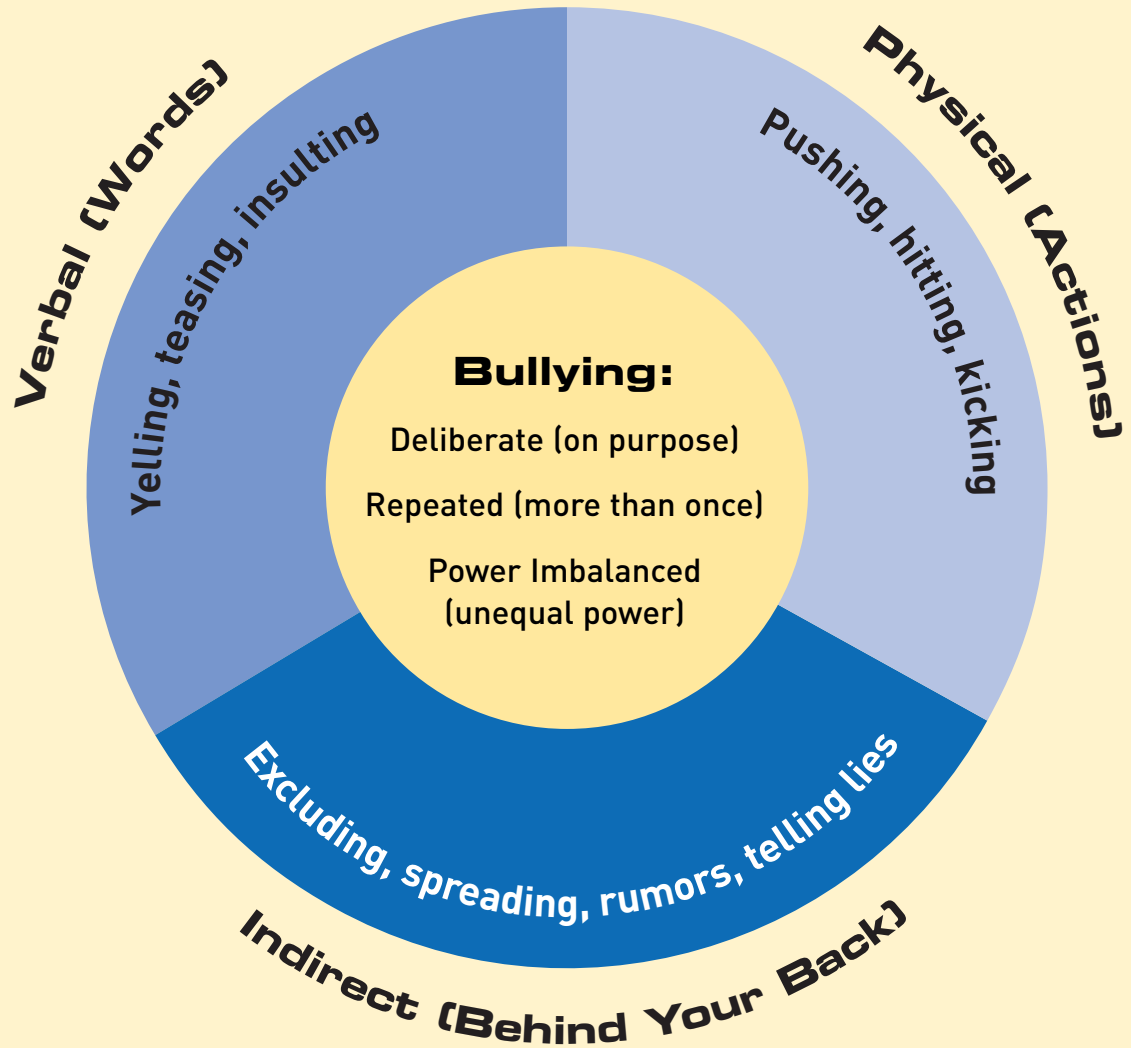
Understand the defining features and various forms of bullying

Identify a variety of behaviors that can escalate into bullying

Understand reasons why kids may not talk about bullying

Identify strategies that facilitate reporting bullying

What Is Bullying?



Verbal



Physical



Indirect

