



## What You Can Do

A PEATC  
Bullying Prevention and  
Awareness Brief  
for Virginia's Parents

### WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is characterized by aggression used within a relationship where the aggressor(s) has more real or perceived power than the target. Bullying can involve overt physical behavior or verbal, emotional, or social behaviors.

Cyber bullying can include offensive text messages or e-mails, rumors or embarrassing photos posted on social networking sites, or fake online profiles.

100 N Washington Street, Ste. 234  
Falls Church, VA 22046  
800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010  
[www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org)

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO

## *What You Can Do*

Bullying affects everyone. Whether you're the target, the witness, or even the kid who picks on others, there's something you can do to put an end to bullying.

### —Target—

#### You Are In Control

Being bullied? There's a lot that you can do.

*Try these tips.*

#### **What a Bully Looks for — Differences**

*How You Can Protect Yourself—*Respect differences.

Everyone has differences. Just look around you. When you value and respect differences, you let the bully know that being different doesn't bother you a bit. In fact, you like it! If a bully makes fun of your red hair or hearing aid or how you talk, just smile and agree.

"Yes, I do have red hair."

"Yes, I do use a hearing aid."

"Yes, I do stutter."

Then walk away!

#### **What a Bully Looks for — Helplessness**

*How You Can Protect Yourself—*Don't react.

Kids who bully want you to be upset. They're counting on it. So don't give them what they want! Even if you feel scared or upset, try not to show it. Crying, showing fear, or acting mad encourages the bully to pick on you again. If a bully calls you names in gym class, do something unexpected. Yawn. Laugh. Walk away.

#### **What a Bully Looks for — Isolation**

*How You Can Protect Yourself—*Be with others.

Kids who bully love to target kids who are alone. They love it when no one knows what they're up to. So try to hang out with other teens or be within sight of a grownup. (Most bullying happens when adults are not around.) Tell a parent, teacher, or other grownup you trust. Adults can help you stop the bullying.

If a bully shoves you against a locker and threatens to beat you up after school, remember not to act as upset as you feel (why give 'em what they want?). Keep your voice calm and steady. Hold your head high. Look the bully straight in the eye, and say, "No! Leave me alone." Say it strong and loud; you'll be sure to attract a crowd — which is exactly what the bully doesn't want.

Oh, and one more thing. Remember that trying to get even with someone who bullies is never a good idea. When you fight back, there is a good chance that the bullying will continue and even become worse. Also, the adults at school may see you as a part of the problem.

## —Witness—

Here You Come to Save the Day!

What would you do if you saw a bank being robbed? Or a house on fire? Or a car go off the road?

It might not be safe to rush into the scene, but you'd call 9-1-1, right?

It's like that when you see bullying. It might not feel safe to jump into the situation at the moment, but you can still help the person being bullied.

How? Tell an adult, be a friend to the kid being bullied, convince others to stand up against bullying. What other ideas do you have?

Heroes and heroines don't need super powers. They just need to do what they can—even a small step behind the scenes—to help make a difference.

## —Bully—

Think About It. You might think bullying is fun or makes you cool, but think about it.

What's fun or cool about hurting someone? Name calling, tripping someone, laughing at them, leaving them out, ignoring them—it really says more about you than them.

A lot of kids bully because they:

- have troubles at home and use bullying as a way of taking out their frustration or unhappiness on someone else
- want to make sure they stay part of a group
- are jealous of someone
- want to feel powerful
- are looking for attention, and the only way they know how to get it is to pick on someone

Others might act like they think your bullying is cool, but odds are, they're just afraid of getting on your bad side. Wouldn't you rather have friends who actually like you instead of ones who are scared of you? They could even help you deal with whatever problems you have.

Ready to get real? The first step is to recognize that you bully others. Then think about the consequences of what you're doing. It might seem like your bullying isn't a big deal, but it can destroy a person's self-esteem and confidence for years to come. You want that on your conscience? And don't forget, it might come back to hurt you, too. You could be suspended or expelled from school. If you physically hurt someone, you could also be arrested and have a police record. Is that the future you want for yourself?

Once you start bullying, it can be hard to stop. But remember, you're not alone, and it's not too late to change. Here's how to show you're really in control. Find an adult you trust and start talking. Whether it's your mom or dad, a teacher, school counselor, or another trusted grown-up, tell them about what's going on and ask for help. Believe it or not, adults can actually be useful in helping you deal with the reasons you bully and in finding better ways to treat others. You want cool? That's cool.

