



# 4 Look Strategically...

## What YOU Can Do

### **Recommendations and Strategies for Adults to Prevent Bullying**

#### **Intervene when children are young.**

Children who bully are not born bullies and children who are victimized are not born victims. But many young children engage in aggressive behaviors that may lead to bullying, while others react by submitting or fighting back. Adults can stop these patterns *before* they are established by encouraging cooperative behaviors such as sharing, helping, and problem-solving, and by preventing aggressive responses such as hostility, hurting, and rejection.

#### **Teach bullying prevention strategies to all children.**

Don't assume that only "challenging" children become bullies or that only "weak" children become victims. Most children are likely to be victimized by a bully at some point in their lives, and all children can benefit from learning to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; how to stand up for themselves, and others; and when to turn to an adult for help.

#### **Take bullying seriously.**

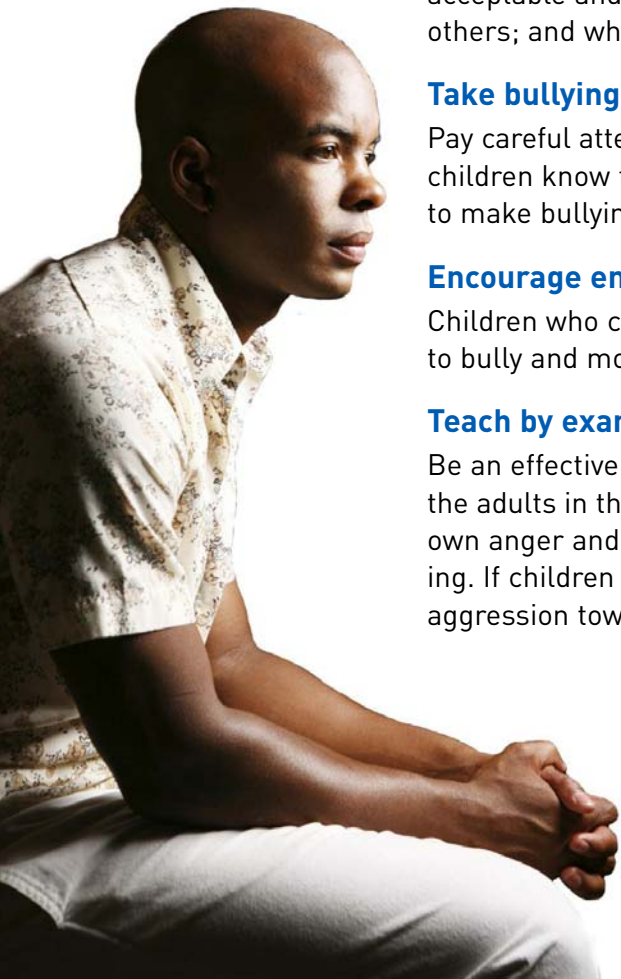
Pay careful attention to the warning signs and to children most at risk. Make sure children know that bullying will not be tolerated and that you will work with them to make bullying stop.

#### **Encourage empathy.**

Children who can empathize understand that bullying hurts. They are less likely to bully and more likely to help children who are bullied.

#### **Teach by example.**

Be an effective role model. Children learn how to behave by watching and emulating the adults in their lives. Consider how you solve problems, discipline, control your own anger and disappointment, and stand up for yourself and others without fighting. If children observe you acting aggressively, they are more likely to show aggression toward others.





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### **Help children critically evaluate media violence.**

Children may learn aggressive behaviors by watching television and movies that glorify violence and by playing violent video games that reward violent behavior. Help children understand that media portrayals of violence are unrealistic and inappropriate. Intervene when you see children imitating media violence in their play or in their social interactions.

### **Provide opportunities for children to learn and practice the qualities and skills that can protect them from bullying.**

Children who are *confident* are less likely to tolerate bullying and more likely to have the courage and inner-strength to respond effectively. Children who are *assertive* know how to react to a bully in effective, non-aggressive ways, and they are less likely to be targeted by bullies in the first place. Children who know how to make and keep friends can rely on them for protection from bullying. Children who know how to *solve problems constructively* avoid responding aggressively to conflict.

### **Encourage children to talk about and report bullying.**

When they do, listen carefully, and be patient: Talking about bullying can be difficult, and children may feel embarrassed or afraid to share their concerns.

### **Develop strong connections with the children in your care.**

Children are less likely to bully if they know it will displease an adult whom they respect and trust. Similarly, children are more likely to confide in an adult with whom they have a caring and trusting relationship.

***“If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.”***

**—Carl Jung**

### **Reexamine your own beliefs about bullying.**

Misconceptions may prevent you from “seeing” a potential bullying incident or intervening as quickly as you should.



## When YOU see or hear bullying...

**Intervene immediately.** When you do nothing, you send the message that bullying is acceptable. If you ignore or minimize the problem, victims will not believe that adults understand or care, or that they can help. If *you* don't intervene, children won't either.

**Intervene even if you're not sure it's bullying.** Observing children's actions, words, body language, and facial expressions will help you determine if bullying is occurring. Even if it's not, aggressive behaviors need to be stopped.

**Stand between or near the victim and the bully, separating them if necessary, so as to stop the bullying behaviors.** For young children, consider removing them from the situation to a "time-out" area or room.

**Respond firmly but appropriately.** Remain calm, but convey the seriousness of the situation. Announce that the bullying must stop. Describe the behavior you observed and why it is unacceptable.

**Get help if needed.** If the bully is using physical force, or there is more than one bully, you may need to find another adult to help keep children safe and protect yourself.

**Do not respond aggressively.** Using aggressive behavior sends the wrong message that this is a good way to solve problems. It may also prompt a bully or a bystander to increase his or her bullying behavior or become aggressive toward you.

**Avoid lecturing the bully in front of his or her peers.** Your goal is to end the behavior, not humiliate or shame the bully. Rather than serving as a deterrent, lecturing and scolding often provide the bully with attention that he or she finds rewarding.

**Don't impose immediate consequences.** Allow yourself time to consider the incident and obtain any clarifying information—then decide the best course of action.

**Don't ask children to "work things out" for themselves.** Bullying is different from an argument or conflict; it involves a power imbalance that requires adult intervention.

**Give praise and show appreciation to helpful bystanders.** Children who try to help the victim or stop the bully are key to bullying prevention.

**Stick around.** Remain in the area until you are sure the behavior has stopped.

*"The guiding rule of action should be to intervene too early rather than too late."*

—Dan Olweus<sup>27</sup>

## After the incident...

**Follow up with each of the “players” separately.** Rely on your relationships and connections with the children to talk openly and productively about the bullying incident, and its effects and consequences.

**BULLIES must understand that bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.** To this end, it is important to impose immediate consequences that are appropriate for their offense and developmental level, and that are consistent with program policy. It is also important for children who bully to take responsibility for their actions: to understand *what* they did, *why* their behavior is wrong, *how* it affects their victims, how it affects others around them, and to “make amends.” Help the bully apologize or make amends by doing something nice for the victim. Consider organizing supervised activities that include both the bully and the victim so they can learn to interact in more positive ways.

**VICTIMS must know that adults care and support them.** Listen carefully to their description of what happened and offer sympathy and support. Help them develop strategies for addressing the problem, should it recur in the future. Let them know they do not deserve to be bullied and they are not alone—adults and peers can help.

**BYSTANDERS must understand the effects of their actions—or non-actions.** Explain that they have the power to cool down the situation by asking the bully to stop, helping the victim walk away, getting support from other bystanders, asking an adult for help, and/or reporting the bullying incident. Talk with them about what they did or did not do to help.

**Inform appropriate staff.** Report the incident to a supervisor and any other staff with whom the children work closely. Inform the children’s parents, as warranted.

**Keep a detailed record of the incident.** Include who is involved, where the incident occurred, whether it has happened before, and strategies used to address the problem. This record will reveal any patterns and help you see which interventions work best.

**Check in regularly with the victim, the bully, and program staff** to make sure the bullying does not continue. Create opportunities for talking about bullying issues with children in your program.

## What you should tell CHILDREN about bullying...

- **Bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.**
- **If a bully bothers you, it’s O.K. to stand up for yourself, walk away, or ask a friend or adult for help.**
- **Responding to bullying by fighting back doesn’t usually work—and may make matters worse.** Violence encourages more violence and fails to solve problems.
- **It is important to report bullying when you see it *and* when you hear about it.** Telling is not tattling.
- **Bullying does not have to happen.** Working together with adults and peers, there are specific things you can do to prevent and stop bullying.

## What you should tell BULLIES...

- Stop the bullying immediately.
- Bullying behaviors will *not* be tolerated.
- Bullying hurts your victim *and* you.
- Bullying sets a bad example for other children.
- Bullying may cause you to lose friends.
- Every child deserves to be treated with respect.
- There are other ways to solve conflicts.
- Ask adults for help if you feel angry or upset, or don't know how to stop bullying.

## What you should tell VICTIMS...

- You are not responsible for a bully's behavior. It's not your fault.
- Don't respond to bullies by giving in, getting upset, or fighting back—this will encourage them. Instead, stay calm and be assertive.
- Sometimes the best response is *no* response—just walk away.
- Get help from a trusted adult. Adults can help you figure out new ways to respond the next time a bully bothers you.

*Providing children who are bullied with specific options for responding and an action plan will help them feel less anxious and fearful, and more confident to take action to stop the bullying.*

## What you should tell BYSTANDERS...

- **Your involvement makes a difference.** Don't just stand by and watch quietly.
- **Stand up for the person being bullied.** If you feel safe, tell the bully to stop. Use phrases such as "Stop teasing!" "Don't fight!" "Leave him alone!" and "It's not funny!"
- **Don't join in.** Don't laugh at the victim or participate in the teasing, harassing, or fighting. This encourages the bully to continue and can make the situation worse.
- **Help the victim walk away.** A victim may be too afraid to leave on his or her own, but will do so with the help of a friend.
- **Encourage other bystanders to help the victim.** Tell them not to join in the bullying.
- **Get help from a trusted adult.** Report the bullying.
- **Afterward, tell the victim you feel bad about what happened.** Encourage victims to talk to an adult, and offer to go with them.
- **Include the victim in activities.** Be a good friend.



# Look Strategically...What YOU Can Do

## Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

**Bullying can be seen as a destructive game, devised by the bully. The rules are simple:**

- The bully decides when to start the game, where it will be played, and who is allowed to watch.
- The bully picks the players.
- The bully sets the stakes: He or she can demand to control territory, objects, or privileges. But the real “fun” comes from showing that he or she has the power to control the people around him or her.
- Bystanders must accept or encourage what the bully does.
- The first round of the game is over when the bully wins. Then the bully can play again.
- The bully can play the game as often as he or she likes, for as long as the fun lasts.

**These are the bully’s rules. But what if you don’t follow them? The bully doesn’t have a game—unless you play it.**

## What Would Happen *If*?

**Bullies like to set the rules and they expect them to be followed. But what would happen if the rules changed: if a victim didn’t accept his or her punishment, or a bystander did more than stand by?**

This activity is designed to help both victims and bystanders end the bullying game, by finding new ways to respond to the bully. It empowers children to change the rules, see available options, and appreciate how their actions can make a difference.

- 1** Pick the story (on next two pages) that is most appropriate for your group.
- 2** Read it aloud.
- 3** Ask children to discuss *What would happen if... ?*

**This activity will help children...**

**Realize that behaviors involved in bullying are largely predictable**

**See how their actions can either encourage or stop bullying**

**Think of specific ways to change the bullying game, in particular situations**

## Look Strategically...What YOU Can Do



### STEVEN'S STORY

Steven wasn't enjoying overnight camp. He wasn't very good at the camp activities and he missed his friends from home. At first, the boys in his bunk mostly ignored him. Then Jesse, one of the older boys, discovered Steven's stuffed bear. After that, things really went downhill. Jesse made fun of him for bringing the bear to camp. He started calling him "Baby Stevie" and the other boys soon followed. One counselor heard them and told them to cut it out, but that just made things worse. Steven counted the days until he'd be able to go home.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Steven attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Jesse?
- Steven stood tall and told Jesse to stop calling him names?
- The other boys in the bunk didn't follow Jesse's lead?
- One of the boys stood up for Jesse and told the other kids to stop?
- The counselor followed up by talking with the group about teasing?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?



### CARINA'S STORY

Carina didn't understand why Nel had suddenly become so mean. They used to be best friends, but now Nel barely spoke to her. Even worse, Carina knew Nel talked about her because she often saw Nel whispering to her new friends whenever Carina walked by. Yesterday, during soccer, none of the girls passed the ball to Carina. The coach didn't seem to notice. Carina found out later that Nel had told them not to. Nel said it would be funny.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Carina attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Nel?
- Carina ignored Nel's whispers?
- The other girls didn't whisper with Nel about Carina?
- One of the other girls passed the ball to Carina anyway?
- The coach noticed Carina was being excluded and asked the girls what was going on?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?



### DANIEL'S STORY

Daniel and Gabe were playing catch when Alex walked over. Alex was two years older. "Give me the ball," Alex demanded. Daniel held on to the ball: It was his; he'd brought it from home. Alex hadn't returned the ball he took from Daniel last week. "Give it to me!" Alex demanded again. "We need a ball for our game!" Daniel looked across the field where a group of boys waited for Alex to return. He looked toward the school where the afterschool teachers were deep in conversation. Daniel handed his ball to Alex. He knew he wouldn't see it again.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Daniel attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Alex?
- Daniel stood tall and told Alex he couldn't have the ball?
- Gabe told Alex to leave Daniel alone?
- The boys on the field hadn't been waiting for Alex to return with the ball?
- The afterschool teachers had been supervising the playground more closely?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?

**Understanding options for changing the bullying game  
is critical to bullying prevention.**