

Discussion Guidelines

Educators: Awareness and Understanding

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This video is designed to inform teachers about a range of bullying issues that are often difficult to identify or which educators are often unaware are considered bullying. All of the issues that are presented in the videos were designed to help educators become more aware about bullying. From these videos, conversation among colleagues should occur, for addressing bullying is a collective response. That means working with one another to better understand bullying and how to respond to it.

These guidelines are to add information to the issues being addressed in the video, to help educators in their discussion about the topic, as well as subsequent response to these situations, both individually and programmatically.

Video Components:

The video is comprised of eight vignettes, each dealing with a specific topic about bullying that is often overlooked or not even considered bullying. Each vignette stands alone, except for the teacher response section, which has three separate segments. While each vignette focuses on a specific issue, several issues related to bullying are addressed in each vignette.

Discussion questions are provided for each vignette. It is best to read the brief introduction and then ask the questions to discuss prior to showing the segment. However, you can also revisit the discussion questions after seeing the segment or after watching the video in its entirety.

Vignettes:

Vignette 1: Introduction and Definition of Bullying:

This is an introduction to what bullying is and how it influences people. There is also a definition of the different forms of bullying and a short vignette about physical bullying, since this is the easiest to identify and most teachers know how to respond, and most schools have specific policies in place to address this, physical bullying is not highlighted elsewhere in the video. Instead, other harder to detect and more subtle forms are discussed in the subsequent vignettes.

The information below, while divided up into vignettes to help add to the ideas being discussed in the video segments, is relevant throughout the DVD. In particular, the information in this first section is a lot of general information about bullying that comes up throughout.

Discussion Questions:

What is bullying?

What type of bullying do we see most at our school?

What are our current rules/policies about bullying and how it is reported?

Definition

There are five identifying features of bullying.

- It is deliberate, hurtful behavior.
- It is repeated over a period of time.
- It is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.
- It is difficult for those who bully to learn new social behaviors.
- Those who bully have, and exercise power inappropriately over others.

Types of Bullying

- Physical violence, for example hitting and kicking.
 - Easiest to identify
 - Not the most harmful
- Verbal, for example name-calling, teasing, taunting.
- Relational, emotional, for example exclusion, gossip, stalking, threatening and coercion.
 - Some of the most harmful forms of bullying
- Damage to property, for example taking lunches or destroying schoolbooks.
- Cyber-bullying for example mean text messages or harassing posts on the internet.

Social Experience:

- The relationship between the two is based on a power imbalance.
- Victim often feels they cannot defend themselves or make the bully stop.
- 85% of bullying experiences occur in front of others
- Victims are chosen by bullies because they are believed to be weaker
 - It is easier to display to others the power a bully has, using a determined weaker individual as a victim
- Lack of response by bystanders condones the behavior and supports the culture of bullying in a school.

Whole school approach:

It is a major part of changing the culture at a school, is that everyone takes responsibility for changing the culture, and that includes everyone being informed of the events. The task of the victim is to inform. The role of the staff/adult is to protect the victim, and to make sure that responses show that bullying and harassment are not allowed at a school. That is important to maintain the trust of students.

School Environment:

Culture of violence that promotes it. The students join in because the idea of bullying being the way to power is supported by the experiences they witness. All of this creates a culture that promotes victims not feeling safe, bystanders avoiding speaking up and bullies in control.

It is further supported by limited responses by teachers and administration. It is also supported by the interactions between everyone in society.

Students should be made aware that when bullying happens at school it makes everyone feel unsafe and that everyone has the right to feel safe and everyone has the responsibility to make it safe for everyone. Students need to help teachers and school staff to create a school where bullying is not tolerated.

Roles:

Victims:

- **Passive Victims:** The most common type of victim. They are identified by bullies as potential victims because of their passive behavior. They are less likely to stand up for themselves in situations. They struggle to connect with others because of their passive stance, perpetuating the bullying.
- **Provocative Victims:** They are more likely to struggle socially, which often results in people believing that they deserve being bullied. Many provocative victims suffer from ADHD, although not all. They are often marginalized in schools because of their social behaviors, which does not help others in seeing them as victims who need help. In fact, teachers often have problems with these students. Negative responses by teachers toward these students can help to promote bullying these kids by students.

Bullies:

- *Confident bullies:* strong, enjoy aggression, have good social skills, who feel secure and are of average popularity.
- *Follower or Henchman:* Enjoys bullying and aggression in general. Relies on bully's power to maintain power.
- *Reluctant bully:* Is part of the bully group, does not want to bully, but does so to maintain status, and avoid becoming the victim, or at least marginalized by the bully.
- *Anxious bullies:* weak academically, have poor concentration, and are less popular and less secure.
- *Bully/victims:* bullies in some situations and are bullied in others. Bully victims are unpopular and come from bad homes.

Bystanders: (see below in Vignette 4)

Vignette 2: Relational Aggression (Kindergarten):

Vignette two shows aggression using relationships. These are most common in older children but recent research has shown this as a problem even as young as preschool. This vignette shows a typical relational aggression action among young children and highlights the proper way for bystanders and teachers to respond. The roles of the young children are played by adults.

Discussion Questions:

Teachers don't usually see relational aggression happen. What are the warning signs?

What type of relational aggression do we see or hear about in our school?

What are ways we can respond as teachers and administrators?

How can we help protect children's self-esteem against relational aggression?

Relational Aggression forms:

Most of these are conducted against individuals who are in or want to be part of the group who are doing the bullying. It is the interest in the relationship that allows for the power to engage in the behaviors. It is most often very subtle and unseen.

Difficult for the teachers to be aware of it if not looking for it.

- *Cyberbullying*: threats, often anonymous, although not always, such as text or pix bullying on cell phones
- *Notes*: Often to identify future victims, to administer threats, or perpetuate rumors. A means to maintain power without directly attacking the individual.
- *Exclusion*: Not allowed to be part of the group, or the activities. This can be on and off, simply to display power to those in the group, as well as, to some degree those outside the group. This extends to others, for to be part of the group or connected to that group, they may also harass or mistreat the victim.

It should also be noted that relational aggression can occur at any and all ages. Recent research has shown that children as young as pre-school display behaviors that are defined as relational aggression. It has also been noted that these students are aware of their actions, which is counter to beliefs about the development at this age.

The distinct difference is that at early ages, they are still learning their roles, and the appropriateness of their behaviors. The power of the authority figure at school (teachers) can have a greater impact on the acceptance of this behavior in the school.

It is important to talk to students about what bullying is and to hold them accountable for their behavior. Left unchecked, roles can become solidified.

Be careful of giving too much power to some students, even through class leadership roles, which can contribute to power imbalances among younger students.

Vignette 3: Verbal Bullying:

Vignette three looks at verbal bullying. Specifically, verbal abuse. Verbal bullying of course also includes teasing and taunting that you see in the classroom or on the playground. Those forms also need to be dealt with. However, the most common form is more indirect and can influence the entire learning environment.

Discussion Questions:

How much teasing and taunting do we see at our school?

How do we respond when we see or hear it?

What types of rules do we have about indirect verbal bullying or the use of hate language in general?

What types of hate language do we respond to?

What are other types of hate language that we do not currently respond to?

Verbal Bullying:

Verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying that does not decline as kids enter into high school. It accompanies other forms of bullying.

The concern is that the use of terms that are negative, even when not directed at kids specifically, perpetuate beliefs about those groups. It is about considering the environment for all involved and making sure that all kids can feel comfortable. This is often a good consideration when responding to verbal abuse at school. If any possible student would be offended by the language used by another student, then responding to the comment is important. It is disrespectful to others, making for an unwelcome environment.

Intolerant environment can breed aggression by establishing it as being okay to be disrespectful to others.

Responding to Verbal Abuse:

- Identify the word/phrase that is used
- Identify the rule that was broken in the school
- Explain the negative impact the word/phrase has. The group that is impacted and how the general environment is influenced.

Vignette 4: Exclusion:

Vignette four looks at exclusion. This is considered one of the most hurtful and harmful types of bullying, especially for students in junior high or high school where peer relationships are key to healthy development. Note especially in this vignette how this can be going on without the teacher having any knowledge of it because of the covert nature and the likelihood that it will transcend the classroom or school grounds.

Discussion Questions:

Exclusion often happens behind the scenes, how can we as teachers and administrators identify students who are being excluded?

How can we support students who are being excluded?

How can we intervene with the students who are doing the excluding?

Exclusion:

The majority of bullying occurs when teachers/staff are not present or otherwise occupied. It is important then that students have strategies for responding to bullying. Even when it does occur in front of a staff member, it is often conducted in such a way as often not to be easily identified by authority figures. In order to recognize it, an educator needs to pay attention to subtle changes in behaviors of possible victims or even class structure.

Identifying Exclusion:

- Look for students who were previously friends but are not now hanging out together
- Be aware of sudden drops in academic performance or grades by students
- Watch out for students with less focus who get into more trouble or tend to be acting out
- Look for students who are isolated from others

Responding to Exclusion:

- Talk to the student who is being excluded privately so as to avoid making them anymore of a target than they already are
- Empower them by asking them what they want to do about it and valuing their concerns
- Set up work groups in class and separate students who are excluding
- Inform the parents of the excluded student. It helps you to understand the entire situation. It also helps the excluded student to have support at home.
- Talk to bystanders to better understand what is happening
- Befriending interventions such as connecting them to other social groups that will be positive environments (these are noted in the attachment about social groups that are important to exist in a school)

Bystanders:

In exclusion experiences, bystanders play an important role throughout the experience.

Types of Bystanders:

Passive Bystander (Supporter): Most of the kids watching the episode; likely see the victim as deserving it, and happy it is not them

Disengaged Onlooker: Not a part of the bullying episode in any capacity

Defender: Can become the object of future attacks to marginalize the person, but still attempts to stop the bullying. Can do so through multiple ways: step in, support victim after episode to help reduce affect, go get teacher/adult.

Passive Defender: can even leave the situation to avoid having to make a decision to stop it. They often know what is going to happen but do not want to see it happen, but not knowing how to stop it.

Key points about bystanders:

- Passive Bystanders (beyond the bully and his/her friends) actively help the bully to achieve his or her goal of isolating the victim
- Bystanders witness events that teachers may not see, and can inform or support experiences of victims
- Bystanders can offer a place/group to support the victim to limit the impact the exclusion has on the victim

According to the U.S. Department of Education, bystanders may experience negative effects of witnessing bullying such as:

- *Be afraid to associate with the victim* for fear of either lowering their own status or of retribution from the bully and becoming victims themselves
- *Fear reporting bullying incidents* because they do not want to be called a "snitch," a "tattler," or "informer"
- *Experience feelings of guilt and helplessness* for not standing up to the bully on behalf of their classmate
- *Be drawn into bullying behavior* by group pressure
- *Feel unsafe*, unable to take action, or a loss of control

It is clear that bystanders display distinct patterns of behavior during a bullying incident; these responses represent students' attitudes toward the problem of bullying (e.g., positive, neutral-indifferent, negative) as well as the actions they are likely to take during an actual incident.

Bystander: Become isolated, like victim if they help. If they don't, it perpetuates the culture of violence that already exists in the school.

As discussed above, often interested in helping, but afraid to do it often, and even when they do, they learn (as does everyone else) because they are victimized as well

Bullying is a social interaction, bullies and victims are only part of the larger social context. Bystanders are a primary part of the interaction. They are the audience for the bullies for the display of power. The dominance over a victim is a display for the others so they are aware of the bully's power.

Intervention Strategies for Bystanders:

Students should be told that all students are expected to act responsibly and take action to help those being bullied. Classroom rules should remind them that they should *never* encourage the bully or join in the bullying. (Bystanders who egg on or help the bully are considered to be as responsible for the bullying as the bullies themselves!)

Bystanders should be empowered to take an active role in preventing/intervening in bullying by one of the following strategies:

In incidents of *direct* bullying (e.g. hitting, teasing, threats, etc.):

- The bystander who feels *safe* confronting the bully and assertively remind the bully of the classroom rules for treating others and tell the bully to stop picking on the victim.
- If the bystander does *not* feel safe confronting the bully, the student should get help from an adult about the bullying as soon as possible.
- Act like a friend to the person being bullied who needs help and support.

In incidents of *indirect* bullying (e.g., malicious gossip, excluding others, cyberbullying etc.):

- The bystander should not participate in the bullying in any way.
- The bystander should also point out to the person bullying or the group that they are bullying and remind them of the class rules against it.
- If the bullying persists, the student should tell an adult about the bullying.

Reasons students may give for not telling:

Threats:

Threats against the student, both covert and overt against informing someone else about the bullying. This gives, supports and maintains the power in the school, not to mention the culture of violence. It is important to inform students that it is their right to feel safe. As well, it is important to maintain anonymity of anyone who informs about a bullying situation.

Tattling:

Students are afraid of being further marginalized by being labeled as a tattle-tale, snitch, rat, etc. What students need to be aware of is that there is a distinction between tattling and informing about bullying. The simplest way to consider the difference is the reason a student is informing a staff member, or someone else. If it helps a person, including his or herself to be safe, then it is acceptable to tell. If the only intention is to get someone else in trouble, and does not make another student safer (directly), then it is not the best idea to inform a staff member. This is only enhanced when students believe a teacher is not going to respond or support them.

At fault:

Many students feel they are at fault because the culture of the school often has focused on blaming victims for their situations. We also tend to rationalize situations by blaming it on victims, rather than addressing the culture of the school. This includes provocative victims, who it is easier to blame for their situations. It does not matter the behaviors of the student, no one deserves to be bullied.

Embarrassed:

Students are often embarrassed about being victimized, so they refrain from telling others about, for they feel they will be seen as at fault, weak, or a lesser individual. This makes it important to inform students that wanting to feel safe is wrong.

Vignette 5: Sarcasm:

Vignette five is presented like an infomercial. It is a little tongue in cheek but draws our attention to the fact that even though we, as educators, may want to use sarcasm as a way of connecting with others it is important to be aware that sarcasm can also be a form of bullying. We should note this is not an easy task to stop using it. Focus first on being aware of it, then changing the tone of interactions to being inclusive. This does not mean you cannot joke around with students. Just be aware of what is the intent and outcome of the sarcasm and jokes.

Discussion Questions:

What are ways that sarcasm is used by students at our school?

How can sarcasm be hurtful?

How can we address students using sarcasm when they think it is just fun but someone's feelings are being hurt?

Is there forms of sarcasm/humor that are not bullying? If so, can we learn to use them?

Sarcasm:

While many of us may utilize sarcasm to connect with students, you need to be careful that you are not bullying a student(s). Remember, there is an already established power imbalance between teacher and student, so any form of critique, especially through indirect forms of sarcasm are bullying.

When is sarcasm bullying:

- When a student(s) are NOT in on the joke
One of the few instances when sarcasm is not bullying is when the student(s) are in on the joke, then it is a way to connect to them. This does not mean they know about the joke, but rather that the joke is not aimed at them.
- To get students to behave
- To critique or criticize students
- To humiliate students.
This includes if you are critiquing a student who bullies others. To bully a bully only informs the bully that the behavior he/she is engaging in is correct. It will get them what they want.

Vignette 6: Cyberbullying:

Vignette six discusses bullying using technology, called “cyberbullying.” This vignette discusses a case of cyberbullying but also legislation in California that speaks to schools rights and responsibilities regarding addressing it.

Discussion Questions:

What have you heard about cyberbullying?

What can schools do when it often happens off campus?

What type of education for students would help address cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying:

The fastest growing form of bullying. It is often related to other forms of bullying, such as verbal, sexual harassment, and even threats or actual physical bullying. In fact, students who experience cyberbullying are more likely to experience other forms of bullying. Students who experience multiple forms of bullying the negative effects of bullying are much greater.

Cyberbullying includes:

- Text messages
- Instant messages
- Online harassment

Some cyberbullying, the bully is known to the victim, while in other forms, the bully is unknown.

California Assembly AB 86: This means that schools can respond to online bullying if it is impacting a student’s education, regardless of where it occurs. Schools are being held legally libel for cyberbullying.

Prevention:

- Increase awareness for everyone about cyberbullying and internet usage
 - Inform students that anyone can see material when it is located on the internet
- Create campus group social networking page that students can friend
 - This will allow for a connection to an official site that can record when bullying or harassing comments/postings are made about a student
 - Review policy of social networking sites: most sites have agreed to immediately remove any negative sites or sites that contain negative postings/comments that are a form of bullying or harassment.
- Design an explicit cyber policy on campus, including responses to the different forms of cyberbullying
 - Be consistent with responses to it.

Responding to Cyberbullying:

- Remind students of the policy that is being violated
 - This includes violation of service providers

- Need to report incident to providers
- Keep all evidence of cyberbullying (texts, hate pages, etc)
- Journal events and their feelings about each point in the experience

Vignette 7: Teacher Response:

Vignette seven is provided in three parts. Like an old style educational show that demonstrates the correct and not so correct way of doing things, these segments show common mistakes made by teachers when talking to students involved in bullying as well as some strategies for dealing with bullying in ways that reduce the bullying. Again, we use comedy to make light of the situation but the strategies discussed are helpful in dealing with bullying in schools.

Discussion Questions:

What would you say to a student who tells you they are being bullied?

What are the concerns about being bullied – why don't students tell?

How can we support victims of bullying?

How can we intervene with bullies without increasing risk to victims?

How can bystanders be useful in this process?

Teacher Response:

While the responses presented in the situations are ideal, the intention and impact is the primary consideration for all educators. As schools officials respond to bullying situations, it will inform students that it is an issue of concern, and will then feel more comfortable, and safe to report other situations.

Teachers only see 1/3 of all bullying situations, so responding to bullying situations is as much about helping the victim as it is informing all other students of the importance of changing the culture that exists in the school.

Teacher Response:

Some Teacher/Staff Responses that have been found to help stop bullying and create a safe school environment.

- Respond to all situations

This means that any reported incident needs to be addressed, whether it is stopping it and addressing all involved, or by gathering information about it to determine magnitude of incident and possible solution/response.

- If personally witness: Intervene immediately
 - Do not redirect behaviors of those involved: address the situation directly
 - Do not leave it up to the victim to deal with it
 - Stop the incident.

- Cite the policy when responding, directing bullies to the appropriate place/person to receive punishment, as determined by the policy.
- Identify bystanders for possible later information.
- Talk to victim in private about the issue (the problem over time, both in the past and possibly the future).
- If informed by a student of an incident/situation
 - Gather all information
 - Have each person involved write down what happened, independent of the others (this works especially well when a bully group is identified)
 - Talk to other witnesses/bystanders if relevant (have them write down information as well)
 - Make a plan with victim to address it (see below)
 - Protect identity of informer if it is known (not result of anonymous report)
 - Do not directly confront bully until plan has been determined
- Solutions and Responses after (including punishments)
 - Work with others (bullying committee) to come up with solutions
 - Be creative: No one solution works for all
 - There can be immediate punishments for actions and then long term responses to change behavior/culture
 - Include victim in the solution (empowers the victim)
 - Focus on behaviors, not individuals
 - Not about labeling kids, but focusing on the behaviors that are not acceptable. It helps students to focus on the issues and not the people. As a result, specific behaviors become less acceptable, regardless of who performs them.
 - Rely on the school policy, including identifying responses to bullying/sexual harassment when making decisions (be consistent)
 - Do not require students to work it out
- Identify location and increase supervision at location
 - Intent is to personally witness incident, which reduces likelihood of retaliation against informant or victim.
- Notify parents (of all students involved)

Determine best time frame to inform parents, and the format. Use school policy to do so. For the victim, include them in the discussion of informing parents.

Responding to Bullies:

- Hold bully accountable for their behaviors
- Keep situation away from focus on victim
 - This is to reduce interest in retaliation against the victim
- Do not punish publically
 - Do not bully the bully
- Alternative responses/punishments for bullying

This is to limit the focus on punitive responses, which can help reduce the likelihood of retaliation against victim (or informer). It also helps the bully to learn appropriate behaviors without being ostracized (or labeled), as it focuses on behaviors that can be addressed. It keeps students in the learning environment (and often the only stable environment they have), such as in-school suspensions.

- Get bullies involved in positive working relationships
 - Mentoring- peer and/or younger student mentoring (e.g. elementary)
- Increase socio-emotional learning for bullies
 - For example, Second Step: Empathy, self control and anger management

Responding to Victims:

- Connect victims with social groups (peer mentoring, service clubs, other related groups)
 - Can help to increase self esteem
 - Establishes a group support network
 - Connects victim with a group who is focused on acceptance
 - Can, if needed, help to further socialize student (if student has been identified as having limited social skills)
- Follow up with victims (bystanders, especially if they reported incident)

Keeps them informed of situation, letting them know their voice matters, and that the school (and teachers/staff) are trustworthy and safe. This connects them more to the school, and increases the likelihood of informing again. Do not need to offer them details, just that it is being investigated, addressed, etc.

Vignette 8: Conclusion:

Vignette eight wraps up the segments as well as gives some overarching advice to keep in mind when addressing bullying or trying to prevent it.

Discussion Questions:

What are the roles of teachers in responding to bullying?

What are the effects of bullying on victims, bullies, and bystanders?

How can we support students in developing good social behavior?

Conclusion:

Teachers are first responders and have the greatest impact on bullying situations. The focus is to establish a safe environment that students feel comfortable and connected to school. This can be created by having a safe and trusting environment in the classroom.

This type of environment will increase the likelihood of a student informing a teacher of bullying experiences.

Our best advice to teachers is to act in any and all situations. This is not to assume there is an explicit right way to respond, or that you will get it right every time. But responding shows students the importance of addressing bullying. Feel free also to speak with colleagues about the best course of action. All responses do not have to occur immediately, and do not always need to be responded to alone.

Remember, everyone is responsible to help in changing the culture of a school.

There are a number of concerns about bullying that impact everyone: victim, bully, bystander, etc.

Effects:

- Can't concentrate
- Sad
- Anxious
- Low self-esteem
- Loss of confidence
- Withdraw from social situations
- Reduction in grades/lower performance.
- Feel Sick
- Less empathy for those who suffer
 - Accept the culture of bullying
- Disconnected from school
- Limited feeling of safety
- Lowered self-efficacy in responding to future experiences

Effects on others at the school:

Bullies: A sense of power is given to them. But a lot of kids don't like to play with people who are mean to them (peer rejection).

Bystanders: A sense of fear, believe in dominance as a way to power.

Want to help, but not know what to do.

Followers: Engage in bullying, which perpetuates the victimization of a victim, and thus maintain the power structure and the culture of violence.

Bullies and supporters are all caught up in both reliving and retelling the experience, as well continuing the bullying.

Passive Bystanders and Defenders are focused on the instance, either concerns for their own safety, guilt over not helping, or concerns if did help.

Learning environment is compromised for all who witnessed the bullying. Makes it more difficult to educate for teachers, and to learn for students because of such episodes.

