



Playbook 2 of 3



# A Bullying Resource for Parents & Caring Adults

How to Help a Child to  
Stop Bullying Other Kids



## → Who is this Playbook for?

This Playbook is the **second** in a series.

Your fifth-grader's teacher just called. He said your child has been bullying another child on the playground. There might be a lot of thoughts racing through your head. You might be angry with the teacher for telling you, and worry that your child has been unjustly accused. You might think what the other child did to your child. You might even wonder if you did anything to make your child bully others. Above all, you're probably wondering what to do next.

That's why we created this Playbook: to help parents like you. We're going to guide you step-by-step through understanding bullying, how to approach and hold a conversation with your child, and more. You're not the first parent to face this kind of situation and you won't be the last. There's a lot of research and experience available to help—and we're going to boil it down into concrete actions that you can take right now to make a seemingly bad situation better.

While the Playbook is targeted to **parents**, any **caring adult** (i.e., coaches, teachers, counselors, extended family members) can greatly benefit from the tools you'll find here.

In Playbooks 1 and 2, we explain bullying in a way that will help parents to address it at home and in partnership with the school. We take both parents of children who are bullying others and parents of children who are being bullied through a 4-Step Action Plan to address the problem at home and school. If you are part of one of those two groups, we hope you'll start with the Playbook most relevant to you.

In Playbook 3, we go beyond the immediate crisis and look to the bigger picture: the proactive steps caring adults can take with their kids to build a culture of kindness, empathy, and upstanding. Here, we explain what each of those words mean—and how cultivating them can help to eliminate bullying.

**If your child is being bullied,  
go to Playbook 1:**  
[How to Help a Child Being  
Bullied](#)

**If your child is bullying other kids,  
go to Playbook 2:**  
[How to Help a Child to Stop  
Bullying Other Kids](#)

**For caring adults wanting to build a  
culture of kindness, go to Playbook 3:**  
[How to Support the Development of  
Kindness and Empathy in Our Youth](#)

## → How to use this Playbook

This playbook is a set of generalized recommendations and are not universal strategies or facts for every child or context.

For more specialized support, reach out to your child's teacher, school, coach, or consider contacting a licensed professional such as a child psychologist or social worker.

# Table of Contents

## Section 1: Bullying 101

What Is Bullying?	4
What Does Bullying Look Like?	4
<a href="#">For Younger Kids</a>	
<a href="#">For Older Kids</a>	
How Can You Spot Cyberbullying?	5
• Examples of Cyberbullying	6
• How Teens Talk About Cyberbullying	6
When Is It NOT Bullying?	7
<a href="#">For Younger Kids</a>	
<a href="#">For Older Kids</a>	
Who Is in the Bullying Ecosystem?	8

## Section 2: What To Do

What Can I Do if My Child Is Bullying Others?	9
• 4-Step Action Plan	9
• Prepare to Talk to Your Child	9
• Talk to Your Child	10
<a href="#">For Younger Kids</a>	
<a href="#">For Older Kids</a>	
<a href="#">Conversation Examples for Younger Kids</a>	
<a href="#">Conversation Examples for Older Kids</a>	
• Work with Your Child to Build Empathy	12
<a href="#">For Younger Kids</a>	
<a href="#">For Older Kids</a>	
• Work with the School to Develop an Action Plan and Other Supports	13

## Section 3: Risk Factors and Different Types of Bullying

Who Is Most at Risk to Bully?	14
Who Is Most at Risk for Both Roles?	14
What Is Othering and Bias-Based Bullying?	15
Important Definitions	16

# Bullying 101: What Bullying Looks Like

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is **any unwanted**, intentional aggressive behavior that causes physical, emotional, educational, and/or psychological harm to others. Youth who are bullied have difficulty stopping the action and struggle to defend themselves, often resulting in the behavior that is **repeated over time**. Bullying usually involves an **“imbalance of power”** where the child exhibiting bullying behavior acts to take control or harm others.<sup>1,2</sup>

The **three** major indicators of bullying are...

Behavior that is unwanted and intentionally aggressive

Behavior that involves an imbalance of power between two people who are not friends

Behavior that is repeated over time

In "The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey," teens reported that the number one reason they either experienced or saw bullying was based on **appearance** and **weight**.

At the end of the day, youth can be bullied for anything that's considered "different" by the person doing the bullying. Sometimes, that can look like able-bodied students teasing one with disabilities, or kids in a majority racial group targeting a member of a "minority." When bullying is based on a person's own bias, it is called [bias-based bullying](#).

## What Does Bullying Look Like?

Bullying can take place anywhere, both in and out of school, and online (called [cyberbullying](#)).



**More than 1/3 of teens reported they have been bullied in the past year**, but that number is significantly higher for some groups. Bullying happens in different places, but respondents most frequently report incidents at school.

-“The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey,”  
conducted by Ipsos

### Kinds of Bullying:<sup>1</sup>



#### Social

Spreading rumors or lies about others, leaving someone out of the group (which can happen in person and online)



#### Verbal

Name calling, teasing, making threats to cause damage or harm to others (both in person and online)



#### Physical

Exhibiting violent behavior to hurt others or their belongings/property, forcing someone to do something they don't want to do (primarily, in person)

# Bullying Across Different Age Groups

Bullying is generally experienced toward the end of elementary school and peaks in middle school, while remaining steady or declining somewhat in high school.<sup>3</sup> Youth of all ages are capable of showing bullying behavior, but the types of behavior they exhibit can change as they get older. Below are the most common types of bullying based on age:

## YOUNGER KIDS

Physical and verbal bullying are most common during the end of elementary school.

## OLDER KIDS

As kids reach adolescence, physical and verbal bullying are seen less often. However, relational/social bullying, particularly through cyberbullying, becomes the most prevalent type of bullying during youth's tween and teen years.<sup>4</sup> **Middle school, specifically 6th grade, is when most youth experience bullying. As tweens and teens increasingly care more about fitting in and being accepted by their peer groups, some believe that making fun of those who don't "fit in" will make them more popular.**<sup>5</sup> Bullying tends to decline as youth reach later adolescence (think high school and early adulthood), as they learn to control their emotions and

Among teens who have been bullied,

**22%**

report someone sent them threatening messages through social media, texting, or online.

-"The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey,"  
conducted by Ipsos



Only **1 in 10** teens report telling their parents that they are being cyberbullied.<sup>53</sup>

## How Can You Spot Cyberbullying?

**Cyberbullying** (bullying that happens online) can occur via social media, gaming, or any platform where people can connect digitally. It can be more difficult to spot, as adults can't monitor every single message their child sends or every video they post. Below are a couple of common behaviors children show if they are involved (either being bullied or bullying others) in cyberbullying:<sup>9,10</sup>

1. Your child significantly increases or decreases their device use, including texting
2. Your child shows apparent emotional responses (laughter, anger, upset) to what is happening on their device
  - Someone who is bullying others might laugh when spreading rumors online
3. Your child hides their screen or device when you or others are near
  - They could also avoid discussion about what they are doing on their device when you ask
4. Your child abruptly shuts down or deletes their social media account
5. Your child creates new or multiple accounts

# Some Examples of Cyberbullying

## Adolescent girls and fake Instagram accounts (Finsta)

One common social media tactic adolescents use, in particular adolescent girls, is creating a fake Instagram account (Finsta). Here, they post embarrassing, or even sexual, pictures/ videos and share with only their close friends and classmates. While the initial intent to create a Finsta might be to avoid a parent who is constantly monitoring their digital use, it can escalate to something very serious. Youth can post inappropriate pictures of others without their consent, or anonymously bully others.

- The Jed Foundation has a [toolkit](#) that walks parents through what cyberbullying looks like and how to address it on platforms like Instagram.
- The Anti-Defamation League has a [“Grown Folks” Guide to Popular Apps in Social Media](#) that goes more in-depth about common terms youth use and how they communicate via the fast-moving world of social media.

## Adolescents and online gaming

Today’s games allow youth to interact with fellow players either through text or voice chat. These interactions are often unmonitored, which can expose youth to verbal harassment, offensive language, or threats. Girls who game are at higher risk to be sexually harassed online by other players. This is, unfortunately, often accepted as “gaming culture.”<sup>10</sup>

- [The Anti-Defamation League](#) has a parent resource toolkit on how to address hate and bias seen in online gaming.

# How Teens Talk About Bullying and Cyberbullying

While the words “bullying” and “cyberbullying” are common words for adults, youth rarely use these words. Here is how many teens and youth are describing bullying behavior that happens in person and digitally:<sup>11-14</sup>

66

“The **toxicity** in that comment section is unreal. Those guys are **trolling** you for sure, because you look amazing in those pictures.”

66

“Why is she spreading so much **hate** about Willow getting cheer captain? Like it’s one thing to be jealous but another thing to be flat-out **racist**.”

66

“She is being such a **jerk** to you for no reason. I’ve had it with all her **drama**.”

66

“He’s being so **nasty** to Jordan. He’s constantly **harassing** him about his weight just so he can feel better and it’s uncalled for.”

# When Is It NOT Bullying?

Like adults, children experience conflict with others. Even when a child handles conflict poorly, it may not always be considered bullying. Some kids are naturally more assertive and impulsive—this doesn't necessarily mean that they are bullying. It's important that children learn healthy ways to manage their emotions and also to control their behavior when met with conflict. Escalating this behavior and calling it bullying may not always be helpful.<sup>2</sup>

It's important to remember that not all conflict is unhealthy!

Some examples of **healthy** conflict are...

- Two friends disagreeing with each other and debating a topic
- Kids who are competitive
- Kids who are assertive and advocate for their needs
- Teasing and joking between close friends

As youth learn how to interact with others, they test boundaries and begin to express their feelings in different ways. Parents should be aware of these changes and understand the difference between instances of harmful or unpleasant behavior and bullying.

## Examples of Negative Behavior That May Not Be Bullying Behavior

### FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- Not sharing toys or playing with another person
- Excluding someone from a birthday party or activity that involves other friends
- Being considered “bossy”

### FOR OLDER KIDS

- A group of boys playfully teasing a friend about their new haircut
- Being rude or “snarky” to another classmate
- Bumping into someone in the hallway
- Lashing out or yelling at a stranger
- A heated argument between two friends



# Who Is in the Bullying Ecosystem?

**The child being bullied:** A child who is repeatedly a target of bullying behaviors. Some [factors](#) may put a child at a higher risk of being bullied but, ultimately, it comes down to them being considered “different” by the person bullying.<sup>15</sup> To learn more about how to work with your child who is being bullied, check out [Playbook 1](#).

**The child who is playing multiple roles:** In some cases, children who are being bullied will begin to bully others as a form of retaliation.

**The child showing bullying behavior:** A child who is intentionally and repeatedly causing harm (whether that be physically, psychologically, emotionally, or educationally) to another person. Some [factors](#) may increase a child’s likelihood of showing bullying behaviors, but not all children with these characteristics will show bullying behaviors.<sup>15</sup>



**Bystander:** A child who sees bullying take place. They could be joining in and encouraging the bullying or ignoring it and just watching.<sup>15</sup>



**Upstander:** A child who speaks or acts in support of an individual who is being harassed or bullied.<sup>16</sup>



**Caring adults involved in the child’s life:** Children and youth require support from caring adults in their lives to help change their behavior or address any challenges when being bullied.

# 4-Step Action Plan

1

Prepare to Talk  
to Your Child



2

Talk to  
Your Child



3

Work with Your Child to  
Build Empathy



4

Work with the School  
and Other Supports

1

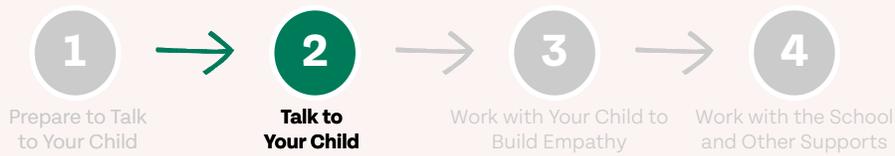
## Prepare to Talk to Your Child

It's important that you feel equipped to have a safe and intentional conversation with your child about how bullying has affected their well-being.



### Recommendations to effectively prepare to talk to your child:

1. **Acknowledge how you feel:** Understand that this is a process that won't be solved in one conversation. Reach out to any of your networks to support yourself first (whether that be friends, family, or a healthcare worker) so you can be better centered and calm to support your child.<sup>17</sup>
2. **Examine your child's environment:** Children who bully are often modeling what they see. Is your child exposed to physically or emotionally harmful behavior? Has their environment changed? What might be causing stress, like a divorce or moving to a new school? Look inward and think honestly about how you or others (i.e., siblings, adult family members, or friends, etc.) are presenting to your child.<sup>38</sup>
3. Consider researching in advance what supports/plans might be available for your child in case you discover your child needs immediate help or has follow-up questions.
4. **Create a plan for the conversation:**<sup>17</sup>
  - Be intentional of where and when the conversation will take place. Avoid situations where you or your child are stressed out, distracted, or in a rush. For example, having the conversation in the car isn't a good idea. There's limited time during a car ride, you can be distracted while driving, and your child might feel blindsided or "trapped" if you choose to have this conversation unexpectedly in the car.
  - Make a list of your child's behaviors you've observed that might be [warning signs](#) for bullying and/or cyberbullying.
  - Think about how you might handle your child's reaction/emotions in this conversation. It's important to show neutral emotions while your child shares how they feel.
  - Discuss your plan with a trusted friend or family member for any feedback.



## 2 Talk to Your Child

There is no “perfect time” to talk to your child. While it's recommended to take time when preparing to talk with your child, it is also important to start the conversation in a timely fashion so they can receive support when they need it most.

### Consider these following recommendations when talking to your child:

1. **Identify the bullying behavior:** Children might not recognize that their behaviors are actually bullying behaviors. Make sure the child knows what bullying behavior looks like, that it can harm others, and that it is not tolerated.<sup>35,36</sup>

#### FOR YOUNGER KIDS

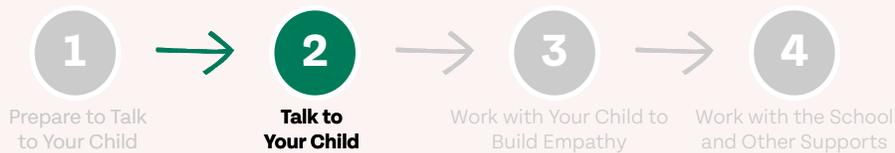
[PACER's bullying identification checklist](#) can help younger kids to understand what behaviors are considered bullying.

#### FOR OLDER KIDS

Older kids can take an [empathy test](#) online from The Jed Foundation to assess how they respond when others are struggling emotionally.

2. **Understand why they are showing bullying behavior:** Ask non-judgmental and open-ended questions to understand why your child is showing bullying behaviors. Maybe they are experiencing peer pressure from other kids to bully others, or they're being bullied themselves.<sup>35,36</sup>
  - Read through these [conversation examples](#) to see how to incorporate these recommendations into a conversation.
3. **Listen and let them share their story:** This will help you understand why they are behaving differently.<sup>17,18</sup>
  - Make the deliberate choice to listen vs. fix.
  - Thank them for sharing.
4. **Reassure them:** Validate their feelings and avoid judgmental language that might minimize their feelings.<sup>20</sup>

66 "What I'm hearing you say is...am I understanding that right?"



## 66 CONVERSATION EXAMPLES FOR YOUNGER KIDS<sup>47,48</sup>

**Adult:** "I heard from your teacher that you've been using unkind words to your friend Annie on the playground and pushed her down near the swings today. Can you tell me what's been happening between the two of you?"

**Child:** "She stole all my friends because she got the lead role in the musical. She's getting all this attention from the teacher, too, and it's not fair."

**Adult:** "Ah, thank you for sharing your side of the story. What I'm hearing is that Annie has become more popular with your friends and teacher and you might be feeling jealous of all the new attention she's getting. Did I get that right?"

**Child:** "Yeah, none of my friends want to play with me anymore on the playground."

**Adult:** "That sounds really hard, feeling like your friends don't like you anymore. But even if we feel bad or jealous of someone else, it doesn't mean we can be mean or hit them. The way you've been behaving toward Annie is not showing kindness and it really hurt her feelings. That kind of behavior is not okay at any time, no matter how bad you are feeling. Does that make sense?"

**Child:** "Yeah, I guess."

**Adult:** "Can you remember a time when someone hurt your feelings?"

**Child:** "When Stan took the stuffed animal that I won at the fall festival, he teased me and didn't let me have it all night."

**Adult:** "That's a really good example. Your older brother Stan took that stuffed animal from you because he was feeling jealous that you won something at the festival and he didn't. Instead of celebrating that his little sister won something, his jealousy made him want to take away the thing you wanted. How did you feel when he took the stuffed animal away?"

**Child:** "Really bad, I cried."

**Adult:** "That story sounds a lot like how you reacted to Annie getting the lead role in the musical. Do you think she might feel the same way that you felt when Stan took your stuffed animal?"

**Child:** "Yeah she cried, too."

## 66 CONVERSATION EXAMPLES FOR OLDER KIDS

**Parent:** "You've said it's funny to see the way Marcus reacts when you tease him. Can you tell me more about that?"

**Youth:** "Well, everyone else teases Marcus all the time in homeroom, so I don't think it's a huge deal. He knows we're just teasing."

**Parent:** "How do you think you would feel if you were in Marcus' shoes?"

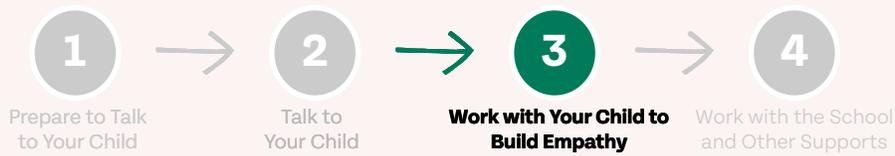
**Youth:** "I guess kinda bad. I've seen Marcus get frustrated after we were making fun of his new haircut. Sometimes, he just leaves to go to the bathroom for the rest of the class period."

**Parent:** "What I'm hearing is that you and your friends repeatedly make fun of Marcus and he leaves class and goes to the bathroom for the rest of the period. Am I hearing that right?"

**Youth:** "Yeah"

**Parent:** "From what you're telling me, it doesn't seem like Marcus is part of the fun, but more part of the joke. It might really be upsetting him emotionally and maybe even affecting his studies if he keeps missing so much class. To you and your friends, that might be just having fun. For Marcus, it's something completely different."

**Youth:** "I didn't really think about it that way. He's barely coming to homeroom now and he doesn't sit with us at lunch anymore. Now I kind of feel bad about joining the others teasing him."



# 3

## Work with Your Child to Build Empathy

Bullying behavior can be unlearned, but it won't be resolved on its own—it requires help from parents and other caring adults to teach their child that their actions can hurt others and how they can improve their behavior.

### Good general tips on working with your child to learn from their mistakes and address conflict in the future:

- Work through healthy ways of coping to teach empathy:** Ask your child to explain a scenario that frustrated them, and offer constructive ways of reacting. Encourage your child to “put yourself in their shoes” by imagining the experience of the person being bullied. Remind your child that comments made online still hurt in the real world.<sup>36,37</sup>  
*“Sometimes our actions can hurt other people’s feelings. It’s important to know that everyone has feelings and their feelings matter—especially if we hurt them.”*
- Use consequences to teach:** Consequences that involve learning or building empathy can help prevent future bullying.<sup>20</sup>

### Examples of positive ways to develop empathy

- Read a story about bullying or cyberbullying that offers constructive solutions.
  - The [Anti-Defamation League’s Words That Heal](#) resource is a list of recommended books and discussion guides to address bullying for all ages.
  - Visit websites, social media forums, and other media that reflect positive interpersonal behavior.
  - [Common Sense Media](#) rates and recommends various forms of children’s media that show positive social behaviors for viewers of all ages.
- Engage in a hobby, club, or other activity that builds on your child’s talents or interests and develops positive attributes and social skills.
- The Special Olympics’ [Unified Sports](#) program promotes intentional inclusion through team sports for all ages.
- Participate in volunteer work or a community service project that encourages respect and consideration for others.<sup>42</sup>

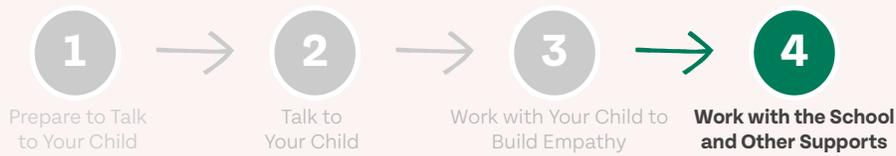
#### FOR YOUNGER KIDS

Find local volunteering opportunities that you can do along with your child—like helping at the local animal shelter or food bank.

#### FOR OLDER KIDS

The Born This Way Foundation offers the [Be There Certificate](#), where older adolescents can learn about mental health and how to safely support anyone who may be struggling with their mental health.

- Teach by example:** Modeling and identifying kindness and empathy at home can help your child begin to mirror those behaviors. For example, you can incorporate activities that help build empathy and teach healthy ways to cope when feeling frustrated or angry.<sup>20</sup>
  - [Find age-appropriate tips and activities](#) for your child in Playbook 3.
  - Provide positive feedback:** Provide praise and recognize your child when you see them showing compassionate and empathetic behavior toward others. Positive reinforcement can be much more effective than punishment.



## 4 Work with the School and Other Supports

First, contact your child's homeroom teacher or a caring adult that they spend a lot of time with.

### Some general recommendations when working with the school

1. **Create an action plan together:** After sharing your concerns with the teacher, ask for their perspective on the situation and let them know you are willing to work with the school to help stop your child from bullying. As a group (you, your child, and your child's teacher), come up with an action plan on how to best stop the bullying behavior. Sometimes, this action plan can include what the student who is bullied needs so they feel safe and supported at school.<sup>41</sup>
2. **Involve the child who was bullied:** Under the recommendation of your child's teacher and consent from the child who was bullied and their parents, repairing the situation can help your child see how their actions affect others.<sup>36</sup> It's important to note that you should not reach out individually to the other child or their parents. The teacher or school should act as a moderator between the two families.
3. **Research programs that encourage kindness:** Ask your child's school (or coach) for opportunities or groups in the community that your child can be a part of that encourage cooperative relationships and regularly practice kindness and teamwork.<sup>20,37</sup>
4. **Follow up:** Continue to check in periodically with your child's teacher and/or school to track progress and further work together on supporting your child to become a more compassionate and empathetic person.

#### Examples of making amends to the child who was bullied:<sup>41</sup>

- Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
- Write a letter apologizing to the student who was bullied.
- Do a good deed for the person who was bullied or for others in your community.



**Counseling may be needed for your child:** Additional help from a counselor or a psychologist can help you and your child to better understand and deal with bullying behavior. Working with a mental health professional can help your child develop healthy coping skills and positive social behaviors.<sup>38</sup>

For assistance finding mental health care for your child, check out this [resource from the National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) for helpful guidance and available options.

# Extended Information: Who Is Most at Risk to Bully and Bias-Based Bullying

## Who Is **Most at Risk** to Bully?

- **Peer factors:** When the child is trying to maintain social power to fit into a peer group, exclude others from the peer group, or control the behaviors of the peer group.
- **Family factors:** When the child may have family members/guardians who also exhibit bullying or aggressive behavior, do not provide healthy emotional support or communication, respond in authoritarian or reactive ways, or are overly lenient with little involvement in their child's life.
- **Emotional factors:** When the child may have been bullied in the past or currently, have low self-esteem or feelings of insecurity, have difficulty understanding others' emotions and controlling their own emotions, or have limited skills for handling social situations in healthy, positive ways.<sup>40</sup>
- **School factors:** When the child may be in a school where bullying is not properly addressed, or may experience exclusion or stigmatization at school.<sup>40,41</sup>

It should be noted that while the above factors are common reasons why youth exhibit bullying behaviors, youth who bully, and their reasoning for bullying, can come in many forms. They can be the popular kid wanting to hold their social status, the teacher's pet who is jealous of another kid of a higher social status than them, or even the star football player who wants to exert physical dominance over people who are smaller than him. Youth who bully can also have sound moral reasoning and can be both socially competent and high achievers. Just as there are many different reasons for youth to bully others, such as control over a person or situation, or getting attention from others, there is not a set list of attributes or qualities that make a person more likely to bully.<sup>7,42</sup>

## Who Is Most at Risk at Both Roles?

Youth who are bullied can often feel helpless and try to seek relief. As a defense mechanism, they can start bullying others. They might think that if they can bully others, maybe they can be immune to being bullied themselves. However, carrying both of these roles can cause a vicious cycle of negative behaviors and greater mental health issues.

Students who are both targets of bullying and engage in bullying behavior are at **greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems** than students who only bully or are only bullied.<sup>25</sup>



# Bullying Across Different Gender Identities



**Boys** who are bullied are more likely to bully others, thus taking part in both roles. Boys are also more likely to say they have been bullied physically (being hit, slapped, or pushed).<sup>25</sup>



**Girls** are more likely than boys to be involved in cyberbullying (either being bullied or bullying others). 15% of girls report being targets of abusive online behaviors, in comparison to only 6% of boys reporting being targets.<sup>7</sup>

## Youth Who Experience Trauma

**Children or teens who have been exposed to trauma and violence are more likely to bully others or be bullied.** If a child is either being bullied or exhibiting bully behaviors, it can be important to also take stock of any past traumas, as strategies can be different.<sup>39</sup>

### What does this look like?

**For a coach**, a minor foul can escalate into a fight with teammates, a lack of focus, or the inability to handle competitive pressure.

**For a teacher**, a child might continuously exhibit isolating or aggressive behavior during class.

## Othering and Bias-Based Bullying

**Othering** is the act of excluding or treating someone as an “outsider” because they are considered different from yourself or your group. This can lead to violent, exclusionary, or even aggressive bullying behaviors toward “outsiders.” This is called **bias-based bullying**, also known as stigma- or identity-based bullying.<sup>16,28</sup> Bias-based bullying can take many forms. It could look like offensive jokes and insensitive comments to someone you consider to be an “outsider.” It can also escalate into even more destructive behaviors, like hate crimes.<sup>29</sup>

In "The 2022 Choose Kindness Project Survey," teens reported the top reasons for bias-based bullying they experienced or have seen at school:

- Weight
- Appearance (not including weight or race)
- Sexual orientation
- Race or skin color
- Gender identity
- Political beliefs
- Disability
- Accent or country of origin
- Religion or spiritual beliefs

The most frequently reported bullying in elementary schools is **gender-based**, targeting children who don't fit into gender norms.<sup>30</sup>

This guide is designed to support all parents but if your child is dealing with bias-based or identity-based bullying, the following organizations may be able to provide you with additional resources:

#### **LBGTQ+ Youth:**

[GLAAD](#)

[GLSEN](#)

[The Jed Foundation](#)

[Welcoming Schools](#)

#### **Youth with Intellectual Disabilities:**

[Special Olympics](#)

#### **Race & Religion:**

[AAKOMA](#)

[Act to Change](#)

[Anti-Defamation League](#)

[Asian American Psychology Association](#)

[Hispanic Federation](#)

[NAACP](#)

# Important Definitions

- [Allyship](#) - Showing compassion and support for someone or communities that might be a target of bias and/or bullying<sup>31</sup>
- [Bias](#) - A belief that some people are better than others, often based on race, religion, ability, socioeconomic status, appearance, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity<sup>30</sup>
- [Bias-Based bullying](#) - Bullying that is motivated by a person's bias toward another (often times called stigma- or identity-based bullying)<sup>16</sup>
- [\\*Cyberbullying](#) - Bullying, such as threats, harassment, or humiliation, that occurs digitally<sup>21</sup>
- [Upstander](#) - A child who speaks or acts in support of an individual who is being harassed or bullied<sup>16</sup>
- [Intentional Inclusion](#) - When you accept, value, and include someone who is different from you<sup>32</sup>
- [Othering](#) - The act of excluding or treating someone as an 'outsider' of a group because they are considered different from yourself<sup>33</sup>
- [Social-Emotional Development](#) - Learning how to understand, experience, express, and manage emotions and to develop meaningful relationships with others<sup>34</sup>

\*While the word cyberbullying is common for adults, youth rarely use it. Teens often use [other language](#) to express that cyberbullying is happening.



The Choose Kindness Project is an Alliance of the nation’s leading nonprofit organizations that champion three major issue areas involving children and teens: bullying prevention, intentional inclusion, and youth mental wellness.

Guided by the 20+ members of the Alliance, The Choose Kindness Project is dedicated to inspiring a more inclusive world where all young people feel empowered to be themselves and feel safe to create the futures they imagine.

The project is activated through investments in research, collaborations, and innovations with the Alliance in order to help them expand their reach and impact. The Choose Kindness website aggregates resources for parents, teachers, and coaches to help navigate through these three major intersectional issues affecting children and teens.

[TheChooseKindnessProject.org](http://TheChooseKindnessProject.org)



→ Visit Playbook 1, [How to Help a Child Being Bullied](#)

→ Visit Playbook 3, [How to Support the Development of Kindness and Empathy in Our Youth](#)



## References

1. Act to Change. “What Is Bullying?,” May 13, 2022. <https://acttochange.org/resources/>.
2. Anti-Defamation League. “What Bullying Is and Is Not,” December 14, 2022. <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-bullying-and-not>.
3. Nansel, Tonja R., Mary Overpeck, Ramani S. Pilla, W. June Ruan, Bruce Simons-Morton, and Peter Scheidt. “Bullying Behaviors Among U.S. Youth.” JAMA 285, no. 16 (April 25, 2001): 2094. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.285.16.2094>.
4. Center for Disease Control. “Preventing Bullying.” Accessed February 6, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-factsheet508.pdf>.
5. Eslea, Mike, and Josette Rees. “At What Age Are Children Most Likely to Be Bullied at School?” Aggressive Behavior 27, no. 6 (2001): 419–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.1027>.
6. StopBullying.gov. “Warning Signs for Bullying,” November 11, 2021. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/warning-signs>.
7. The Jed Foundation. “Understanding Bullying,” July 29, 2021. <https://jedfoundation.org/resource/understanding-bullying/>.
8. NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. “Know the Warning Signs.” Accessed February 6, 2023. <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms>.
9. Anti-Defamation League. “Cyberbullying Warning Signs,” December 14, 2022. <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/cyberbullying-warning-signs>.
10. The Digital Wellness Lab. “Cyberbullying,” March 17, 2021. <https://digitalwellnesslab.org/parents/cyberbullying/>.
11. Sameer Hinduja, email message to authors, January 18, 2023.
12. Youth Media Representation Program members, email message to authors, January 18, 2023. Center for Scholars and Storytellers.
13. Anne Collier, email message to authors, January 18, 2023.
14. Amanda Third, email message to authors, January 18, 2023.
15. Anti-Defamation League. “Identity-Based Bullying,” December 14, 2022. <https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/identity-based-bullying>.
16. Facing History and Ourselves. “Upstander,” June 12, 2020. <https://www.facinghistory.org/upstander>.
17. The Jed Foundation. “Parent Conversation Guide.” Accessed February 6, 2023. <https://jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Parent-Conversation-Guide-JED-2018.pdf>.
18. National School Climate Center. “Resources for Parents,” August 19, 2021. <https://schoolclimate.org/resources-for-parents/>.
19. National Alliance on Mental Illness. “The Three C’s for Parents/Guardians.” Accessed February 6, 2023. [https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/The-Three-C-s-Parent-Guardians\\_-English\\_2022.pdf](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/The-Three-C-s-Parent-Guardians_-English_2022.pdf).
20. Anti-Defamation League. “Bullying Prevention and Intervention Tips for Families.” Accessed February 6, 2023. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Bullying-Prevention-and-Intervention-Tips-for-Families.pdf>.
21. The Digital Wellness Lab. “Cyberbullying,” March 17, 2021. <https://digitalwellnesslab.org/parents/cyberbullying/>.
22. United States Department of Health and Human Services. “How to Talk with Educators at Your Child’s School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children.” Accessed February 6, 2023. <https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/7771/urlt/0084806-howtotalkwitheducators.pdf>.
23. Making Caring Common. “Questions to Ask Schools,” September 23, 2022. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/questions-ask-schools>.
24. Gordon, Sherri. “10 Types of Kids Most Likely to Be Bullied.” Verywell Family, March 25, 2021. <https://www.verywellfamily.com/reasons-why-kids-are-bullied-460777>.
25. National Center for Educational Statistics. “Student Reports of Bullying :Results From the 2017 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.” 2019. United States Department of Education.
26. Gordon, Allegra R., Kerith J. Conron, Jerel P. Calzo, Matthew T. White, Sari L. Reisner, and S. Bryn Austin. “Gender Expression, Violence, and Bullying Victimization: Findings From Probability Samples of High School Students in 4 U.S. School Districts.” Journal of School Health 88, no. 4 (March 2, 2018): 306–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12606>.
27. Human Rights Campaign. “CDC Releases National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Results,” August 26, 2020. <https://www.hrc.org/news/new-cdc-data-shows-lgbtq-youth-are-more-likely-to-be-bullied-than-straight-cisgender-youth>.

## References (cont.)

28. Anti-Defamation League. "What is Identity Based Bullying?" n.d. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/what-is-identity-based-bullying.pdf>.
29. Anti-Defamation League. "Pyramid of Hate," December 14, 2022. [https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/pyramid-hate-en-espanol?gclid=Cj0KQCQiA\\_bieBhDSARIsADU4zLdTj\\_LMCjWzXzqm7vp2U0tXLQdV\\_OaUKpfLNyLrvW3dZinb68mtGdAaAgXrEALw\\_wcB](https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/pyramid-hate-en-espanol?gclid=Cj0KQCQiA_bieBhDSARIsADU4zLdTj_LMCjWzXzqm7vp2U0tXLQdV_OaUKpfLNyLrvW3dZinb68mtGdAaAgXrEALw_wcB).
30. Human Rights Campaign. "Six Steps to Respond to Bias-Based Bullying," October 12, 2018. <https://www.hrc.org/news/six-steps-you-can-take-to-prevent-bias-based-bullying>.
31. Anti-Defamation League. "6 Ways to Be an Ally," December 14, 2022. <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-be-ally-en-espanol>.
32. Special Olympics. "What Is Inclusion?," July 9, 2020. <https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/impact/what-is-inclusion>.
33. Doing Good Together. "Beyond Our Neighbors Curriculum," n.d. <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/lessons/beyond-our-neighbors>.
34. Cohen, J., Onunaku, N., Clothier, S., & Poppe, J. "Helping young children succeed: Strategies to promote early childhood social and emotional development." 2005. In Research and Policy Report. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures.
35. StopBullying.gov. "How to Talk About Bullying," November 12, 2021. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/how-to-talk-about-bullying>.
36. UNICEF. "How to Talk to Your Children about Bullying," n.d. <https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-talk-your-children-about-bullying>.
37. StopBullying.gov. "Support the Kids Involved," December 5, 2019. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/support-kids-involved>.
38. Anti-Defamation League. "What to Do If Your Child Exhibits Bullying Behavior," n.d. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/What-to-Do-if-Your-Child-Exhibits-Bullying-Behavior.pdf>.
39. Positive Coaching Alliance Development Zone. "Adverse Childhood Experiences," n.d. <https://devzone.positivecoach.org/resource/article/adverse-childhood-experiences>.
40. Positive Coaching Alliance Development Zone. "Understanding Trauma's Impact on Behavior," n.d. <https://devzone.positivecoach.org/resource/worksheet/understanding-traumas-impact-behavior>.
41. StopBullying.gov. "Who Is at Risk," June 2, 2021. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/at-risk>.
42. Faris, R., & Felmlee, D. "Casualties of social combat: School networks of peer victimization and their consequences." 2014. American Sociological Review, 79, 228-257.
43. The Jed Foundation. "Understanding Bullying," July 29, 2021. <https://jedfoundation.org/resource/understanding-bullying/>.
44. United States Department of Education. "Student Reports of Bullying :Results From the 2017 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey," July 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019054.pdf>.
45. Making Caring Common. "The Children We Mean to Raise: The Real Messages Adults Are Sending About Values — Making Caring Common," October 21, 2022. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/children-mean-raise>.
46. Lions Club. "Lions Quest SEL at Home Learning Together Resource," n.d. <https://www.lions-quest.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Lions-Quest-SEL-at-Home-Learning-Together-Resource-LQ200.pdf>.
47. National Alliance on Mental Illness. "A Week of Wellness." n.d. [https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/A-Week-of-Wellness\\_English\\_2022.pdf](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/A-Week-of-Wellness_English_2022.pdf).
48. National Alliance on Mental Illness. "10 Question Tuesday." n.d. [https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/10-Question-Tuesday\\_English\\_2022.pdf](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/10-Question-Tuesday_English_2022.pdf).
49. Making Caring Common. "How to Build Empathy and Strengthen Your School Community," January 30, 2023. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>.
50. Making Caring Common. "Inspire Everyday Acts of Caring with Family Routines," December 13, 2021. <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/inspire-everyday-acts-of-caring-with-family-routines>.
51. What If You Had the Power to Change the World? n.d. [Kindness.org](https://www.kindness.org). Accessed February 21, 2023.
52. Welcoming Schools. "Research Connections: Equity, School Climate, and Academic Achievement." n.d. [https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/welcoming-schools/documents/WS\\_Research\\_Connections\\_Equity\\_Academic\\_Achievement.pdf](https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Research_Connections_Equity_Academic_Achievement.pdf).
53. National Crime Prevention Council. "Stop Cyberbullying Before It Starts." n.d. <http://archive.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/bullying/cyberbullying.pdf>