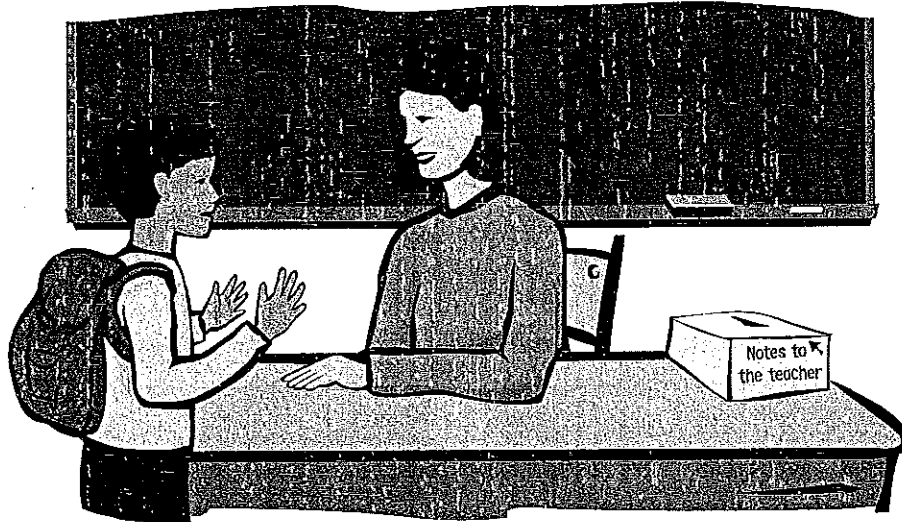


# HELPING VICTIMS



**I**f you were bullied as a child, you can probably remember how you felt. You may recall the specifics of each incident—the people, places, words, insults, frustration, pain, anger, and powerlessness.

The good news is: Your students don't have to endure the bullying you put up with when you were their age. We know more about bullying now than we did ten or even five years ago, and we know more about how to prevent it and stop it. We know more about how to help the victims of bullying—and why we should and must.

The "Creating a Positive Classroom" section of this book includes many tips and strategies that can benefit victims and potential victims. *Examples:*

- "Teach Anger Management Skills" (page 32)
- "Teach Friendship Skills" (pages 34–36)
- "Explore Ways to Deal with Bullies" (page 41)
- "Use a Notes-to-the-Teacher Box" (pages 41 and 45)
- "Teach Students to Use 'I Messages'" (page 51)
- "Teach Assertiveness Skills" (pages 53–54)
- "Teach Conflict Resolution Skills" (page 58)
- "Teach Students to Affirm Themselves" (page 66)
- "Teach Positive Self-Talk" (pages 68 and 71)

Similarly, "Helping Victims" features suggestions that you can use with all of your students. But most focus on students who desperately need adults to notice them, see what they're going through, and do something about it.

As you try these ideas with your class, individual students, and small groups, and as you share them with other teachers and staff, here are some good things you can expect to happen:

*Your students will learn how to:*

- stick up for themselves and each other
- break the code of silence and report bullying incidents
- differentiate between reporting and “ratting”
- feel stronger, more confident, and better about themselves
- strengthen their bully resistance skills
- build their social skills
- plan ahead to avoid potential problems
- use humor and other “power skills” to disarm bullies.

*You’ll discover how to:*

- identify victims or potential victims
- encourage students to report bullying
- act quickly and effectively when you learn of a bullying incident
- communicate with parents and get them involved in making your classroom bully free
- mobilize the masses—witnesses and bystanders—to become bully busters
- help students accept their differences
- equalize the power between victims and bullies
- protect yourself.

## BE ALERT

Most bullying takes place where you (and other adults) can’t see it or hear it. Bullies need an audience of their peers to establish their power over the victim, but the last thing they want is an audience of adults who have power over *them* and can make them stop.


Pay attention to interactions between your students. Are there some who seem fearful, withdrawn, lonely, and shy? Are there others who seem especially aggressive, need to “win” all the time, seek excessive attention, and are always pushing the boundaries of school or class rules? How do they get along with each other? What happens when they’re seated beside each other, or are assigned to the same groups and expected to work together? Be watchful and alert.

Talk with lunchroom supervisors, hall monitors, playground supervisors, gym teachers, and other adults who spend time with your students. Ask for their insights and input into relationships between your students. What have they seen? What have they heard? Learn as much as you can. It may be that bullying has gone on behind your back (even under your nose) and you simply haven’t noticed it. If so, you’re not alone.

## IDENTIFY VICTIMS OR POTENTIAL VICTIMS

You may know that some students in your classroom are victims of bullying—because you’ve witnessed bullying events personally, or other students have reported them to you, or the victims themselves have come forward.

But most bullying goes unnoticed and unreported. How can you identify victims or potential victims? You can watch for specific behaviors—and you can seek input from students’ parents.

 **Important:** Experts have determined that there are *two* types of victims:

- *passive victims*—anxious, sensitive loners who give off “victim” signals, lack self-defense skills, don’t think quickly on their feet, and have few friends to support them
- *provocative victims*—easily aroused, impulsive, annoying kids who tease or taunt bullies, egg them on, and make themselves targets but can’t defend themselves

## LOOK FOR WARNING SIGNS

For any student you suspect might be a victim or potential victim, complete the “Warning Signs” checklist (pages 79–80).



## WARNING SIGNS

The following behaviors may indicate that a student is being bullied or is at risk of being bullied. For any student you're concerned about, check all that apply.

When any of these behaviors are evident and persistent over time, you should definitely investigate. There's no magic number of warning signs that indicate a student is definitely being victimized—but it's better to be wrong than to allow a student to suffer.

Some of these characteristics are obviously more serious than others. A child who talks about suicide or carries a weapon to school, for example, needs immediate help. Don't wait for the child to come to you (this may never happen). Following the guidelines established by your school or district, contact a professional who is specially trained in dealing with high-risk behaviors.

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### SCHOOL AND SCHOOL WORK

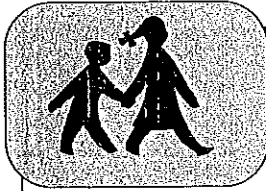
- \_\_\_ 1. Sudden change in school attendance/academic performance
- \_\_\_ 2. Erratic attendance
- \_\_\_ 3. Loss of interest in school work/academic performance/homework
- \_\_\_ 4. Decline in quality of school work/academic performance\*
- \_\_\_ 5. Academic success; appears to be the teacher's pet\*
- \_\_\_ 6. Difficulty concentrating in class, easily distracted
- \_\_\_ 7. Goes to recess late and comes back early
- \_\_\_ 8. Has a learning disability or difference
- \_\_\_ 9. Lack of interest in school-sponsored activities/events
- \_\_\_ 10. Drops out of school-sponsored activities he or she enjoys

### SOCIAL

- \_\_\_ 1. Lonely, withdrawn, isolated
- \_\_\_ 2. Poor or no social/interpersonal skills
- \_\_\_ 3. No friends or fewer friends than other students, unpopular, often/always picked last for groups or teams
- \_\_\_ 4. Lacks a sense of humor, uses inappropriate humor
- \_\_\_ 5. Often made fun of, laughed at, picked on, teased, put down, and/or called names by other students, doesn't stand up for himself or herself
- \_\_\_ 6. Often pushed around, kicked, and/or hit by other students, doesn't defend himself or herself
- \_\_\_ 7. Uses "victim" body language—hunches shoulders, hangs head, won't look people in the eye, backs off from others

\* True, #4 and #5 are opposites. They are also *extremes*. Watch for any extremes or sudden changes; these can be signs that something stressful is happening in a student's life.

—————➔  
CONTINUED



## WARNING SIGNS (continued)

- \_\_\_ 8. Has a noticeable difference that sets him or her apart from peers
- \_\_\_ 9. Comes from a racial, cultural, ethnic, and/or religious background that puts him or her in the minority
- \_\_\_ 10. Prefers the company of adults during lunch and other free times
- \_\_\_ 11. Teases, pesters, and irritates others, eggs them on, doesn't know when to stop
- \_\_\_ 12. Suddenly starts bullying other students

### PHYSICAL

- \_\_\_ 1. Frequent illness\*
- \_\_\_ 2. Frequent complaints of headache, stomachache, pains, etc.\*
- \_\_\_ 3. Scratches, bruises, damage to clothes or belongings, etc. that don't have obvious explanations
- \_\_\_ 4. Sudden stammer or stutter
- \_\_\_ 5. Has a physical disability
- \_\_\_ 6. Has a physical difference that sets him/her apart from peers—wears glasses, is overweight/underweight, taller/shorter than peers, "talks funny," "looks funny," "walks funny," etc.
- \_\_\_ 7. Change in eating patterns, sudden loss of appetite
- \_\_\_ 8. Clumsy, uncoordinated, poor at sports
- \_\_\_ 9. Smaller than peers
- \_\_\_ 10. Physically weaker than peers

### EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL

- \_\_\_ 1. Sudden change in mood or behavior
- \_\_\_ 2. Passive, timid, quiet, shy, sullen, withdrawn
- \_\_\_ 3. Low or no self-confidence/self-esteem
- \_\_\_ 4. Low or no assertiveness skills
- \_\_\_ 5. Overly sensitive, cautious, clingy
- \_\_\_ 6. Nervous, anxious, worried, fearful, insecure
- \_\_\_ 7. Cries easily and/or often, becomes emotionally distraught, has extreme mood swings
- \_\_\_ 8. Irritable, disruptive, aggressive, quick-tempered, fights back (but always loses)
- \_\_\_ 9. Blames himself or herself for problems/difficulties
- \_\_\_ 10. Overly concerned about personal safety; spends a lot of time and effort thinking/worrying about getting safely to and from lunch, the bathroom, lockers, through recess, etc.; avoids certain places at school
- \_\_\_ 11. Talks about running away
- \_\_\_ 12. Talks about suicide

\* A school nurse can determine if these physical symptoms might have other causes. A nurse can also gently question a child to learn if he/she is being bullied.



**Important:** These forms should be kept confidential. You may want to share them with other adults—teachers, your principal, the school counselor, the student's parents—but they should never be accessible to students.

## GET PARENTS' INPUT

If a student shows some or many of the warning signs, contact the parents. Arrange a face-to-face meeting at school.

No parent wants to hear that his or her child might be a victim or potential victim of bullying, so you'll need to offer a lot of reassurance along the way. You might start by emphasizing your commitment to making your classroom bully free. Share information about schoolwide efforts to reduce and eliminate bullying. Then tell the parents that you've noticed some behaviors at school which may indicate their child is being bullied or could be a potential victim of bullying. Give examples. Explain that there are other behaviors that don't show up at school, and you need their help identifying those behaviors.

Ask if they have noticed any of the following in their child:

- Frequent illness\*
- Frequent complaints of headache, stomachache, pains, etc.\*
- Sudden changes in behavior (bed-wetting, nail-biting, tics, problems sleeping, loss of appetite, depression, crying, nightmares, stammering, stuttering, etc.)\*
- Seems anxious, fearful, moody, sad; refuses to say what's wrong
- Doesn't want to go to school, refuses to go to school, starts skipping school
- Changes walking route to school, wants to change buses, begs to be driven to school (refuses to walk or ride bus)

\* Ask the parents if their child has been seen by a doctor recently; if not, suggest that they make an appointment. A doctor can determine if these symptoms and behaviors might have other causes. A doctor can also gently question a child to learn if he or she is being bullied.

- Comes home from school with scratches, bruises, damage to clothes or belongings, etc. that don't have obvious explanations; makes improbable excuses
- Comes home from school hungry (lunch money was "lost" or stolen)
- Possessions (books, money, clothing, etc.) are often "lost," damaged, or destroyed
- Frequently asks for extra money (for lunch, school supplies, etc.)
- Carries or wants to carry "protection" (guns, knives, forks, box openers, etc.) to school
- Sudden loss of interest in homework, school work, academic performance
- Has few or no friends; is rarely invited to parties or other social events
- Seems happy/normal on weekends but not during the week; seems preoccupied/tense on Sundays before school
- Obsesses about his or her height, weight, appearance, clothes, etc.
- Has started bullying other children/siblings; is aggressive, rebellious, unreasonable
- Talks about or attempts to run away from home
- Talks about or attempts suicide\*

Keep a written record of your meeting and any relevant information the parents share with you. Thank the parents for coming in and talking with you. Tell them that you'll communicate with them often about their child's behavior and progress, and about your efforts to make sure the bullying stops (or never starts). Then be sure to follow through.

## TALK WITH OTHER TEACHERS AND STAFF

If you think that a student is being bullied or might be at risk, share your concerns with other teachers or staff members.

\* If parents report this behavior, urge them to seek professional help *immediately*. Follow the guidelines established by your school or district.

If the student spends part of the day in another classroom, talk with that teacher. How is the student treated by other kids in the class? Has the teacher noticed any sudden changes in the student's behavior? (See "Identify Victims or Potential Victims," pages 78–81.) Has the student said anything about feeling worried, anxious, or afraid to be in school?

Talk to a playground supervisor or hall monitor to find out how the student is treated at recess or during class breaks. If the student rides the bus to and from school, talk to the bus driver.

Other adults may be aware of events in the student's life that could indicate a bullying situation. You might also discover that problems you've noticed are not isolated incidents. If so, find out more and follow through.

## EXAMINE YOUR OWN BELIEFS

To help victims gain the strength and skills to stop being victims, to help bullies change their behavior, and to reduce or eliminate bullying in your classroom, you need to believe that bullying is a problem that can be identified, addressed, and resolved.

Since you're reading this book, chances are you're already convinced. But many adults (including teachers) have lingering misconceptions about bullying. It's worth taking the time to do a reality check on your own beliefs. Following are four examples of erroneous thinking about victims, bullies, and bullying.\*

*"Bullying isn't a problem in my classroom or in our school."*

Some teachers and administrators make this claim. In fact:

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem. . . . Although much of the

formal research on bullying has taken place in the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, and Japan, the problems associated with bullying have been noted and discussed wherever formal schooling environments exist.\*

- The National Association of School Psychologists estimates that 160,000 children miss school every day for fear of being bullied.
- According to the National Center for School Safety, three million bullying incidents are reported each year. Since most bullying goes unnoticed and unreported, this number probably represents the tip of the iceberg.

*"It's best to let students solve their own problems, without adult interference. This is how they learn to get along in the world."*

Many adults tell children not to "tattle" about bullying. In a normal peer conflict (sharing toys, deciding who goes first in a game, arguing about rules or privileges, etc.), kids should be allowed and encouraged to figure out and try their own solutions.

*Bullying is not a normal peer conflict.* Here are two reasons why:

1. In a normal peer conflict, both parties are emotionally involved. Both experience painful or uncomfortable emotions; they're hurt, upset, angry, frustrated, disappointed, outraged, etc. In a bullying situation, it's usually only the victim who feels emotional pain. In contrast, the bully might feel satisfied, excited, or nothing at all (flat affect).
2. In a normal peer conflict, both parties have some power—sometimes equal power, which is why arguments, disagreements, and differences of opinion can seem to last forever. In a bullying situation, there's always a power imbalance.

\* See also "Expose the Myths" (page 16) and "Share Facts About Bullying" (pages 19 and 21).

\* SOURCE: Ron Banks, "Bullying in Schools," ERIC Digest EDO-PS-97-17, March 1997.

The bully has all or most of the power; the victim has little or none.

For these reasons, adult intervention with bullying is necessary. This is not "interference." It's helping young people with a problem they aren't equipped to solve on their own.

*"I've heard that bullying starts in the elementary school years, peaks in the middle school years, and declines during the high school years. That sounds almost like 'growing pains.' Maybe bullying is just a normal, unavoidable part of life."*

Bullying does seem to follow this very general pattern . . . although many adults experience bullying in their relationships and in the workplace. We get over our "growing pains," but the effects of being bullied (and of being a bully) can last a lifetime.

For victims, feelings of low self-esteem, isolation, powerlessness, and depression can continue into adulthood. The psychological harm they suffer as children can interfere with their social, emotional, and academic development. They may develop health problems due to the prolonged stress of being bullied. Some victims drop out of school; some commit suicide.

What about bullies? A longitudinal study by psychologist E. Eron at the University of Michigan found that bullies remain bullies throughout their lives. As adults, they have more court convictions, more alcoholism, and more personality disorders than the general population. They use more mental health services and have difficulty maintaining relationships.

*"I was bullied at school, and I survived. Bullying builds character."*

If you were bullied at school, you probably have very clear memories of what happened and how you felt about it. Maybe you even have nightmares related to bullying you experienced as a child. Why would you wish this on any of your students? And what kind of "character" does bullying build? If bullying is allowed to continue, children learn that might is right, bullies

get their way, aggression is best—and adults can't be counted on to help.

## BREAK THE CODE OF SILENCE

Research has shown that students are reluctant to tell adults about bullying. They don't believe it will help; they fear it will make things worse. Often, they're right.

Adults may not act on what they learn. They may not keep the confidence of young people who tell. And if they don't know much about bullying, they may give poor advice—such as "fight back" or "solve your own problems." A code of silence exists, especially as students move toward middle school, when the unspoken rule becomes "don't tell on other kids." Meanwhile, bullies make it known that anyone who reports their behavior will be their next target.

You can and should break this code of silence. The "Creating a Positive Classroom" section of this book describes several ways to do this. *Examples:*

- "Share Stories About Bullying" (page 22)
- "Take a Survey" (pages 22 and 24–30)
- "Respond Effectively to Reports of Bullying" (pages 32 and 34)
- "Learn More About Your Students" (pages 38–39)
- "Use a Notes-to-the-Teacher Box" (pages 41 and 45).


As you encourage students to come forward with their bullying stories, make sure they know the difference between "ratting" and "reporting." Ratting is when one student tells on another for the purpose of getting the other student in trouble. Reporting is when one student tells on another for the purpose of protecting someone else. When your students fully understand this, reporting will become less of a social taboo and more of a positive, acceptable action.

If a student comes to you to report bullying he or she has witnessed:

1. Listen carefully.\* Ask questions to clarify the details. Who was involved? What happened? When? Where? Were there any other witnesses? Take notes.
2. If the student requests confidentiality, respect his or her wishes.
3. Thank the student for talking with you.

If a student comes to you to “just talk” and you suspect that he or she is a victim of bullying:

1. Be patient. Don't expect all the details to come pouring out immediately. The student may be reluctant to give specifics out of embarrassment or shame.
2. At first, don't question the student too closely. Avoid questions that imply he or she might have done something wrong or “deserved” the bullying in any way.

 **Important:** Some victims provoke bullies—by pestering, teasing, fighting back (even though they always lose), and coming back for more. But this doesn't mean they *deserve* to be bullied.

3. Approach the topic gently and indirectly. Give the student the option to talk about it or not.
4. If the student still skirts the issue, let him or her know that you're willing to listen anytime he or she wants to talk. Leave the door open for future conversations.
5. Once the student begins talking about the incident (or several incidents), don't be surprised if it's like a dam breaking. Let the student talk. Just listen. Try not to interrupt with suggestions or opinions. This might be the first time the student has told anyone about the bullying.

6. Be sympathetic, but don't overreact. The student will probably be emotional; it's your job to stay calm. On the other hand, don't trivialize what the student tells you. What sounds like simple teasing to you might be terrifying to him or her.
7. Let the student know that you believe what he or she is telling you.
8. Ask the student if he or she has any ideas for changing the situation.



**Important:** This boosts self-confidence and self-esteem; you're letting the student know that you think he or she is capable of coming up with solutions to the problem. But even if the student has ideas, don't stop here. Bullying is *not* just another peer conflict. It's *always* a power imbalance. Adult intervention is required.

9. Ask the student if he or she wants your help. Chances are, the answer will be yes, otherwise the student wouldn't have come to you. But sometimes what a victim needs most at the moment is an adult who will listen respectfully and believe what he or she says.
10. Offer specific suggestions. (You'll find several throughout this section of the book. See also “Explore Ways to Deal with Bullies” on pages 41.)



**Important:** If you're not sure what to say or suggest, promise the student that you'll get back to him or her. Then seek advice from someone with experience in this area—another teacher, your principal, the school counselor.

11. Redouble your efforts to create a positive classroom where bullying is not tolerated.
12. If at any time the student mentions, threatens, or alludes to suicide, take this *very* seriously. *Get professional help immediately.*

Whether your reporter is a witness or a victim, be sure to follow through. Make it very clear that when someone tells you about a bullying

\* See “Be a Good Listener” (pages 86–88).



incident, you *will* take action and you *won't* just "let it go."

## ACT IMMEDIATELY

No matter how you're made aware of a bullying incident—whether you witness it personally, a student tells you about it, you receive a report in your "Notes-to-the-Teacher" box (see pages 41 and 45), you read about it in a student's journal (see pages 38–39), or you learn about it in some other way—take immediate action.

### IF YOU WITNESS IT PERSONALLY . . .

Intervene then and there. Don't try to talk with anyone involved; don't solicit suggestions on how to resolve the problem. Just put a stop to it.

1. If the bullying is *physical*, say "(Student's name), stop (pushing, shoving, hitting, tripping, etc.) immediately" in a firm, authoritative voice. Instruct the bully to move away from the victim.

If the behavior has attracted an audience, tell the onlookers to return to their seats, return to their classroom, or go somewhere else. When you remove the audience, you remove a large part of the bully's power.

What if the bully and victim are fighting? Follow these suggestions from the Crisis Prevention Institute on how to break up a fight:\*

- *Get assistance.* Intervening alone is dangerous.
- *Remove the audience.* Onlookers fuel the fire. The intensity of an altercation often parallels the intensity of the bystanders. Remove them as quickly as possible.

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- *Avoid stepping between the combatants.* This puts you in a vulnerable position and the combatants' aggression can quickly shift to you.
- *Always try verbal intervention first.* Often one or both combatants are waiting for someone to arrive and stop the fight. Avoid the temptation to immediately revert to physical intervention.
- *Use a distraction.* A distraction (loud noise, flickering of lights, etc.) can be enough to break the intensity of the aggression long enough to give you an edge.
- *Separate the combatants.* As soon as possible; break visual contact between the combatants. As long as they can see one another, their hostility will likely continue.

2. If the bullying is *verbal*, say "(Student's name), stop (teasing, name-calling, using racist or bigoted remarks, etc.) immediately. We don't use those words with each other." Refer to your class rules (see pages 31–32).
3. If the bullying is *emotional*, say "(Student's name), stop (intimidating, ignoring, excluding, etc.) immediately. In our classroom, everyone is welcome and accepted." Refer to your class acceptance statements (see page 16).

Once you've intervened with the bullying behavior, your work is just beginning.

### WHETHER YOU WITNESS IT PERSONALLY OR LEARN ABOUT IT IN ANOTHER WAY . . .

Consult your school's or district's policies on handling bullying incidents. They should include some or all of the following general steps.



**Important:** Keep written records along the way of conversations, actions taken, follow-through, etc. You'll want these for reference and also to include in the students' files.

1. Talk to the victim and the bully *separately* and *soon*. Talk to witnesses one at a time.

For tips on talking to victims, see "Break the Code of Silence" (page 83–85). Be sure to offer reassurance that you *will* take action, and you'll do everything in your power to prevent the bullying from happening again.

When talking to bullies, don't ask for their account of what happened. (Bullies generally don't take responsibility for their actions; they deny or minimize their role.) Instead, explain simply and clearly why their behavior was unacceptable. Refer to school or district policies and/or your class rules. Tell them the behavior you do expect. Spell out the specific consequences of the bullying behavior, then apply the consequences right away. Let the bullies know that their parents will be informed.

When talking to witnesses, ask for details. What did they see or hear? Who did what? When? What was the sequence of events? What, if anything, did they (the witnesses) do to stop the bullying? Seek their suggestions for ways to resolve the problem and prevent it from happening again in the future.

2. Talk with other teachers, administrators, and staff. Tell them about the bullying incident and also about your conversations with the bully, the victim, and any witnesses. Seek their advice and insights.
3. Contact the parents or guardians of both the bully and the victim. If possible, call them that day. Explain what happened, and arrange to meet with them at school as soon as schedules allow.



**Important:** You'll want to meet *separately* with each set of parents or guardians.

When talking to the victim's parents, let them know what happened and what was done to stop it. Explain your school policies and class rules regarding the bullying behavior, and tell them the consequences. Reassure them that bullying is not tolerated, and that you and the school are taking specific steps to prevent future incidents. Tell them that you will stay in touch with them and let them know how the situation is resolved.

You can share essentially the same information with the bully's parents. Tell them that you'll be working with their child to change his or her behavior—and you'll need their help.

Depending on the nature and severity of the bullying incident, you may want to have follow-up meetings with the parents to report on the progress being made.

4. Continue to communicate with your colleagues and the parents until the situation is clearly resolved. Monitor the bully's behavior in your classroom; ask other teachers to do the same in the halls, in the lunchroom, on the playground, etc. and report back to you on what they see. Tell them that you also want to hear *good* news about the student's behavior, not just bad news. At the same time, monitor the victim's safety.

## BE A GOOD LISTENER

If a student comes to you to report a bullying incident—as a witness or a victim—the first and most important thing you should do is *listen*.

It's estimated that we spend about 70 percent of our waking hours communicating (reading, writing, speaking, listening), and most of that time goes to listening. Yet we receive little or no training on how to listen. In school, we learn how to read, write, and speak . . . but not how to listen. We assume that listening "comes naturally."

There's an old saying: "We were born with one mouth and two ears because listening is twice as hard as talking." Here's how to be a good listener.

#### **DO:**

1. **Pay attention and be quiet.** Listening means not talking!
2. **Use attentive body language.** Face the speaker squarely, lean slightly toward him or her, and keep your arms and legs uncrossed.
3. **Make and maintain eye contact.** This allows you to pick up on the speaker's body language and facial expressions—important clues to how he or she is feeling.
4. **Be patient.** Allow time for the speaker to say what's on his or her mind. Especially if the speaker is embarrassed or uncomfortable, this might take a while. Also, people generally think faster than they speak. And students might not have the vocabulary or life experience needed to find precisely the right words.
5. **Ask for clarification if you need it.** Confirm the accuracy of what you're hearing. *Examples:* "I'm not sure I understand. Could you go over that again?" "Could you repeat that please?" "Can you tell me more about that?"
6. **Empathize.** Try to put yourself in the speaker's place and see his or her point of view.
7. **Ask questions to encourage the speaker and show that you're listening.** *Best:* Open-ended questions. *Worst:* Questions that require simple yes or no answers.
8. **Reflect the speaker's words and feelings from time to time.** *Examples:* "It sounds like you felt hurt when Marcy ignored you at recess." "I hear you saying you're angry because of how George treated you." Reflecting (also called mirroring) is simply paraphrasing what the speaker has

said—objectively, without interpretation, emotion, or embellishment.

9. **Mirror the speaker's feelings in your own face.** If the speaker looks sad, hurt, or angry, you should, too.
10. **At points along the way, summarize what you're hearing the speaker say.** Check with the speaker to make sure you've got it right. *Example:* "You're saying that Zach pushed you against your locker, and you dropped your books and papers on the floor, and then Zach stepped on your math book."
11. **Use encouraging body language.** Nod your head, smile, lean a little closer to the speaker (but not too close).
12. **Use brief interjections to indicate that you're listening.** *Examples:* "I see." "Go on." "Tell me more." "Uh-huh." "Really." "Hmmm." "What then?" "So. . ."
13. **Really concentrate on what the speaker is saying.** Stay focused on his or her words.
14. **Invite the speaker to name his or her feelings.** *Examples:* "When Marcus called you a bad name, how did you feel?" "When Su-Lin made fun of you in front of the others, how did you feel?"

If you listen intently, you should feel somewhat tired afterward. That's because listening is *active*, not *passive*.

#### **DON'T:**

1. **Talk.** This is not the time to offer your advice or opinions. Wait until *after* the speaker has finished talking or asks for your input.
2. **Interrupt.** You don't like being interrupted when you're talking. Interruptions are rude and disrespectful.
3. **Doodle.** You'll probably want to take notes, however. Tell the speaker why—because

you want to keep the facts straight and have a written record of your conversation.

4. **Tap your pen or pencil, shuffle papers, wiggle your foot, look at your watch, yawn, etc.** These behaviors indicate boredom.
5. **Argue with, criticize, or blame the speaker.** This puts him or her on the defensive.
6. **Mentally argue with the speaker or judge what he or she is saying.** This takes your focus off the speaker's words.
7. **Evaluate or challenge what the speaker is saying.** Just listen.
8. **Interrogate the speaker.** Ask questions for clarification, or to encourage the speaker to tell you more. Make sure your questions don't imply that you doubt what the speaker is saying.
9. **Allow distractions.** Turn off the television, radio, etc. Don't answer the telephone. If someone else approaches you and the speaker, politely but firmly say, "I'm listening to (student's name) right now. I'll have time for you when we're finished here."
10. **Think ahead to what you're going to say when the speaker stops talking.** This is called "rehearsing," and it takes your focus off the speaker.
11. **Let your mind wander.** Sometimes a speaker's words can trigger our own thoughts, memories, and associations. If you feel this happening, change your body position and use one of the "Do's" listed on page 87. This should get you back on track.
12. **Mentally compare what the speaker is saying with what you've heard from other students.** If you're gathering information about a bullying incident or series of incidents, take notes and compare your notes later.

*Tip:* You might share some or all of these do's and don'ts with your students. Knowing how to listen is a social skill that builds friendships.

## SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE

When you talk with a student who has been (or is being) bullied, you may find that the student blames himself or herself for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, provoking the bully, doing something to attract the bully's attention, or somehow "asking for it." Make it very clear that bullying is *never* caused by the victim. Tell the student:

- It's not your fault that you're being bullied.
- You didn't ask for it.
- You don't deserve it.
- You didn't do anything to cause it.
- Bullying isn't normal. It isn't okay.
- You don't have to face this on your own. I will help you. Other people will help you, too.

You might write these sentences on a card, sign it, and give it to the student. Or you might ask the student to repeat these sentences after you:

- "It's not my fault that I'm being bullied."
- "I didn't ask for it."
- "I don't deserve it."
- "I didn't do anything to cause it."
- "Bullying isn't normal. It isn't okay."
- "I don't have to face this on my own. My teacher will help me. Other people will help me, too."

Strong, positive statements like these can help students start feeling better about themselves—a bit more powerful and less like victims.\*

\* See also "Teach Students to Affirm Themselves" (page 66) and "Teach Positive Self-Talk" (pages 68 and 71).

## PROVIDE COUNSELING

Being bullied is a very traumatic experience. If at all possible, victims should have access to some type of counseling—by a school psychologist, guidance counselor, or another trained adult. Peer counseling can also help.

See if your school can start a group for victimized students—a place where they can interact with others, build their social and friendship-making skills, and practice getting along. Group meetings can be structured and focus on specific topics (avoiding fights, avoiding bullies, coping with stress, being assertive, etc.), or they can be less structured (students can talk freely about issues that are important to them).



**Go farther:** Learn how to organize groups (and find more than 100 complete 45-minute sessions) in *Child Support Through Small Group Counseling* by Lois Landy (Charlotte, NC: KIDSRIGHTS, 1996). Several states have added this book to their mandated lists for elementary and middle school counselors. See especially the "Peer Relations Group," "Self-Concept Group," and "Shyness Group" sections.

## EMPOWER PARENTS

As you work to make your classroom bully free, get students' parents involved and keep them informed. Parents can be your allies—and can also clue you in to bullying situations you might not be aware of.

Tell parents about your efforts to prevent and intervene with bullying in your classroom. You might do this at parent-teacher conferences, on Parents' Night, during open houses, and in notes you send home with students.

As early as possible during the school year, give parents copies of "Keeping Kids Bully Free: Tips for Parents" (pages 90–92).



**Important:** It's best to give this to parents in person. If this isn't possible, attach a brief cover letter introducing the handout and explaining why you're sending it home: because you believe *all* parents can benefit from this information. Otherwise you might alarm parents unnecessarily. If "Keeping Kids Bully Free" arrives out of the blue, a parent's first thought might be, "Oh no! This must mean that MY child is being bullied!" Preparation and explanation can prevent unnecessary worry and misunderstandings.

## MOBILIZE WITNESSES

According to Denver psychologist (and bullying expert) Carla Garrity, "You can outnumber the bullies if you teach the silent majority to stand up."

Most students are neither bullies nor victims. They're witnesses or bystanders—kids who might not know what to do and might be afraid to get involved. In some cases, they're the bully's "lieutenants" or "henchmen," offering support for the bully and sharing a bit of the bully's power without actually doing the bullying.

In one Canadian study, 43 percent of students said that they try to help the victim, 33 percent said they should help but don't, and 24 percent said that bullying was none of their business.\* If you can "mobilize the masses" to take action against bullying, you'll significantly reduce the bullying that occurs in your classroom and school.

## OFFER SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

Students can make a difference simply by the way they react when they witness bullying incidents. Share these suggestions with your students, and ask if they have ideas of their own.

\* SOURCE: A. Charach, D. Pepler, and S. Ziegler, "Bullying at school—a Canadian perspective: A survey of problems and suggestions for intervention," *Education Canada* 35:1 (1995), pp. 12–18.



## KEEPING KIDS BULLY FREE

### Tips for Parents

1. If you think your child is being bullied, *ask your child*. Many children won't volunteer this information; they're ashamed, embarrassed, or afraid. Adults need to take the initiative. Ask for specifics and write them down.

If you suspect that your child won't want to talk about being bullied, try approaching the topic indirectly. You might ask a series of questions like these:

- "So, who's the bully in your classroom?"
- "How do you know that person is a bully? What does he or she do?"
- "What do you think about that?"
- "Who does the bully pick on most of the time?"
- "Does the bully ever pick on you?"
- "What does the bully say or do to you? How does that make you feel?"

2. If your child tells you that he or she is being bullied, *believe your child*. Ask for specifics and write them down.

3. Please DON'T:

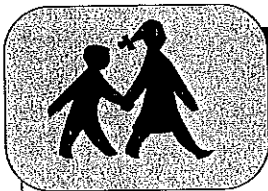
- confront the bully or the bully's parents. This probably won't help and might make things worse.
- tell your child to "get in there and fight." Bullies are always stronger and more powerful than their victims. Your child could get hurt.
- blame your child. Bullying is *never* the victim's fault.
- promise to keep the bullying secret. This gives the bully permission to keep bullying. Instead, tell your child you're glad that he or she told you about the bullying. Explain that you're going to help, and you're also going to ask the teacher to help.

4. Contact the teacher as soon as possible. Request a private meeting (no students should be around, and ideally no students except for your child should know that you're meeting with the teacher). Bring your written record of what your child has told you about the bullying, and share this information with the teacher. Ask for the teacher's perspective; he or she probably knows things about the bullying you don't. Ask to see a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy. Stay calm and be respectful; your child's teacher wants to help.

Ask what the teacher will do about the bullying. Get specifics. You want the teacher to:

- put a stop to the bullying
- have specific consequences for bullying in place, and apply them toward the bully


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## KEEPING KIDS BULLY FREE

### Tips for Parents (continued)


- help the bully change his or her behavior
- help your child develop bully resistance and assertiveness skills
- monitor your child's safety in the future
- keep you informed of actions taken and progress made

 **Important:** It takes time to resolve bullying problems. Try to be patient. The teacher will need to talk with your child, talk with the bully, talk with other children who might have witnessed the bullying, and then decide what's best to do for everyone involved.

5. Make a real effort to spend more positive time with your child than you already do. Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings. Ask your child how the day went. Praise your child as often as possible. Give your child opportunities to do well—by helping you with a chore, taking on new responsibilities, or showing off a talent or skill.
6. Help your child develop bully resistance skills. Role-play with your child what to say and do when confronted by a bully. Here are a few starter ideas:
  - Stand up straight, look the bully in the eye, and say in a firm, confident voice, "Leave me alone!" or "Stop that! I don't like that!"
  - Tell a joke or say something silly. (Don't make fun of the bully.)
  - Stay calm and walk away. If possible, walk toward a crowded place or a group of your friends.
  - If you feel you're in real danger, run away as fast as you can.
  - Tell an adult.

Ask your child's teacher or the school counselor for more suggestions. Also ask your child for suggestions. It's great if your child comes up with an idea, tries it, and it works!

7. Consider enrolling your child in a class on assertiveness skills, friendship skills, or self-defense. Check with your child's teacher or community resources—your local public library, YMCA or YWCA, community education, etc.

 **Important:** Self-defense classes aren't about being aggressive. They're about avoiding conflict through self-discipline, self-control, and improved self-confidence. Most martial arts teach that the first line of defense is nonviolence.

8. If your child seems to lack friends, arrange for him or her to join social groups, clubs, or organizations that meet his or her interests. This will boost your child's self-confidence and develop his or her social skills. Confident children with social skills are much less likely to be bullied.

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## KEEPING KIDS BULLY FREE

### Tips for Parents (continued)

9. Consider whether your child might be doing something that encourages bullies to pick on him or her. Is there a behavior your child needs to change? Does your child dress or act in ways that might provoke teasing? No one ever *deserves* to be bullied, but sometimes kids don't help themselves. Watch how your child interacts with others. Ask your child's teachers for their insights and suggestions.
10. Label everything that belongs to your child with his or her name. Things are less likely to be "lost" or stolen if they're labeled. Use sew-in labels or permanent marker.
11. Make sure your child knows that his or her safety is always more important than possessions (books, school supplies, toys, money, etc.). If your child is threatened by a bully, your child should give up what the bully wants—and tell an adult (you or the teacher) right away.
12. Encourage your child to express his or her feelings around you. Give your child permission to blow off steam, argue, and state opinions and beliefs that are different from yours. If you allow your child to stand up to you now and then, it's more likely that he or she will be able to stand up to a bully.
13. Check with your child often about how things are going. Once your child says that things are better or okay at school—the bullying has slowed down or stopped—you don't have to keep asking every day. Ask once every few days, or once a week. Meanwhile, watch for any changes in behavior that might indicate the bullying has started again.
14. If you're not already involved with your child's school, get involved. Attend parent-teacher conferences and school board meetings. Join the Parent-Teacher Association or Organization (PTA or PTO). Learn about school rules and discipline policies. Serve on a school safety committee. If you have the time, volunteer to help in your child's classroom.
15. Remember that *you* are your child's most important teacher. Discipline at home should be fair, consistent, age-appropriate, and respectful. Parents who can't control their temper are teaching their children that it's okay to yell, scream, and use physical violence to get their way. *Tip:* Many children who bully others come from homes where their parents bully *them*.



*If you want to stop bullying, you can:*

- refuse to join in
- refuse to watch
- speak out ("Don't treat him that way. It's not nice." "Stop hitting her." "Don't use those words." "Don't call him that name." "I'm going to tell the teacher right now.")
- report any bullying you know about or see
- stand up for the person being bullied and gather around him or her, or invite the person to join your group (there's safety in numbers)
- be a friend to the person being bullied
- make an effort to include students who are normally left out or rejected
- distract the bully so he or she stops the bullying behavior

Role-play various ways to react to bullying incidents.

### **PRAISE BULLY BUSTERS**

Encourage students to tell you about times when they intervened with bullying incidents or helped put a stop to bullying. Praise them for their courage—because it definitely takes courage to stand up to a bully, especially if you're one of the first to do it.

You might create a "Bully Busters" bulletin board with photographs of students who have taken action against bullying in your classroom or school. Make sure there's room to display everyone's picture eventually; that should be your goal.

### **HAVE STUDENTS SIGN A CLASS PLEDGE**

Make a copy of the "Class Pledge" (page 94). Introduce it by saying that *everyone* can help

your classroom become and stay bully free. Read the pledge aloud, then pass it around for everyone to sign. Post it in a prominent place in your classroom. Or turn the pledge into a large poster and invite students to decorate it as well as sign it.

## **ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

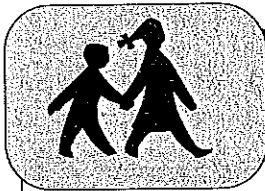
All students—especially those who have been or are being bullied—can benefit from facing life with a positive attitude. Encourage your students to look for what's good in their lives. This might be as simple as a sunrise, warm gloves on a cold day, or a puppy's wagging tail. Help them to see that no matter how bad things might seem at the moment, something good is waiting just around the corner.

Use stories of hope and courage to inspire students to feel optimistic and reach for the stars.

*Examples:\**

- *Champions: Stories of Ten Remarkable Athletes* by Bill Littlefield (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993). Grades 5-8.
- *Kids with Courage: True Stories About Young People Making a Difference* by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1992). Grades 6 and up.
- *Mirette on the High Wire* by Emily Arnold McCully (New York: The Putnam Publishing Group, 1992). Grades K-3.
- *Real Kids Taking the Right Risks: Plus How You Can, Too!* by Arlene Erlbach (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1998). Grades 4-8.
- *Ruth Law Thrills a Nation* by Don Brown (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993). Grades K-3.

\* Ask your school librarian or the children's librarian at your local public library to point you toward other appropriate books. Or check the latest issue of *The Bookfinder* or *The Best of Bookfinder: A Guide to Children's Literature About Interests and Concerns of Youth Ages 2-18*. Published by American Guidance Service, the *Bookfinders* group and describe books by topic. Ask for them at your library's reference desk.



## CLASS PLEDGE

1. We won't bully others.
2. We will help students who are being bullied.
3. We will include students who are left out.
4. We will report any bullying we know about or see.

SIGNED:

## BUILD STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM

Most bullying victims have low self-esteem. Here are six ways you can build self-esteem in *all* of your students.\*

### STAR CHARTS

Create a separate chart for each student. Whenever he or she does something positive or helpful, write it on the chart and decorate it with a star. Or create charts listing specific positive/helpful behaviors you want to encourage in your classroom.

### FEEL-GOOD POSTERS

Create a poster for each student (or have students create their own posters). Put a photograph of the student at the center. Surround it with positive comments about the student. Display the posters in the classroom; they'll be especially noticed and appreciated on Parents' Night and at open houses.

### FEEL-GOOD LISTS

Make copies of the handout "My Feel-Good List" (page 96). Complete the first column for each student, then invite students to complete the second column. They can share their lists or keep them private—whatever they prefer.

*Tip:* If any students have difficulty completing their columns, offer help. Make simple suggestions. *Examples:* "Everyone has talents, and so do you. What are some of your talents? What are you good at? What do you do best?" They can also take their handouts home and ask their parents and siblings for help.

Tell students that whenever they feel down or sad, they can look at their lists and feel better about themselves.

\* See also "Affirm Your Students" (pages 65–66), "Teach Students to Affirm Themselves" (page 66), "Teach Students to Affirm Each Other" (pages 66–68), and "Teach Positive Self-Talk" (pages 68 and 71). There are many books and resources available on helping students build self-esteem, develop self-confidence, and form a positive self-concept. Several are listed in "Resources" at the end of this book.

### SELF-ESTEEM BOOSTERS

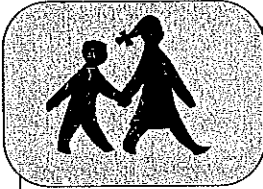
Ask students, "What are specific things you can do to feel good about yourself?" Write students' ideas on the chalkboard. If they have difficulty getting started or run out of ideas too soon, you might suggest some of the following:

- use positive self-talk (see "Teach Positive Self-Talk," pages 68 and 71)
- learn a new skill
- develop/strengthen a skill you already have
- start a new hobby
- join a club or group that interests you
- earn money from doing a job or chore
- volunteer to help someone (see "Get Students Involved in Service," pages 73–75)
- read a book
- get involved in a cause you care about
- take a class in self-defense
- exercise every day
- make a new friend
- be more assertive (see "Teach Assertiveness Skills," pages 53–54)
- get more sleep

Once you've written a list of ideas on the board, have students read it over (or read it aloud to the class) and choose 3–5 ideas they might like to try. Have them write the ideas in a notebook or on a sheet of paper. Encourage them to try the ideas as soon as possible; offer to help them find resources, get in touch with groups or organizations, etc. Wait a few days (or a week), then ask students to report on their progress.

### CHOICES

Whenever possible, give students opportunities to make choices—all kinds of choices. They might decide where to sit, how to arrange their



## MY FEEL-GOOD LIST

**10 things my teacher  
likes about me:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**10 things I like  
about myself:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

desks, what types of projects to work on (written reports, oral reports, art projects, etc.). Even if their choices aren't always successful, find something positive about them to recognize. If you must comment on a poor choice (with the goal of helping students make better choices next time), do it privately, not publicly.

### THEY'RE THE TEACHERS

Set aside time to learn with and from your students. Let them tell you about their interests, demonstrate their skills, talents, and abilities, and show off a little. Give them opportunities to do things better than you; students delight in this, and it gives them a major self-esteem boost.

## TEACH POSITIVE VISUALIZATION

Let your students in on the secret of "mind over matter." Arnold Schwarzenegger once said, "As long as you can envision the fact that you can do something, you can do it—as long as you really believe it 100 percent."

It's a fact that many successful athletes have improved their performance with positive visualization—mentally "seeing" themselves succeed. *Examples:* golfer Jack Nicklaus, champion boxer Muhammad Ali, skier Jean-Claude Killy, and tennis stars Billie Jean King and Virginia Wade.

In a famous experiment, an Australian basketball team divided into three groups. All three wanted to be able to shoot more baskets.

- Group 1 practiced taking foul shots for 30 minutes every day. After 20 days, they noticed a 24 percent improvement.
- Group 2 did nothing. They noticed a 0 percent improvement.
- Group 3 practiced mentally. These players didn't actually shoot baskets. Instead, they imagined themselves shooting baskets. They noticed a 23 percent improvement—

nearly as great as Group 1, who practiced for 30 minutes every day.

Learn about positive visualization and mental imagery. Teach your students how to use it—especially those who are or have been victims of bullying, or who lack friends, social skills, and self-esteem.

*Example:* Teach students to see/imagine themselves getting along with others. With practice, they'll project an attitude of confidence and acceptance, which will improve their chances of fitting in. *Tip:* The more details they can imagine, the better. Can they picture themselves walking into a room? Smiling at people? Saying hello? Can they see people smiling back at them? What do they look like? What are they wearing? What are they saying? How does it feel to be in a group of smiling, welcoming people?



*Go farther:* Read *Self-Esteem* (revised edition) by Matthew McKay, Ph.D., and Patrick Fanning (New York: St. Martin's, 1994). This step-by-step program for building self-esteem includes a detailed description of how to use visualization for self-acceptance.

## PLAY A "POSITIVE SELF-TALK" GAME

Write a series of put-downs or nasty names on individual slips of paper. Or invite your students to do this, but be sure to read the names before you use them to make sure they're not *too* nasty (or obscene, personal, specific, racist, etc.).

Drop the slips into a hat. Invite one student to draw a slip out of the hat and give it to you. Write the put-down or name on the chalkboard.

Tell the class that they have your permission to call the student that name (or use the put-down) *just for now* because you're going to play a game.

Have the class form two lines with enough space between them for you and the student to

walk comfortably. As you and the student walk through the group, the other students call him or her the name (or use the put-down). Meanwhile, you whisper positive comments in the student's ear. *Examples:* "You're not like that." "You can stay calm." "Don't believe what they say." "You're more mature than they are."

Next, the student walks back through the group alone, using positive self-talk ("I'm not like that," "I can stay calm," etc.).

Repeat this game with the other students. Afterward, talk about how they felt when you whispered positive comments to them, and when they used positive self-talk.

For more tips on helping students develop this powerful skill, see "Teach Positive Self-Talk" (pages 68 and 71).

## HELP STUDENTS ACCEPT THEIR DIFFERENCES

If you and your students did the "Build Acceptance" activity (pages 16 and 19), students learned ways to accept each other. Victims and potential victims also need to know how to accept themselves.

Most bullying victims are "different" from the majority in one or more ways. Bullies zero in on differences and make them the focus of their attacks. Kids are bullied for being too tall, too short, too thin, or too heavy; for having a physical disability or learning difference; for belonging to ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious groups that aren't the "norm"; for having special needs . . . for almost any reason that sets them apart.

How can you help students accept themselves? Here are several ideas to try. Ask other teachers and experts (your school counselor, local spokespersons, etc.) for more suggestions.

- Model acceptance and affirmation by learning as much as you can about your students' differences. Invite them to educate you.
- When assigning projects and reports, allow students to research their differences. A student who wears glasses might report on the history of eyeglasses . . . and identify famous people in history who have worn them. A student with a chronic illness might contact a national organization, learn about other people who have his or her illness, and share their stories. Encourage students to identify reasons to be proud of their differences, and/or positive ways to cope with their differences.
- Help students identify role models who share their differences. (*Examples:* Tom Cruise, Whoopi Goldberg, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, former U.S. president George Bush, and race car driver Jackie Stewart all have something in common: dyslexia.)
- Ask your librarian or media specialist to recommend books and other resources related to your students' differences. Incorporate them into lessons and displays. *Example:* Look for *Succeeding with LD (Learning Differences)* by Jill Lauren, M.A. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1997). Read 20 inspiring true stories about people with LD.
- On the Web, check out DisabilityInfo.gov, a gateway site to government resources for people with all kinds of disabilities. Go to: [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov)
- Overweight students are often picked on and rejected, especially if they lack social skills. You might want to contact the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) for information about its Kids' Project. A nonprofit human rights organization, NAAFA has been working since 1969 to eliminate discrimination based on body size. Write or call: NAAFA, PO Box 188620, Sacramento, CA

95818; telephone (916) 558-6880. On the Web, go to: [www.naafa.org](http://www.naafa.org)

- Are there local support groups for people with disabilities and other differences? Find out and get in touch with them. You might invite a speaker to visit your class or school.
- Make it a privilege for students to help those with special needs.
- As a class or a school, raise funds to buy a piece of equipment or other resources to help students with special needs.
- Help students talk more openly about their differences. A willingness to talk indicates a positive attitude and acceptance, which serves as an example for others. Students who are embarrassed or ashamed of their differences can become targets for bullies.
- Help students develop a sense of humor. Kids who can laugh at themselves are better able to cope with teasing. Humor can also defuse potentially volatile situations.

## SEE YOUR CLASSROOM THROUGH YOUR STUDENTS' EYES

Students who are bullied often say that adults "never noticed" the way they were treated. Try seeing your classroom (and yourself) through your students' eyes.

Watch how students interact. Listen to how they talk to each other. If you were a child, would you be comfortable in your classroom? Would you feel safe, welcome, accepted, and free to learn? Is this a place where you could be and do your best without feeling threatened, intimidated, or excluded? Would you feel as if the teacher were approachable—as if the teacher would really listen if you reported a problem or asked for help?

Try being a student for an hour (or a day). Have your students teach the lessons and manage the class. You might learn a great deal about how they see you.

## SHARE TIPS FOR STAYING BULLY FREE

Make several copies of "Ways to Stay Bully Free" (page 100). Cut along the dotted lines and give one card to each student. (*Tips:* Make copies on heavy paper or thin cardboard. Laminate them for durability.) Spend class time discussing the ideas listed on the cards. Students can keep the cards in their pockets or backpacks and review them whenever they need ideas or reminders.



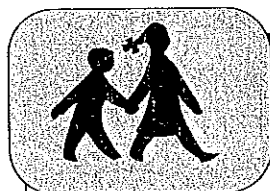
**Go farther:** Get a classroom copy of *Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain*, written and illustrated by Trevor Romain (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1997). With wit and humor, this little book teaches children ages 8–13 ways to become bully-proof.

## TRY THE METHOD OF SHARED CONCERN

The Method of Shared Concern is a nonpunitive, counseling-based intervention model that was developed by Swedish psychologist Anatol Pikas in the 1980s. It has since been used successfully in many parts of the world.

It involves conducting structured interviews with individual bullies, during which they are asked to take responsibility for their actions and commit to more responsible behavior. Interviews are also done with victims and then with groups of bullies and victims together.

This method is not designed to teach children how to make friends, or to reveal detailed facts about the bullying situation. It is designed to



## WAYS TO STAY BULLY FREE

### WAYS TO STAY BULLY FREE

Avoid bullies  
 Act confident  
 Look confident  
 Be observant  
 Tell a friend  
 Tell an adult  
 Be assertive  
 Stay calm  
 Keep a safe distance  
 Walk away  
 Say "Stop it!"  
 Say "Leave me alone!"  
 Say "Whatever!"  
 Use humor  
 Use "I messages"  
 Travel in a group  
 Join a group  
 If you're in danger, RUN

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 If you're in danger, RUN

### WAYS TO STAY BULLY FREE

Avoid bullies  
 Act confident  
 Look confident  
 Be observant  
 Tell a friend  
 Tell an adult  
 Be assertive  
 Stay calm  
 Keep a safe distance  
 Walk away  
 Say "Stop it!"  
 Say "Leave me alone!"  
 Say "Whatever!"  
 Use humor  
 Use "I messages"  
 Travel in a group  
 Join a group  
 If you're in danger, RUN




change the situation by getting children to change their behavior.

Shared Concern seems to be most effective with children age 9 and older, but it has also been used with younger children. It involves a three-stage interviewing and meeting process:\*

1. individual interviews with each child
2. follow-up interviews with each child
3. a group meeting

### PRELIMINARIES

1. Determine that a bullying situation exists—that one or more children are being bullied by another child or group, and that this has been going on for a period of time.
2. Get reliable information about who is involved, and identify the ringleader of the bullies.
3. Talk to the teachers of the bullies and the victims. Schedule interviews with the children. Ask the teachers not to alert the children that they will be interviewed. They should simply send the children to the interviews as scheduled.

 **Important:** Plan to conduct all of the interviews in sequence, without a break, so the children involved don't have the opportunity to talk to each other between interviews.


4. Arrange to do the interviews in a room where you'll have privacy and won't be interrupted. It's best if there are no windows. If windows can't be avoided, the child being interviewed should sit with his or her back to the window.
5. Know and understand your role. Throughout the interviews, you will be a nonjudgmental facilitator who encourages children to consider their own behav-

\* The procedure and guidelines described here are adapted from *Tackling Bullying in Your School*, edited by Sonia Sharp and Peter K. Smith (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 79-88. Used with permission.

iors and the consequences of their behaviors, then suggest alternate behaviors. *Notes:* Young children may find it difficult to come up with ideas; you may need to offer suggestions. Girls seem to have a hard time finding a middle ground between "friends" and "enemies." You may need to explain that they're not being asked to make the other children their "best friends."

### INITIAL INTERVIEWS (7-10 minutes each)

Interview the ringleader first, then the rest of the bullies (if a group is involved), then the children who are being bullied. See the guidelines and sample scripts on pages 102-103.

 **Important:** The interviews must be non-confrontational. Students should appear relaxed when they return to class.

Each interview should end with the child agreeing to try his or her own suggestion(s) during the following week.

### FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS (3 minutes each)

The purpose of the follow-up meetings is to determine whether the children did what they agreed to during the initial interviews. If they did, congratulate them and invite them to the group meeting.

Sometimes bullies don't try the suggestions they agreed to try—but they do leave the victims alone. If this is the case, congratulate them and invite them to the group meeting. Leaving the victims alone is an important change in behavior.

### GROUP MEETING (30 minutes)

The purpose of the group meeting is to maintain the changes made since the initial interviews.

1. Meet with the bullies first. Ask them to think of something positive they can say to the victims.



## INTERVIEWING A BULLY: GUIDELINES AND SAMPLE SCRIPT

*Start by saying:*

I hear you have been nasty to (student's name). Tell me about it.

*The bully will probably deny this. Follow up immediately with:*

Yes, but nasty things have been happening to (student's name). Tell me about it.

*Listen to what the bully tells you. Be patient; give him or her time to think, and don't worry about lengthy silences. If the child doesn't respond after a significant period of time has elapsed, say:*

It seems that you don't want to talk today. You'd better go back to class now.

*He or she might start talking at this point. If so, just listen. Don't accuse or blame. Avoid asking questions. Try to determine if the child feels justified in his or her behavior toward the victim. The child might feel quite angry toward the victim. Work toward an understanding that the victim is having a bad time, whoever is to blame. Say with force and emphasis:*

So, it sounds like (student's name) is having a bad time in school.

*By now, the child should assent to this. Move on quickly to say:*

Okay. I was wondering what you could do to help (student's name) in this situation.

*See what solution the child can come up with. Be encouraging. If the child never offers a solution, ask:*

Would you like me to make a suggestion?

*If the child offers a solution that depends on someone else's efforts (yours or the victim's), say:*

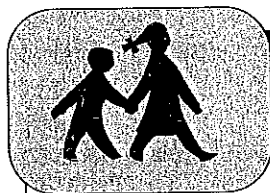
I was thinking about what you could do. What could you do?

*If the child makes an impractical suggestion, don't reject it. Instead, ask:*

So, if this happened, the bullying would stop?

*When the child proposes a practical and relevant solution, say:*

Excellent. You try that out for a week, and we'll meet again and see how you've done. Good-bye for now.



## INTERVIEWING VICTIMS: SAMPLE SCRIPTS

### NONPROVOCATIVE VICTIM

**Teacher:** Hello, Matthew. Sit down. I want to talk with you because I hear some nasty things have been happening to you.

**Child:** Yes. It's the others in my class. They just keep on picking on me. They won't leave me alone. They mess around with my bag . . . putting stuff in it.

**Teacher:** You sound as if you're fed up with it.

**Child:** It just doesn't stop. The rest of the class joins in now.

**Teacher:** Is there anything you can think of that might help the situation?

**Child:** I could change schools.

**Teacher:** Mmm. So you feel it would be better to get out of the situation altogether.

**Child:** Well, sometimes. But I don't suppose my mother would let me. They're not so bad when I hang around with Simon.

**Teacher:** So being with someone else helps the situation?

**Child:** Yes. He backs me up when I tell them to stop it.

**Teacher:** So he supports you?

**Child:** Yes. I could sit next to him.

**Teacher:** Okay. You do that over the next week and then we'll have another chat to see how things have been going. Okay? Good-bye.

### PROVOCATIVE VICTIM

**Teacher:** Hello, Matthew. Sit down. I want to talk with you because I hear some nasty things have been happening to you.

**Child:** Yes. It's the others in my class. They just keep on picking on me. They won't leave me alone. They mess around with my bag . . . putting stuff in it.

**Teacher:** You sound as if you're fed up with it.

**Child:** It just doesn't stop. The rest of the class joins in now.

**Teacher:** Tell me more about what happens. How does it all start?

**Child:** It's usually when I go over and sit by them. They just can't take a joke.

**Teacher:** So you play jokes on them?

**Child:** Yes, just messing around. I go on really good vacations and they never do so I ask them where they are going . . . it makes them really mad. They're just jealous.

**Teacher:** Then they get angry with you. What happens when they get angry with you?

**Child:** Well, that's when they started messing around with my bag.

**Teacher:** Is there anything you can think of that might help the situation?

**Child:** I guess I could leave them alone.

**Teacher:** Okay. You do that over the next week and then we'll have another chat to see how things have been going. Okay? Good-bye.

2. Ask the victims to enter the room. Place their chairs where they won't have to walk past the bullies to reach their seats.
3. Have the bullies say their positive statements.
4. Congratulate everyone on their success—they have made the bullying situation better than it was.
5. Ask everyone how they can maintain this new and improved situation.
6. Ask them what they will do if the bullying starts again.
7. Introduce the idea of tolerance—being in the same school and classroom without quarreling, accepting each other's differences, coexisting peaceably (but without necessarily being friends).

It might not be necessary to meet again for several weeks. Monitor the situation and call an interim meeting if needed.

## TRY THE NO BLAME APPROACH

Developed by Barbara Maines and George Robinson, the No Blame Approach encourages children to take responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their actions. Like the Method of Shared Concern (see pages 99 and 101–104), this is a nonpunitive intervention model that involves children directly in resolving a bullying situation.\*

### Step 1: Interview the bullied child

Talk with the child about his or her feelings. Do not question the child directly about the bully-

\* This description is adapted from *School Bullying: Insights and Perspectives*, edited by Peter K. Smith and Sonia Sharp (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 88–89. Used with permission.

ing incident(s), but do try to establish who is involved.

### Step 2: Arrange a meeting for all the children who are involved

Set up a meeting for all the children who are directly involved. Include children who joined in but did not directly bully the victim.

### Step 3: Explain the problem

Tell the children how the bullied child is feeling. You may want to use a drawing, poem, or other piece of writing by the child to illustrate his or her feelings. Do not discuss the details of the incident or blame any of the bullying students.

### Step 4: Share responsibility

State clearly that you know the group is responsible and can do something about it. Focus on resolving the problem rather than blaming the children.

### Step 5: Identify solutions

Ask each child in turn to suggest a way in which he or she could help the bullied child feel happier in school. Show approval of the suggestions, but don't ask the children to promise to implement them or go into detail about how they will implement them.

### Step 6: The students take action themselves

End the meeting by giving responsibility to the group to solve the problem. Arrange a time and place to meet again and find out how successful they have been.

### Step 7: Meet with them again

After about a week, see each student and ask how things have been going. It is usually better to see them individually in order to avoid any new group accusations about who helped and who didn't. The important thing is to ascertain that the bullying has stopped and the bullied student is feeling better.

## ENCOURAGE STRONG FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Do as much as you can to support closeness and togetherness in your students' families.

*Examples:*

- Work with other teachers and staff to schedule open houses, family nights, and other events that welcome parents and students.
- Bring in speakers who talk about family life and issues.
- Invite students to attend parent-teacher conferences with their parents.
- Regularly call or write to parents. Let them know about their children's progress. Report on something special their children did—something that deserves praise and recognition.
- Have students interview their parents for homework assignments.

## ENCOURAGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ADULTS

When students develop close relationships with adults—not only their parents, but also other family and community members—they learn important social skills and build their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is important for *all* students, and can be especially beneficial to those who lack social skills and are victims or potential victims of bullying.

### SCHOOL STAFF

Do teachers, administrators, and other staff members make the effort to get to know students? Do they sponsor clubs, coach teams, supervise before-school and after-school activities, and/or lead discussion groups for kids? Do

they take time to listen to students' concerns and offer support and advice? Talk with your coworkers. What can you do individually and together to form positive, meaningful relationships with students?

Enlist the help of all school employees in making students feel welcome, accepted, and appreciated. Custodians, cafeteria workers, librarians, office personnel, and others can greet students by name, share a kind word with them, and intervene if they see a student being mistreated.

Encourage school staff to find ways for students with low self-esteem or poor social skills to shine. *Examples:* A student could deliver the principal's telephone messages or help younger children do library research.

### GRANDPARENTS

Encourage students to spend time with their grandparents, sharing their problems and concerns as well as their achievements.

Because many of your students might not be in regular contact with their grandparents, consider establishing an Adopt-a-Grandparent program in cooperation with a local nursing home or retirement center.

Arrange for your class to visit their adopted grandparents regularly. Bring class plays, presentations, and musical performances to them. Make artwork for the grandparents' rooms and send them cards on special occasions. Invite all grandparents to visit your students at school and volunteer in your classroom and on field trips.

### CLUBS, GROUPS, TROOPS, AND TEAMS

Gather information about local and national clubs, groups, troops, teams, and organizations led by caring adults. *Examples:*

#### Boy Scouts of America

Contact your local council or visit the Web site: [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)

#### Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Contact your local club or visit the Web site: [www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org)

### Camp Fire Boys and Girls

Contact your local council or visit the Web site:  
[www.campfire.org](http://www.campfire.org)

### 4-H

Contact your local program or visit the Web site:  
[www.4-h.org](http://www.4-h.org)

### Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Contact your local council or visit the Web site:  
[www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org)

### Girls Incorporated

Contact your local affiliate or visit the Web site:  
[www.girlsinc.org](http://www.girlsinc.org)

You might also invite representatives to visit your class, tell about their organizations, and talk with your students.



**Go farther:** Check out the *Directory of American Youth Organizations* online at the National Youth Development information Center's site ([www.nydic.org](http://www.nydic.org)). This guide lists and describes more than 500 hobby groups, academic and sports clubs, character-building and service groups, organizations for peace and global understanding, conservation and humane education groups, and more for young people—all adult-sponsored and national in scope.

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Start a card file or computer database of people in your community who are willing to spend time with students—exploring shared interests, helping kids develop their talents, and making a difference in their lives. Pair interested students with caring adults.



**Important:** You'll want to get parents' permission and take all safety precautions. Check with your principal about how to proceed.

## MENTORS

Kids of all ages have formed strong relationships with mentors—caring adults who make active, positive contributions to their lives. You might find out if teachers, administrators,

and other school staff are willing to serve as mentors; match them up with students who share their interests and arrange for them to spend time together. Parents might be available to mentor other students in your class.

To learn more about mentoring and mentorships, contact these organizations:

### Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

The oldest mentoring organization serving youth in the country, BBBSA has provided one-to-one mentoring relationships between adult volunteers and children at risk since 1904. BBBSA currently serves over 100,000 children and youth in more than 500 agencies throughout all of the United States. Contact your local office or visit the Web site: [www.bbbsa.org](http://www.bbbsa.org)

### The National Mentoring Partnership

A resource for mentors and mentoring initiatives nationwide, the National Mentoring Partnership forges partnerships with communities and organizations to promote mentoring. It also educates youth and adults about how to find and become mentors. Write or call: The National Mentoring Partnership, 1600 Duke Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314; telephone (703) 224-2200. Or visit the Web site: [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

## PROVIDE SAFE HAVENS

Students who are bullied at school need places to go where they feel safe and accepted. Work with other teachers, your principal, and staff to set aside a special room or place where all students are welcome. Provide adequate supervision. Older students can help run a quiet activities room.

If space in your school is tight, you might identify a corner of the media center or cafeteria as a safe haven. Or use your classroom Peace Place (see page 58).



**Go farther:** Find out about McGruff houses or block parent programs in the

neighborhoods where your students live, then let students know that these havens exist. A McGruff House is a safe place especially for kids who are bullied, followed, or hurt while walking in a neighborhood. It has a picture of McGruff the Crime Dog and the words "McGruff House" in a window or on a door. For neighborhoods that don't have McGruff houses or programs, talk with parents and encourage them to work with their neighbors or police department to start them. For more information about McGruff, write or call: National Crime Prevention Council, 1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 13th Floor, Washington, DC 20036; telephone (202) 466-6272. On the Web, go to: [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

## PLAY "WHAT IF?"

Lead class discussions, small group discussions, or role-plays around "What If?" questions. *Examples:*

- What if you're walking down the hall and someone calls you a bad name?
- What if someone tries to make you give him (or her) your lunch money?
- What if someone picks a fight with you?
- What if someone pushes you down on the playground?
- What if someone spreads a nasty rumor about you?

Invite students to contribute their own "What If?" questions to talk about or act out. Don't be surprised if this takes an interesting twist. The questions students offer might relate to real bullying incidents they have experienced or witnessed—and you haven't heard about until now.

As students come up with suggestions or role-play possible ways of coping with problem situations, remind them that bullies enjoy having control over their victims. They target

individuals who are physically weaker and lack confidence. Guide students to come up with answers that are assertive, confident, and strong—and, at the same time, aren't likely to make things worse.

*Tip:* If you and your students haven't done the "Explore Ways to Deal with Bullies" activity (page 41), you might want to do this before playing "What If?"

## EQUALIZE THE POWER

Bully-victim relationships always involve the unequal distribution of power. Bullies have it, victims don't—or bullies have most of it and victims have very little.

Look for opportunities to boost the power of students who are bullied or at risk for being bullied. *Examples:*

- Praise them sincerely, appropriately, and publicly.
- Learn their skills and areas of expertise, then suggest that other students consult them as "experts" on a topic.
- Show that you trust them and have confidence in their abilities. From time to time, give them special tasks to do. Make sure these are tasks that other students would find desirable and enjoyable. Assigning "busy work" or "grunt jobs" further stigmatizes victims and potential victims.

Equalizing the power can be a delicate balance. You'll want to offer victims chances to succeed—but without making them "teacher's pets." (See also "Give Them Opportunities to Shine," page 108.) Be careful not to pit victims and bullies against each other as you're handing out praise and special tasks. This might make the bully even more determined to show the victim who's in charge.

## GET STUDENTS INVOLVED IN GROUPS

Students who are bullied have plenty of experience feeling isolated, excluded, rejected, and afraid. They need experience feeling welcome, safe, and accepted.

You might start a counseling group (see "Provide Counseling," page 89) for *any* students who need help making friends and practicing social skills—not just bullying victims. Other types of groups to consider are:

- a peer support group
- a new student orientation group
- a cooperative learning group
- a special interest group or club

For students who aren't ready to integrate with their peers during unstructured times (such as recess), you might start a club that meets at those times. This approach has been used effectively in England. Meetings can be structured around specific topics (how to make friends, how to stand up to bullies, etc.), or students can learn and practice social skills. Some of the meetings should be set aside for fun and play.

This club also provides an alternative for students who are new to the school and not yet comfortable or confident on the playground. The club should provide a well-supervised environment that allows and encourages friendships to form. Once they do, students may be less reluctant to go outside and play.

You can also suggest that students get involved with groups, clubs, and youth-serving organizations in your community. For starter ideas, see pages 105–106. Parents can also arrange these opportunities for their children; you might raise the topic during a parent-teacher conference. The goals of any group involvement should be to develop the student's peer support network, self-confidence, and social skills.

## GIVE THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO SHINE

Increase students' social contacts by giving them specific responsibilities that are social in nature. *Examples:* tutoring other students on the computer, working in the school office, mentoring younger students, reading aloud to younger students, being in charge of group projects. This offers them opportunities to interact with others, help their peers, and demonstrate their skills. Plus assigning students these responsibilities shows that you trust and accept them. (See also "Equalize the Power," page 107.)

Help students discover and develop their talents and skills. This boosts their self-confidence and increases their standing among their peers. *Example:* If one of your students enjoys making kites, he or she could bring some examples for show-and-tell, teach other students what he or she knows, and lead a project on kite-making related to a science or geography lesson.

## HAVE STUDENTS KEEP JOURNALS

Writing is a way to get in touch with our feelings, record events in our lives, formalize our plans and goals, and explore what's important to us. For students who are bullied, writing is a way to regain some of the power they've lost—and keep track of important details (what happened when, who did or said what) that you and other adults can use to stop the bullying and prevent future bullying. Written records make bullying easier to prove.

If possible, give students spiral-bound notebooks or small blank journaling books.\* In one-on-one or small group meetings, explain or demonstrate some of the ways they might use

\* See also "Weekly Journaling" (pages 38–39).



their journals. Or give them a topic to write about each week. *Examples:*

- a time when I was bullied (what happened, who was there, how I felt about it, what I did about it)
- a list of people I can talk to about my problems—people I trust
- a list of people I can count on to help me
- a list of things I can say when a bully teases me or calls me names
- a list of funny things I can say to a bully
- ways to build my self-esteem
- good things I can tell myself (positive self-talk)

Students might use their journals to tell you about things that are happening in their lives—things they don't feel comfortable talking about.

## TEACH PLANNING SKILLS

Students can learn to dodge potential bullying situations by planning ahead. With the whole class or in small groups, work with students to brainstorm ways to avoid bullies, ways to stay safe in their everyday lives, and ways to be more observant. *Examples:*

- When you're walking down the hall and you see a bully, don't make eye contact. Stay as far away from the bully as you can. Try to keep other people between you. If possible, turn and go in a different direction.
- Travel in groups. When you're on the playground, stay close to a friend or two. When you're in the lunchroom, sit with kids who are friendly to you.
- Make a list of places where you feel unsafe. Plan to stay away from those places. If

that's not possible, make sure you never go to those places alone. This might mean changing your route to school, avoiding parts of the playground, or only using common rooms or bathrooms when other people are around.

- If you notice a bully coming toward you, walk calmly but quickly in the opposite direction.
- Stay away from anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable, anxious, scared, worried, or nervous.
- When you're walking in a public place, don't look at the ground. Look around you and notice who else is there.
- Always let a trusted friend or caring adult know where you're going.
- Stick with a group, even if they aren't your friends.

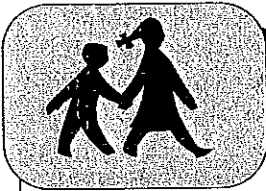
Distribute copies of "Planning Ahead" (page 110). Students can complete them on their own, or work in pairs or small groups. Afterward, share and discuss responses. Praise students for coming up with good ideas.

## TEACH POWER SKILLS

Teach these skills to students you believe are ready to go beyond the basics (stay calm, walk away, join a group, tell an adult). Use demonstration, discussion, role-playing, and plenty of guided practice. *Note:* Some students may be too timid to try these approaches. If that's the case, don't force it.

### 1. Agree with everything the bully says

*Examples:* "Yes, that's true." "You're right." "I see what you mean." "You are absolutely 100 percent correct! I am a wimp!"



## PLANNING AHEAD

**Ways to avoid bullies:**

**Ways to stay safe:**

**Ways to be observant:**

## 2. Disarm the bully with humor

Laugh and walk away. Or laugh and don't walk away. Act as if the two of you are sharing a good joke. Play along. When the bully starts laughing, you can say something like, "Wow, that was fun! See you later. Gotta go!"

Turn a put-down into a joke. *Example:* "You called me a wimp. You're right; I need to lift weights more often."

When a bully mocked her stutter, one student replied, "If you can't st-st-stutter better than that, I'll have t-t-to g-g-give you l-l-lessons."

## 3. Bore the bully with questions

*Examples:* "I'm a wimp? What do you mean by that? How do you know I'm a wimp? Do you know any other wimps? Have you compared me to them? Am I more or less wimpy than they are? What exactly is a wimp, anyway?"

## 4. Be a broken record

Whatever the bully says, say the same thing in response . . . over and over and over again. *Examples:*

Bully: "You're a wimp."  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "Yeah, and I'm right."  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "So what are you going to do about it?"  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "You'd better shut up."  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "I'm getting sick of you."  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "I mean it! Shut up!"  
You: "That's your opinion."  
Bully: "Oh, forget it!"

Bully: "You want to fight?"  
You: "I don't do that."  
Bully: "That's because you're a wimp."  
You: "I don't do that."  
Bully: "You're too scared to fight. You're chicken."  
You: "I don't do that."  
Bully: "I'll bet I can make you fight."  
You: "I don't do that."

Bully: "What's with you? Is that all you can say?"

You: "I don't do that."

Bully: "Oh, forget it!"

## 5. Just say no

*Examples:* "You can't have this toy. I'm playing with it now." "You can't have my lunch. I'm eating it." "You can't have my money. I need it to buy lunch later." "You can't have my pencil. I need it. Give it back."

## 6. Use "fogging"

If being assertive and telling a bully to stop calling you names doesn't work, try responding with short, bland words and phrases that neutralize the situation. *Examples:* "Possibly." "You might be right." "It might look that way to you." "Maybe." "That's your opinion."

## 7. Use "Nonreward Retort Strategies"

These strategies were developed by Dorothea M. Ross, Ph.D., to empower children to combat teasing on their own.\*

- **Exhaust the topic.** Stay calm and confident. Respond to the bully by asking questions after each put-down that require the bully to explain or expand on his or her comments. *Example:* "You called me 'fatso.' What do you mean by 'fatso'? Can you explain how big a person has to be in order to be fat? How many students in our school are fat?" The bully may get tired of the questioning and walk away.
- **Make an asset of the topic.** If a bully targets a difference and uses it as a topic for put-downs, turn the difference into an asset. *Example:* A student lost his hair after a series of medical treatments. A bully started teasing him about it. The student explained that a lot of famous people are bald, and he hoped he'd stay bald at least

\* Reprinted from *Childhood Bullying and Teasing* by Dorothea M. Ross, Ph.D. (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 1996), © ACA. Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction authorized without written permission of the American Counseling Association.

until Halloween. This took the bully by surprise, and he stopped the teasing.

- **Give the teaser permission to tease.**  
*Example:* "It's okay to say whatever you want. It doesn't bother me."

## 8. Use "Punishment Retort Strategies"

Here are more strategies developed by Dorothea M. Ross, Ph.D., to empower children to combat teasing on their own.\*

- Act like you can't remember the bully's name.
- Respond with a comment like, "It takes one to know one." Then turn and walk away, saying, "I'll leave and let you think about that."
- Reverse the teasing. Give the bully the same put-down.
- Call the bully by name and ask, "What did you say?" and "Could you say that again?" The bully may repeat what he or she said two or three times. Then you, in a condescending manner, say something like "Good boy, Sam! You said that three times."
- Make the bully look foolish when he or she says the obvious. *Example:* "He noticed that I don't have any hair. Wow!"
- Make the bully look ignorant about medical conditions. Correct the bully by giving accurate information about your medical condition. Then say something like, "You must not read much, or you'd know that."
- Make fun of the bully for repeating taunts. Nod when the bully says something, then wait for the bully to repeat himself or herself. Then say something like, "You keep saying the same thing over and over. Can you say it in a different way, or even sing it?"

\* Ibid.

- Anticipate the bully's put-downs. Move closer to the bully before he or she has said anything, and ask, "What do you have to say today?" Then reel off several put-downs the bully has used before.

*Tip:* Tell the student that the bully might have comebacks for any of these strategies. Ask the student to report back to you on what the bully says. Then work with the student to improve his or her efforts.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

Teachers can be bullied, too. Maybe you have an intimidating or aggressive student—someone who makes you feel uneasy or threatened. Or maybe the problem is a coworker, a group of your coworkers, or a superior.

Check your school or district policies on how to handle student bullies. There should be guidelines in place. If none exist, talk with your principal and other teachers about this issue.



**Go farther:** Contact the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) and ask about their Nonviolent Crisis Intervention program, which teaches the safe management of disruptive or assaultive behavior. Many schools and districts have benefited from this training. Write or call: Crisis Prevention Institute, Inc., 3315-K North 124th Street, Brookfield, WI 53005; toll-free telephone 1-800-558-8976. On the Web, go to: [www.crisisprevention.com](http://www.crisisprevention.com)

What if you're being bullied by your coworkers or superiors? (Workplace bullying is on the rise, and schools are workplaces, just like businesses or factories.) Talk to your principal. Talk to your union representative. You don't have to put up with rude, hostile behavior or put-downs. Learn about the laws that protect you.



**Go farther:** Contact the Campaign Against Workplace Bullying (CAWB). Founded by Gary Namie, Ph.D., and

Ruth F. Namie, Ph.D., this nonprofit organization acts as a resource for employee and employer solutions. Write or call: The Campaign Against Workplace Bullying, PO Box 29915, Bellingham, WA 98228. CAWB's Web site offers information, research results, surveys, and news articles about workplace bullying. Go to: [www.bullybusters.org](http://www.bullybusters.org)

Meanwhile, here are some commonsense tips you can follow to safeguard yourself:

- Vary your routine. If you walk to and from school, don't always walk the same route at the same time. If you drive, change your route frequently (and try stopping for coffee at a different place now and then).
- Pay attention to your intuition; act on it. It's better to be safe and risk a little embarrassment than stay in an uncomfortable situation that may turn out to be dangerous.
- Don't label keys with your name or any identification.
- Try not to overload yourself with books and other materials when walking down the hall or walking to and from the school building.
- Before or after school hours, check your surroundings before getting out of your car.
- Have your keys ready before you leave the school building. Look inside and under your car before getting in, and always lock your car.
- If your school has an elevator, stay close to the controls and locate the emergency button.
- Get to know your coworkers and look out for each other.
- Walk with confidence. Be assertive. Watch your body language. (See pages 53–54.)
- Be extra watchful when you're walking between buildings, in poorly lighted areas, etc. Try to have another adult with you.
- If you feel that you're in serious, immediate danger from a bully, don't try to defuse the situation on your own. Get help from school security or law enforcement personnel.