



## Witnessing Bullying

Witnesses to Bullying are called Bystanders. Bystanders fall into four categories:

- **Assistants** join the bullying, often taking directions from the bullies.
- **Reinforcers** encourage the bullies by cheering, laughing, or otherwise supporting them.
- **Validators** know about the bullying but do nothing, giving "silent approval"
- **Defenders** intervene and support the victims:
- Most children believe they would help friends who get bullied, but studies show *only around 25%* of children actually defend victims.
- **Bystanders** don't always defend victims against bullying: Because the bully is popular and they want him/her to hang out with them
- They don't think speaking up will help
- They are afraid they will become a victim

*Research also shows that peers are more effective than adults at stopping bullying. One study found that 75% of peer interventions stopped the bully.*

Teachers can help students to be advocates for those who are in difficult situations.

Bystanders have four choices on how to act:

### 1. Stand and watch

If something is happening, it is normal for people to go and see what is going on. If one or more people are hurting someone, it is normal to feel:

- curious – why, what is this about?
- excited – other people's emotions can be 'catching'.
- afraid – what if that person being hurt was I?

But continuing to stand and watch someone get hurt, puts you on the same side as the bully. **If you are not helping the victim, then you are giving your support to the bully.** Do you want to do that?

## 2. Support the bully

Everyone likes to feel powerful at times, but supporting a bully is not the way to go. There are other reasons why someone might take sides with a bully.

- Maybe you don't like the person who is the victim.
- Maybe the bully is a friend.
- Maybe you are afraid that if you don't support the bully, you could be the next victim.

**Helping a bully to hurt someone is misusing your power.** How would you feel if you were the victim?

## 3. Get away from there

It is normal to think:

- I don't want to get involved.
- I don't want to be hurt.
- They probably deserved it anyway.
- Keeping out of trouble is best.

Getting away from bullying will keep **you** safe. Once again, it is the bully who wins.

**By going away you are in effect telling the bully that what he is doing is OK with you** – that you don't care if the victim is being hurt.

Is that what you believe? What if next time the victim is you?

## 4. Be an active bystander (please become this type of bystander!)

If someone is being hurt, it is normal to want to help that person. But look at the situation carefully before you act. It's important to keep yourself safe.

- You may try to stop it happening by saying something and *getting others* to say something.
- You may go to help the victim.
- You may try pulling the bully or bullies away, but only if it is safe for you to do so.
- You may try getting help – for example, asking others to help or getting a teacher or other authority figure to come and stop the bullying.
- You may offer to act as a mediator – someone who listens to both sides and tries to help resolve the conflict.

### Here are some things you might try.

- Say in a loud voice to everyone, "Come on guys, this is ridiculous behavior."
- Tell the person being bothered that you don't like it and ask, "Would you like me to tell someone or go with you to tell someone what happened to you?"
- Get the victim out of there if it feels safe to do so. Say things like, "Oh, there you are, someone is looking for you", or "We're waiting for you to play with us."
- Use humor. Say things to the bully like, "Hey couldn't you find anyone

smaller to pick on?" or say to the person being bullied, "Watch out, you could hurt him!", then laugh and encourage others to join in.

- Use fear. The last time someone acted like you, they are suspended from school" or "you should have seen what that kid's dad did when he found out his daughter was acting just like you."
- Use your brains and send someone to get help, or go yourself.
- Put up your open hand up and shout, "Stop that!"
- Get your friends to come and help stop the bullying.
- Say incredulously, "Can't you think of a better way to work something out than to pick on someone?" Shout, "Look out, Ms (or Mr) (put the name of your meanest teacher) is on duty!" People will run away and be good! (Kids tip)

It is really important to be kind to the victim (the person who was bothered) at other times and to act as a witness to what happened. **This sends the message that you, your friends and your school do not see bullying as OK.** Tell the victim, "Me and my friends went and told the teacher."

### **Put Downs**

Hurting people's feelings can be just as bad, if not worse than being beaten up, especially if it goes on every day.

If you know someone who is being bullied in this way, then you have 3 choices.

- Say and do nothing about it. In this case the bullying will continue.
- Let the bully know that it is not OK and you will report it if the bullying continues.
- Report the bullying to the teacher, through the anti-bullying process in your school, or put bullying on the agenda for class meeting. If the bullying is happening outside school, then report it to a trusted

Make sure you live your life in a way that you role model good behavior to your friends.

1. Make it clear to your friends that you won't be involved in bullying behavior.
2. Don't harass, tease or spread gossip about others — this includes on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.