

Exploring Bullying

In this activity participants explore the bullying dynamic and the roles and behaviors associated with bullying, and identify bullying behavior.

What to Know

Conflict is a normal part of life. Rather than hurt relationships, when conflict is handled productively, it can make relationships healthier and even closer. Bullying, however, is a much different issue. According to bullying expert Dan Olweus, “a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.” Bullying is not conflict; it’s more like abuse.

There are four “tests” for behavior to be considered bullying, which can be remembered by the acronym PAIN. For it to be bullying it must:

P – reflect an imbalance of **Power**- the person engaging in bullying has a real or perceived power over the person being bullied (i.e. age, size, popularity, role, group, etc.)

A – be **Aggressive** - (including various forms of aggression: physical, emotional, relational)

I – be **Intentional** – in person or via social media (cyberbullying)

N – occur **Numerous** times (Repetitive)

Bullying of any kind, including cyberbullying, has wide-reaching effects including increased absences from school, depression and anxiety, trouble sleeping, and lower academic achievement, among others. Students who engage in bullying behavior may be more likely to use alcohol and drugs, be involved in criminal activity, or go on to abuse domestic partners or children. Students who witness bullying are affected, too, possibly experiencing mental health issues and school absences.

As most bullying incidents occur away from the eyes of adults, creating a culture of caring and intolerance for cruelty of any kind is key to effective interventions.

Many schools and programs have agreed-upon terms that are used for the different roles people play (“aggressor”, “victim”, “defender”, etc.) in a bullying situation. While the terms can be helpful in understanding the bullying dynamic, with students we strive to *identify the behavior, not the child* when dealing with bullying situations (“bullying”, “being bullied”, etc.). This prevents labeling a child in ways that can become detrimental.

Objectives

Participants will:

1. explore components of bullying (including cyberbullying);
2. learn the roles that students can play in bullying situations; and,

3. understand positive choices they can make when they witness or experience bullying.

Common Core Standard Alignment

- Anchor Standards for Literacy: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 - Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Anchor Standards for Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Anchor Standards for Writing: Range of Writing
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 - Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
- Anchor Standards for Language: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Anchor Standards for Language-Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
 - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Preparation and Materials:

- A small smiley-face made from yellow paper.
- Copy "The Heart of the Matter" visual onto large chart paper.
- Four pieces of chart paper - 1 each with the heading: "Yes," "No," "I Don't Know," and "It Depends."
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Different colored construction paper circles (1-2 blue, 3-4 orange, up to 15 red, 15 green)

Gather Together/Warm Up/Bell Ringer: Sing! (5 minutes) (Integrated Arts)

Sing "[This Little Light of Mine](#)" or "[If I Had a Hammer](#)." Act out the refrain with agreed upon hand motions.

Main Activity: The PAIN Bullying Definition (10 Minutes)

Introduce the lesson: *"Today we are going to talk about bullying and learn what bullying is and what it isn't. Let's start with what you already know or think you know about bullying."*

Ask: *"What is Bullying?"* Write student responses on chart paper.

After students have offered their definitions of bullying, share the Dan Olweus definition. If your school district or program uses a particular definition, use it instead.

- Dan Olweus bullying definition: "A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."

Explain that the negative actions can be verbal (calling names), physical, social (spreading rumors, excluding) or even electronic (saying mean things online or in social media). Share with students the PAIN acronym, explaining the four components. It's not bullying unless it:

P – reflects an imbalance of **Power**- the person engaging in bullying has a real or perceived power over the person being bullied (i.e. age, size, popularity, role, group, etc.)

A – is **Aggressive** - (including various forms of aggression: physical, emotional, relational)

I – is **Intentional** – in person or via social media (cyberbullying)

N – occur **Numerous** times (Repetitive)

Place chart paper in four parts of the room: 1 piece of paper with the heading "Yes," 1 with the heading, "No," 1 with the heading "I Don't Know," and 1 with the heading "It depends."

Describe a scenario and ask students to move to the chart paper that describes their answer to, "Is this bullying?"

- Every day after school Sarafina, a very popular student, waits for Haley outside of the gym door. On the walk home, she follows behind Haley, taunting her. Sarafina usually ends up pushing Haley to the ground and doesn't leave until Haley is in tears. As she leaves Sarafina says, "What are you? A big baby??" (Process by asking the group who moved to "yes" why they chose that answer.)

- Eli and Zach are on the same soccer team. They don't sit together at lunch, but when Finn, a friend of Zach's, sees them together after school he says to Zach, "Why are you hanging out with that loser?" (Process by asking the group who moved to "It Depends" on why they chose that answer. Summarize: It's only bullying if this happens repeatedly. But point out, while it might not be bullying, it is social cruelty and something our community of caring does not tolerate.)
- Nacala and Tessa have been friends since kindergarten. Tessa didn't invite Nacala to her sleepover and Nacala confronts Tessa at recess. "You're a big jerk," she says. (Process by asking the group who moved to No why they chose that answer. Point out that while Nacala and Tessa are having a conflict, there is no imbalance of power or repetition to this incident. We hope that they will be able to resolve this conflict by discussing it and go back to being friends.)
- Sanjib and Nathaniel both attend the same after-school program. Sanjib is the leader of the program's pickup basketball game and never lets Nathaniel play with the group when he asks. (Process by asking the group who moved to "I don't know" why they answered that way. Explain: even though Sanjib has never said anything mean to Nathaniel, repeatedly excluding someone when you're in a position of authority is a form of bullying.)

The Heart of the Matter (15 minutes)

"Today we're going to make a chart together that will help us better understand what happens during bullying situations. This will help you recognize bullying when it's happening and be able to make some choices about how you want to respond."

Show students the chart you have made, "The Heart of the Matter."

- Point to the center of the circle. Say, "*The center or the "Heart of the Matter" is where someone is being bullied.*" Show students the blue circle that represents the person being bullied. Tape the blue circle onto the center of the circle. (Explain that sometimes there is more than one person being bullied, but often the person is alone.) Ask how this person might be feeling (terrible, embarrassed, afraid).
- Show students the orange circles that represent the people doing the bullying. Share that there may be only one person doing the bullying, but often there is more than one person. Tape those onto the center as well.
- Point to the edge of the larger circle. Say, "*The Outer Edge is where people are when they are witnessing bullying and they have a **choice to make**. Are they going to join in and support the people doing the bullying, do nothing, or try to help the person that's being bullied? People don't stay here long because bullying usually is a brief (though repeated) incident.*" Show students the green and red circles you have made to represent the people on the Outer Edge.
- Point to the inner circle. "*The Inner Circle is where people are once they have made a choice. What happens here can determine the outcome of the bullying incident, whether the person is helped or hurt further.*"

Tell students that they are going to be thinking about the behaviors and actions that might happen in these circles. Pair students and have them sit face to face.

“Let’s focus first on the initial bullying behavior. What types of behaviors might we see from a person who is bullying? What would they do? What would they say? How would they look?”

Give students a minute each to share their ideas with their partners. Ask for a few volunteers to share with the large group. Write their responses on and around the orange circles you have taped on the chart.

*“Now, we’re going to talk about the people on the Outer Edge, the ones with a **choice** to make about how to respond.”* Put two of the partner pairs together to make a group of four. Give students a few minutes to discuss all the ways that someone on the Outer Edge could respond to the bullying they are witnessing.

Then give each group two green circles, two red circles and some markers. On each of the red circles students write one choice that supports the bullying incident. On the green circles, students write one choice that would help stop the bullying and help the person being bullied. (Supporting the bullying can be mimicking the bullying, encouraging, laughing, or just being in physical proximity to the person who is bullying, or saying nothing. Supporting the person who is being bullied or “standing up” to the bullying may mean walking over to the person being bullied, telling the the others to stop, or getting an adult to intervene.)

Have students tape their circles on the Outer Edge. Share responses.

Discuss:

- *Have you ever responded in any of these ways? (Remind students not to use names.)*
- *What do you think it feels like to _____? (choose one of their ideas)*
- *What would happen if many people, three or four or even seven people watching the incident made “green” choices?*

Closing: A Wave of Kindness: (Integrated Arts) (10 Minutes)

Show this [video](#) made by students about how standing up in one small way can make a big difference.

Have students draw a picture of themselves on a surfboard in the ocean. Have them write a sentence or two on their picture about a “small act of kindness” they could do for someone being bullied. Post the Waves of Kindness around your room.

Grade Level Modifications

K-1

Modify the PAIN acronym to simpler language. Emphasize that bullying is repeated and “on purpose.”

Read [*The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade*](#) by Justin Roberts. “*What kinds of behavior is Sally noticing? How does it make her feel? What would you do if you were Sally? What do you think of how she handles the situation?*” Continue with The Heart of the Matter as in the grades 2-5 Main Activity, but do as a whole group. Tape green and red circles on the Outer Edge before beginning the lesson. Write students’ ideas as they are shared.

Emphasize to younger students the importance of reporting bullying incidence to adults. Younger students will have difficulty distinguishing bullying from conflict, but noticing when someone is being treated unkindly will be the task.

6-12

Exploring Bullying: Rotation Stations

Prepare four areas of your room with the following questions. Instead of the “Is it bullying?” scenarios, have students, who are split into four even groups, rotate from one station to the next, answering on chart paper the questions. After 2 minutes, ask the groups to rotate to the next station. The four questions are:

- Thinking about your school (and beyond including afterschool and social media), in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you find the most incidents of bullying?
- Thinking about your school (and beyond including afterschool and social media), in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you find the most support and caring?
- Thinking about your school (and beyond including afterschool and social media), what rules or ways of doing things lead to bullying?
- Thinking about your school (and beyond including afterschool and social media), what rules or ways of doing things make all people feel cared for and accepted?

The activity may be completed on bullying in general and/or with a special emphasis on cyberbullying. Complete the activity as planned otherwise, but close with a quick go-round, “One thing I want to remember from today is. . .”

Curricular Connections

K-1 Literacy: Read [*The Juice Box Bully*](#) by Bob Sornson. Have students do an opinion continuum in response to the prompt: Do you think having a pledge in our classroom about standing up for each other would work? One end of the line indicates “really agree” the other end is “really disagree.” Gather students and discuss their thoughts.

K-5 Literacy: Have students write poems about bullying. Encourage students to write from different points of view (aggressor, target, etc.). With younger students, write a poem together as a class.

2-5 Literacy: Part of the popular Joshua T. Bates series, [*Joshua T. Bates, Trouble Again*](#) (Random House, 1998) by Susan Richards Shreve, is a good chapter book to discuss standing up to bullies with grades 2-5. Also use the book as a launching point to discuss the effects of peer pressure on our behaviors. Ask: Has there ever been a time that you did something like make fun of another kid, just to fit in? How can we make caring “cool” in our school? Have students respond to the writing prompt, “If I were in Joshua’s shoes.....” Use the book [*King of the Playground*](#) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor to further discuss how to respond to bullies.

2-5 Literacy: Have students practice doing something great artists, great scientists, and great writers do regularly: watching and listening. Give students an area of the school to focus on for one week. Choose an area where there is less supervision (cafeteria, hallways, playground). Each day have students write in their journals, “*Today I saw...*” and write down what they noticed about how people treated one another. Remind students not to use names. Share student journal entries during class meetings and discuss. “*How did you feel when you saw this happen? How did you see people respond? How can we encourage more positive choices and discourage negative ones?*”

2-5 Research, Literacy, Math, Technology: Have students do online research to find information on bullying statistics. Have them choose 3-4 questions to guide their research. (*Is bullying more common among girls or boys? Where does it happen? etc.*) Use graph paper, chart paper, drawings, or computer programs to share their research.

6-12 History: Explore the history of bullying as it links to world history. Operation Respect’s DLAM program is in Israel and is working to bridge understanding and civility between Palestinian and Jewish young people. Show this video about Operation Respect in Israel and discuss connections to history and healing from the oppression of one group by another: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYne2FXxrls>

6-12 Literature: Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s book [*Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*](#) is the coming of age tale of a 12-year old Japanese-American girl living in Hawaii named Lovey Nariyoshi. Lovey struggles to fit in in a world where it feels important to have “straight blond hair and long Miss America legs.” Use this book as a launching point to discuss the various ways that young people in your school who do not fit in, or are different in some way, are treated. Also explore the role of peer pressure in acts of bullying.

6-12 Math: Have students conduct polls about attitudes towards bullying in your school and present those polls in your student newspaper in graphs and info-graphics. What statistical tests might you apply to this research?

Graphic Needed for the Heart of the Problem – this is one example of what your graphic might look like

- *The Heart of the Problem is where someone is being bullied. There can be one or more people actively doing the bullying.*
- *The Outer Edge is where people are when they are witnessing bullying and they have a **choice to make**. Are they going to join in and support the people doing the bullying, do nothing, or try to help the person who is being bullied? People don't stay here long because bullying usually is a brief (though repeated) incident.*
- *The Inner Circle is where people are once they have made a choice. What happens here can determine the outcome of the bullying incident, whether the person is helped or hurt further.*

