

Bullying: Facts You Need to Know

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Name: _____

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HERNANDO COUNTY YOUTH COURT

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Bullying: What is it?

Bullying is when one person hurts or threatens someone in the peer group. Anyone can be a bully, and bullying can be carried out in different ways. Physical bullying may include shoving, pushing and hitting. Words and non-verbal behavior can also be used to hurt someone by spreading rumors, taking part in gossip, or threatening someone with looks, notes, or pictures. Bullies choose to pick on peers who are smaller or younger than they are, or who are from a different race or culture, or they may pick on someone who is different in some other way. Bullying might happen once or over and over again. If bullying includes physical or sexual harm or damage to property, makes you feel intimidated or afraid to go to school, or disrupts school, it is probably also assault or harassment. These behaviors are against school rules and many are also against the law. If a bully attacks you or steals something from you, you can report the incident to the police. You can also report school-related bullying to your school, and you should expect the school to take action to confront the behaviors, discipline the bully, and ensure your safety at school, traveling to and from school, and at school activities.

Describe a time when you were bullied or you witnessed someone else being bullied. How did you handle the situation?

How common is bullying?

Almost 30% of teens in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying either as a bully, a target of bullying, or both. In a recent national survey of students in grades 6 to 10, 13% reported bullying others, 11% reported being the target of bullies, and another 6% said they bullied others and were bullied themselves.

Limited available data suggests that bullying is much more common among younger teens than older teens. As teens grow older, they are less likely to bully others and to be the targets of bullies.

Bullying occurs more frequently among boys than girls. Teenage boys are much more likely to bully others and to be the targets of bullies. While both boys and girls say others bully them by making fun of the way they look or talk, boys are more likely to report being hit, slapped, or pushed. Teenage girls are more often the targets of rumors and sexual comments.

While teenage boys target both boys and girls, teenage girls most often bully other girls, using more subtle and indirect forms of aggression than boys. For example, instead of physically harming others, they are more likely to spread gossip or encourage others to reject or exclude another girl.

Bullying can also affect those teens who witness the bullying.

In one study of junior and high school students, over 88% said they had witnessed bullying in their schools. Teens who witness bullying can feel guilty or helpless for not standing up to a bully on behalf of a classmate or friend, or for not report the incident to someone who could help. They may experience even greater guilt if they are drawn into bullying by pressure from their peers. Some teens deal with the feelings of guilt by blaming the victim and deciding that he or she deserved the abuse. Teens sometimes also feel compelled to end a friendship or avoid being seen with the bullied teen to avoid losing status or being targeted themselves.

What type of bullying is more common with teenage girls?

What are some of the feelings that teens who witness bullying may experience?

Are you a bully?

All of us have to deal with a lot of difficult situations and emotions. For some people, when they're feeling stressed, angry or frustrated, picking on someone else can be a quick escape – it takes the attention away from them and their problems. Some bullies learn from firsthand experience. Perhaps name-calling, put-downs, or physical force are the norms in their families. Whatever the reason, though, it's no excuse for being a bully.

If you find it hard to resist the temptation to bully, you might want to talk with someone you look up to. Try to think about how others feel when you tease or hurt them. If you have trouble figuring this out (many people who bully do), you might ask someone else to help you think of the other person's side.

Bullying behavior backfires and makes everyone feel miserable – even the bullies. People might feel intimidated by bullies, but they don't respect them. If you would rather that people see your strength and character – even look up to you as a leader – find a way to use your power for something positive rather than to put others down.

Do you really want people to think of you as unkind, abusive, and mean? It's never too late to change, although changing a pattern of bullying might seem difficult at first. Ask an adult you respect for some mentoring or coaching on how you could change.

Have you ever made fun of someone because of the way they dress, act, etc.? Explain:

What can you do to make someone who is new to your school feel comfortable and welcome?

What you can do if you are being bullied ...

- 1. Talk to your parents or an adult you can trust, such as a teacher, school counselor, or principal.** Many teens who are targets of bullies do not talk to adults because they feel embarrassed, ashamed, or fearful, and they believe they should be able to handle the problems on their own. Others believe that involving adults will only make the situation worse. While in some cases it is possible to end bullying without adult intervention, in other more extreme cases, it is necessary to involve school officials and even law enforcement. Talk to a trusted adult who can help you develop a plan to end the bullying and provide you with the support you need. If the first adult you approach is not receptive, find another adult who will support and help you.
- 2. It is not useful to blame yourself for a bully's actions.** You can do a few things, however, that may help if a bully begins to harass you. Do not retaliate against a bully or let the bully see how much he or she has upset you. If bullies know they are getting to you, they are likely to torment you more. If at all possible, stay calm and respond evenly and firmly or else say nothing and walk away. Sometimes you can make a joke, laugh at yourself, and use humor to defuse a situation.
- 3. Act confident.** Hold your head up, stand up straight, make eye contact, and walk confidently. A bully will be less likely to single you out if you project self-confidence.
- 4. Try to make friends with other students.** A bully is more likely to leave you alone if you are with your friends. This is especially true if you and your friends stick up for each other.
- 5. Avoid situations where bullying can happen.** If at all possible, avoid being alone with bullies. If bullying occurs on the way to or from school, you may want to take a different route, leave at a different time, or find others to walk to and from school with. If bullying occurs at school, avoid areas that are isolated or unsupervised by adults, and stick with friends as much as possible.
- 6. If necessary, take steps to rebuild your self-confidence.** Bullying can affect your self-confidence and belief in yourself. Finding activities you enjoy and are good at can help to restore your self-esteem. Take time to explore new interests and develop new talents and skills. Bullying can leave you feeling rejected, isolated, and alone. It is important to try to make new friendships with people who share your interests. Consider participating in extracurricular activities or joining a group outside of school, such as an after-school program, church youth group, or sports team.
- 7. Do not resort to violence or carry a gun or other weapon.** Carrying a gun will not make you safer. Guns often escalate conflicts and increase the chances you will be seriously harmed. You also run the risk that the gun may be turned on you or an innocent person may be hurt. And you may do something in a moment of fear or anger that you will regret for the rest of your life. Finally, it is illegal for a teen to carry a handgun; it can lead to criminal charges or arrest.

If someone else is being bullied ...

1. **Refuse to join in if you see someone being bullied.** It can be hard to resist if a bully tries to get you to taunt or torment someone, and you may fear the bully will turn on you if you do not participate, but try to stand firm.
2. **Attempt to defuse bullying situations when you see them starting up.** For example, try to draw attention away from the targeted person, or take the bully aside and ask him/her to "cool it". Do not place yourself at risk however.
3. **If you can do so without risk to your own safety, get a teacher, parent, or other responsible adult to come help immediately.**
4. **Speak up and/or offer support to bullied teens when you witness bullying.** For example, help them up if they have been tripped or knocked down. If you feel you cannot do this at the time, privately support those being hurt with words of kindness or condolence later.
5. **Encourage the bullied teen to talk with parents or a trusted adult.** Offer to go with the person if it would help. Tell an adult yourself if the teen is unwilling to report the bullying. If necessary for your safety, do this anonymously.

What can you do if you see someone else being bullied?

What have you done in the past to help someone who has been bullied?

Additional Strategies – HA - HA - SO

H: Help	Seek assistance from an adult, friend or peer when a potentially threatening situation arises. Seek help also if other strategies aren't working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm all of the sources of help at your school – deans, counselors, teachers, nurse. • Stress the different ways to get help – anonymously, in a group, dean's hotline.
A: Assert Yourself	Make assertive statements to the bully addressing you feelings about the bully's behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not be used with sever bullying. • Not as effective with group bullying. • Victim should look bully straight in the eye. • Use "I" statements. • Make assertive statements and walk away.
H: Humor	Use humor to de-escalate a situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use humor in a positive way. • Make the joke about what the bully said, not about the bully. • Make humorous statement and then walk away.
A: Avoid	Walk away or avoid certain places in order to avoid a bullying situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best for situations when the victim is alone. • Avoid places where the bully hangs out. • Join with others rather than be alone.
S: Self-Talk	Use positive self-talk to maintain positive self-esteem during a bullying session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a means to keep feeling good about yourself. • Think positive statements about self and accomplishments. • Rehearse mental statements to avoid being hooked by the bully. • Use positive self-talk when practicing all strategies.
O: Own It	"Own" the put down or belittling comment in order to defuse it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the bully and leave the situation. • Combine with humor strategies such as "Yeah, this is a bad haircut. The lawnmower got out of control this weekend." • Combine with assertive strategies such as, "Yes, I did fail the test and I don't appreciate you looking at my paper."

Important Reminders

1. Practice these strategies in any order, in any combination, or numerous times.
2. The Caring Community can remind each other of the strategies.
3. The Caring Community can help support the victim in using the strategies.
4. If the strategies aren't working, leave or disengage from the situation.

The Cyber Bully

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Usually it is repeated over time. Traditionally, bullying has involved actions such as hitting or punching (physical bullying), teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying), or intimidating through gestures or social exclusion. Today, technology has given youth a new means of bullying each other.

Cyber bullying, which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying, can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.

Children and youth can cyber bully each other through

- Emails
- Instant messaging
- Text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones
- Web pages
- Web logs (blogs)
- Chat rooms or discussion groups, and
- Other information communication technologies.

How common is cyber bullying?

Although little research has been conducted in cyber-bullying recent studies have found that:

- 18% of students in grades 6-8 said they had been cyber bullied at least once in the last couple of months; and 6% said it had happened to them 20 or more times.
- 11% of students in grades 6-8 said they had cyber bullied another person at least once in the last couple of months, and 2% said they had done it two or more times.
- 19% of regular internet users between the ages of 10 and 17 reported being involved in online aggression; 15% had been aggressors, and 7% had been targets. 3% were both aggressors and targets.
- 17% of 6-11 year-olds and 36% of 12-17 year-olds reported that someone had said threatening or embarrassing things about them through e-mail, instant messages, web sites, chat rooms, or text messages.

Cyber bullying has increased in recent years. In nationally representative surveys of 10-17 year-olds, twice as many children and youth indicated that they had been victims and perpetrators of online harassment in 2005 compared with 1999/2000.

Who are the victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying?

In a recent study of students in grades 6-8:

- Girls were about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying.
- Of those students who had been cyber bullied relatively frequently (at least twice in the last couple of months)
 - 62% said that they had been cyber bullied by another student at school, and 46% had been cyber bullied by a friend.
 - 55% didn't know who had cyber bullied them.
- Of those students who admitted cyber bullying others relatively frequently:
 - 60% had cyber bullied another student at school and 56% had cyber bullied a friend.

What are the most common methods of cyber bullying?

In recent studies of middle and high school students, the most common way that children and youth reported being cyber bullied was through instant messaging. Somewhat less common ways involved the use of chat rooms, e-mails, and messages posted on web sites. A study of younger children showed that they were most often bullied through e-mail, comments on a web site, or in a chat room.

Are you a Cyber Bully?

Often people who are victims are also bullies. Before you feel too bad for yourself, take the quiz below to find if you, too, are part of the cyber bullying problem.

Rate yourself on the following point scale according to is, and how many times, you have done these things. Give yourself:

- 0 points if you've never done it
- 1 point if you have done it 1 or 2 times
- 2 points if you have done it 3-5 times
- 3 points if you have done it more than 5 times.

Have you ever ...

- _____ Signed on with someone else's screen name to gather info?
- _____ Sent an e-mail or online greeting card from someone's account?
- _____ Impersonated someone over IM or online?
- _____ Teased or frightened someone over IM?
- _____ Not told someone who you really are online, telling them to "guess"?
- _____ Forward a private IM conversation or e-mail without the permission of the other person?
- _____ Changed your profile or away message designed to embarrass or frighten someone?
- _____ Posted pictures of information about someone on a web site without their consent?
- _____ Created an internet poll, either over IM or on a web site, about someone without their consent?
- _____ Used information found online to follow, tease, embarrass or harass someone in person?
- _____ Sent rude or scary things to someone, even if you were just joking?
- _____ Used bad language online?
- _____ Signed someone else up for something online with their permission?
- _____ Used an IM or e-mail address that looked like someone else's?
- _____ Used someone else's password for any reason without their permission?
- _____ Hacked into someone else's computer or sent a virus or Trojan Horse to them?
- _____ Insulted someone in an interactive game room?
- _____ Posted rude things or lies about someone online?
- _____ Voted at an online bashing poll or posted to a guestbook saying rude or mean things?
- _____ **TOTAL SCORE**

Now calculate your total score:

0-5 Points: Cyber Saint

Congratulations! You're a cyber saint. Your online behavior is exemplary. Keep up the good work!

6-10 Points: Cyber Risky

Well, you're not perfect, but few people are. Chances are you haven't done anything terrible and were just having fun, but try not to repeat your behaviors, since they are all offenses. Keep in mind the pain that your fun might be causing others.

11-18 Points: Cyber Sinner

Your online behavior needs to be reproached! You have done way too many cyber no-no's! Keep in mind that these practices are dangerous, wrong, and punishable and try to clean up that cyber record!

More than 18 Points: Cyber Bully

Put on the brakes and turn that PC/MAC/text messaging device around! You are headed in a very bad direction. You qualify, without doubt, as a cyber bully. You need to sign off and thin about where that little mouse of yours has been clicking before serious trouble results for you and/or your victim(s), if it hasn't happened already!

Explain a situation where you or someone you know was cyber bullied and the outcome of the incident.

Bullying in the News

Teen Jailed for Bullying

A 15-year-old Halifax girl has been sentenced to one year in youth jail for bullying another teen who later committed suicide. Last April, Emmett Fralick committed suicide rather than face the bullying at school. The girl, who cannot be identified, pleaded guilty to charges of extortion, assault and threat to cause bodily harm in connection with Fralick's death. In addition to the year in detention, the girl also faces one year's probation.

During a court appearance in Halifax on Thursday morning, the girl also pleaded guilty to three charges stemming from another case of bullying. She was sentenced to more than five months in that case – the time she's spent in custody since Fralick's death.

New York Times on Cyber Bullying

Amanda Marcuson, 14, of Birmingham, Michigan, reported some girls in her eight-grade class for stealing a pencil case filled with makeup that belonged to her. As soon as she got home, the instant messages started popping up on her computer screen. She was a tattletale and a liar, they said. Shaken, she typed back, "You stole my stuff!" She was a "stuck-up bitch," came the instant response in the box on the screen, followed by a series of increasingly ugly insults.

That evening, Amanda went to a basketball game with her family. But the barrage of electronic insults did not stop. Like a lot of other teenagers, Amanda has her Internet messages automatically forwarded to her cell phone, and by the end of the game she had received 50 – the limit of its capacity. "It seems like people can say a lot worse things to someone online than when they're actually talking to them," said Amanda. The girls never said another word to her in person.

Houston, Texas

David Ritcheson was a hate crime survivor. His attack was so vicious that he was left a shell of his former self. Ritcheson rarely discussed his feelings and declined to get counseling after being attacked at the drug-fueled teen party in April 2006. A year later, he testified before Congress in support of a hate crimes bill.

In an interview with the Houston Chronicle, he said, "I shouldn't care what people think or say. It's just the fact that everyone knows I'm the kid. It was bigger than Houston. It was bigger than Texas. It was bigger than America. Everybody in the world knew what happened and everybody knew the details of it.

Ritcheson, a Mexican-American, was beaten and sodomized with a patio umbrella pole. He also was stomped and burned with cigarettes, and his attackers poured bleach on him before leaving him for dead. He was hospitalized for more than three months and endured 20 to 30 operations. David killed himself by jumping off a cruise ship at 18.

Boston Girl's Story

"The bullying started when two fellow students, both boys (we all were no more than 7) beat me up not more than a half mile from my home. One threatened to bash my skull in with a rock as the other boy held me down. He was talked out of it by the other boy so they "wouldn't get in trouble." I don't recall ever talking to these two boys, but knew they were in my 5th grade class. My mother was horrified that two boys would do this to a small girl."

"After that day, my parents tried to talk to their parents, only to be told "boys will be boys" and there was nothing they could do. The school also did nothing. From there I entered 6th grade and middle school, where it escalated to an unbearable, daily barrage of verbal and physical assaults from most of my classmates. My grades suffered tremendously. I cared nothing for my appearance and alternated between wanting to disappear or die."

What can you do to prevent bullying in your school or neighborhood?

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

Where do you go if you're wondering how to help a friend who is depressed, what to do if someone you know is planning to commit a violent act, or how to start a non-violence program in your school? What can you do to make a positive difference? Call the toll-free number or visit www.safeyouth.org. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Partners Working on Youth Violence.

Toll-Free: 1-866-SAFEYOUTH (1-866-723-3968)

