



How do I know if a youth is at risk for being bullied?

It is important to be approachable and willing to discuss bullying with your student. Below are descriptions of bullying, types of bullying, a list of warning signs, and how to help and support your student if they are being bullied, or know someone being bullied.

What is bullying?

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is:

- Unwanted.
- Repeated, or has the potential to be repeated.
- Involves an imbalance of power: when someone uses their power, such as physical strength or popularity, to control or harm others.
- There are 3 main types of bullying:
- **Verbal** bullying is saying, writing, posting, or communicating violent things.
- **Social** bullying involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships, exclusion is purposely leaving an individual out of a group, family, or social function, meaningful event or activity, disinviting to a function.
- **Physical** bullying involves hurting a person's body or destroying their property.

What is cyberbullying?

Bullying that takes place using technology. This includes text messages, e-mails, and social media sites. Cyberbullying can look like:

- Impersonation: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online, that makes that person look bad or gets that person in trouble or danger.
- Outing and Trickery: Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information online, without consent, dating violence, posting or sharing nudity and private pictures without consent, group bullying, intimidation, humiliation, teasing, or coercion
- Harassment/ Cyber stalking: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages, tags, or posts. Intimidation, violent language, threats of physical harm and violence that make a person afraid for their safety.
- Denigration: Negative comments (dissing) about someone online. Sending or spreading cruel gossip, dating violence, rumors about a person to damage their reputation or friendships.

What are warning signs that my student is being bullied?

- Unexplainable injuries, bruises.
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness (physical symptoms of stress/trauma, or avoidance of bully)
- Changes in eating habits, skipping meals or binge eating (bully may be taking their lunch/lunch money, or avoidance of cafeteria due to bully)
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares.
- Declining grades, skipping classes (is the bully in a class?) loss of interest in school.
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations.
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or decreased self-esteem/ self-compassion.
- Risky behaviors like acting out behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide.

What can your student do?

If your student is experiencing bullying or knows someone who is being bullied, they can...

- Be a friend- Offer support, ask how they can help, let them know they care.
- Tell a trusted adult- Trusted adults could stop the behavior from continuing. Encourage your student to talk to as many adults as possible. The more adults involved, the more support that will be available.
- Get away- Remove themselves or help others get away from the situation immediately, never using violence.

How can I help my student?

- When a student shares about an incident, listen without blaming or shaming, remain from criticism, becoming cynical, and seek to intervene immediately. Your student has shared something very important with you; stay approachable by listening, not giving immediate feedback, allowing space, silence, and pause without the need to think or speak.
- After listening, ask about specifics (who, what, where, when, frequency, duration, physical, and verbal bullying challenges).
- Lead by example: Role model appropriate and safe ways to use technology. If you are unaware of the social media platforms be open to learn with your student.
- Monitor your student's internet/technology usage & have open discussions on social media boundaries. Limit screen time, limit internet use, and set time boundaries such as not an hour before bed or an hour after waking up.
- Maintain open communication between schools, organizations, and parents.
- Don't discount the feelings students express. Offer hope by listening and validating feelings, and praising student for speaking up for their safety.

Helpful questions to ask:

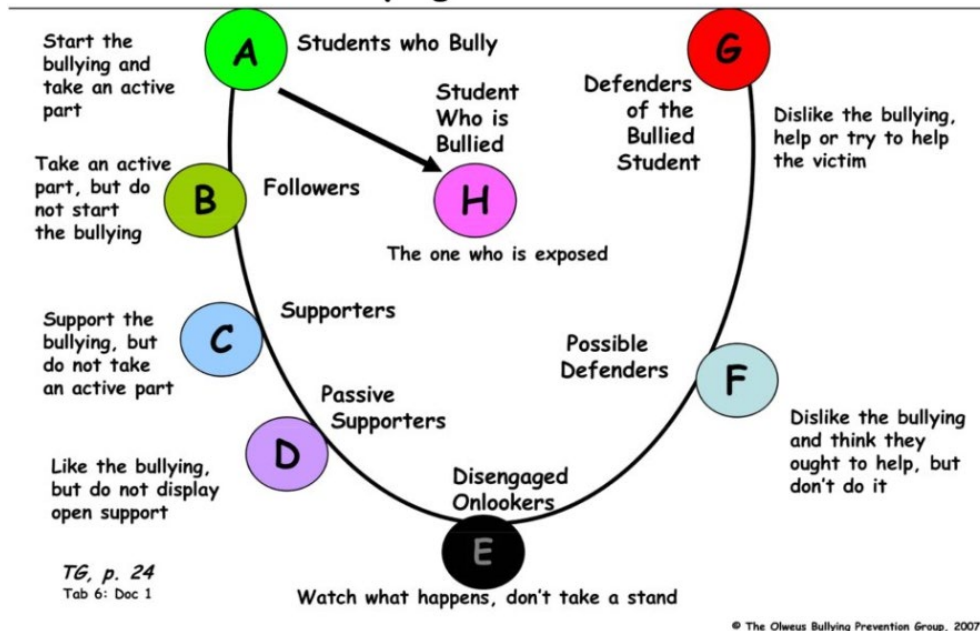
- What is bullying?
Discuss what bullying looks like to your student and times when they have witnessed bullying, been victims of bullying, participated in bullying, or a story which relates to what is going on.
- What can I do to make you feel safe?
Have an open conversation about how they would like to be supported. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied student. For example, talking in a private space, advocate for rearranging classroom or bus seating.
- Who can help if someone is getting bullied?
Discuss who the trusted adults are that your student can go to at school, home and in the community. Review the importance of helping others feel safe at school and not to be a bystander. Some schools have restorative justice models, others peer mediation, counseling, explore the options which make your student feel validated and safe.

Things to avoid

- Ignoring or dismissing the issue.
- Telling your student to ignore the bullying.
- Blaming, shaming, criticizing, or being cynical with your student for being bullied.
- Panicking, projecting anxiety, or fear in front of your student – this may discourage them from sharing difficult things with you in the future if you react rather than respond.

- Encouraging your student to fight back, reacting in violence rather than responding with non-violence.

What Roles Do Students Play In Bullying Situations?



If you are concerned, below are the recommended steps to help keep you and your family safe. You are not in this alone, you have resources!

- Talk with school staff, including the School Counselor, Principal, or Vice Principal or reach out to therapist, doctor, or other Health Care Professional to discuss options.
- San Diego Access and Crisis Line: 1-888-724-7240. Available 7 days a week/24 hours a day.
- Text "Home" to the Crisis Text line at 741-741
- Emergencies: Dial 911 or your local Sheriff's Office and ask for PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team). PERT provides clinical support to law enforcement and the community for calls involving persons having a mental health crisis.

Adapted from: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/support-kids-involved/index.html> & <http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/index.html>