



## **Taking Action Together: The Role of Bystanders in Bullying**

### **Acknowledgements**

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# Taking Action Together: The Role of Bystanders in Bullying

## Aim:

The activities outlined below have been developed for use with students in Key Stage 2/3/4. The aim of the resource is to provide children with an opportunity to explore the role of the bystander and look at how they can respond quickly and appropriately if they see bullying taking place.

## Context:

What we know:

- 85% of bullying takes place with bystanders present.
- In playground observations, children intervened in significantly more episodes than adults did (11% of episodes versus 4%).
- Bystanders play a very important role in bullying situations. Research shows that bullying behaviour will stop in less than 10 seconds nearly 60% of the time when peers intervene.

### Intended learning outcomes:

- An increased knowledge of the role of bystanders (both positive and negative) in bullying situations
- An understanding of techniques to enable children to safely intervene in a bullying situation
- Understand that individuals can make a difference.

### Suggested success measures:

- Over a period of time more children are reporting bullying they have witnessed to adults and adults are intervening.
- Children report that they feel safer in their school.
- Young people report that they are more likely to support someone they see being bullied
- Children are aware of a range of strategies they can take that will be the most effective against bullying behaviour.

### Key messages:

- Bullying will only stop if we take action together.
- Bullying behaviour can be fuelled by the action, or lack of action of the bystander.
- The majority of children, adults, schools and communities do want to take action to tackle bullying but find it hard to know who to tell, who can help, or what strategies really work.
- We know that significant numbers of children who witness bullying still don't tell anyone or take action to stop it.

## Key Stage One Resources

Children can be taught from a very early age the importance of intervening if they see unkind or bullying behaviour taking place. The aim of the following activities is to create an environment where rules of behaviour are clear, children feel safe and understand that everyone has a responsibility to prevent bullying.

The following activity has been specifically developed for Key Stage 1 children and should be used in conjunction with **the IdiBod PowerPoint slide**.

**Setting the scene:** Explain to children that Bubod has never really got on with Vibod and that Bubod has been calling Vibod nasty names every time he sees him.

On your first click of the slide you will bring in the characters Bubod (on the left) and Vibod (on the right).

Ask the children:

- What might Vibod be feeling?
- Why might Bubod be being nasty?

Clicking a second time will introduce one of Vibod and Bubod's friends. Explore how each friend might be feeling. What are they doing? Are they encouraging the behaviour? A third click will introduce more friends. Again, ask what the friends might be feeling and what they are doing.

PowerPoint Slide

### Learning outcomes

- Children understand the role of the bystander in bullying behaviour
- Children understand how their actions – or inactions – can either prevent or escalate bullying behaviour
- Children learn successful strategies and skills to prevent bullying behaviour

**The Role of the Bystander**

**What would your role be?**

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What might happen if Vibod's friends start saying nasty things to Bubod and his friends?

Click on the slide two more times. This will introduce more bystanders in each corner of the slide. Explore how each bystander might be feeling and their body language. What happens if the bystanders just ignore the situation? How will this affect Vibod? What could the bystanders do?

What could they say or do to help Vibod? What sort of things might they say to Bubod that will stop him being nasty?

What should you do if you see this going on in the playground or class but you do not feel safe or confident about saying something?

Explain that they are the people who can help in these situations and that they need to do something about it – either by offering support Vibod, saying something to people like Bubod or by telling to an adult.

### **Grassing vs. Reporting.**

Often children do nothing to intervene, particularly reporting bullying behaviour, because they do not want to be called a **'grass'** by their peers, and by the time they are 12 years old will do almost anything to avoid being labelled this.

However, children need to understand that when someone is in danger or at risk of being hurt, they have a responsibility to report it to an adult. If they saw someone falling over in the playground and really hurting themselves everyone in the playground would probably go and get help from an adult. Why is it different when they see bullying behaviour taking place?

Finally, ask the children to make up a slogan to persuade bystanders to do something about it when they see nasty stuff going on

Slogans examples might be:

- **'See something, say something'**
- **See it, get help, stop it'**
- **Stand up, speak out, take action**
- **Taking action together**

The top left bystander is feeling upset and worried. Explain sometimes when we see things happening that we don't like we can often feel like this, sometimes for a long time after the incident.

The top right bystander looks worried and unsure about what to do. This is a common feeling.

The bottom left bystander looks like they are pretending to ignore the bullying incidents.

Bottom right like the previous bystander is walking past and ignoring the bullying.

## Key Stage 2/3/4 resources

### **Activity: What is a bystander?**

Ask the children to think of other words to describe a bystander e.g, onlooker or witness.

Explain:

***A bystander is 'a person who does not become actively involved in a situation where someone else requires help' (Clarkson 1996, p6) and in this way is understood to be a passive observer, an onlooker who watches something happening, but stays on the sidelines and doesn't intervene or get help, even if someone needs it.***

Explain that there are various roles that bystanders can adopt there are hurtful and helpful bystanders. These include:

**The ringleader** – those initiating or leading the bullying, but not always the person 'doing' the bullying.

**Assistant** – those involved in 'doing' the bullying.

**Reinforcer(s)** - supports the bullying, might laugh or encourage other people to collude with what is going on.

**Outsider(s)** - ignores any bullying and doesn't want to get involved.

**Defenders(s)** - stands up for someone being bullied. Know that bullying is wrong. Feels confident enough to do something about it. This might include talking to an adult in or outside school.

**Activity: Would you intervene if you saw someone being bullied? (see Resource One)**

Split the children into small groups and provide each group with a photograph(s), which illustrates a bullying incident. Ask the children to consider reasons why they think those in the photographs have not intervened and write these on post it notes.

These should be placed on flipchart paper under a heading 'No support'. Allow 10 minutes for this activity. Now as a whole group, discuss the reasons they have given.

Next, ask the children to consider reasons why they think people should intervene. Again ask them to write these on post it notes and place these on a flipchart under the heading 'Support'. Facilitate a further discussion on the reasons they have given in favour of supporting a person being bullied.

Factors that might prevent children (or adults) from intervening:

- Fear of becoming a target themselves
- Fear of being called a 'grass' or 'snitch'
- It's only a bit of fun
- Ignore it and it will go away
- They deserve it
- A belief that people should be able to stick-up for themselves

Factors that *incline* children (or adults) to intervene:

- Empathy
- Perception that friends expect them to help
- Some experience of helping a victim in the past
- Age – primary age are more likely to help than secondary pupils
- Gender – girls more likely to intervene than boys

**Activity: Extension Activity: First They Came poem (see Resource Two)**

Split the children into small groups and handout copies of the poem and ask everyone to read it. In their groups ask them to discuss the following points.

**Discussion Points**

- What do you think the poem is about?
- Who are the "they" mentioned in the poem?
- What do you think is the central message of the poem?
- What does the poem have to do with our lives at school?

Ask the children to feedback to the whole group some of the things that they discussed.

**Activity: What can I do? (see Resource Three)**

This activity is to give children some ideas of interventions they could use to stop a person being bullied.

In small groups ask the children to order/rank the 9 statements provided based on their likely effectiveness. Allow 10 minutes for this activity. Facilitate a discussion on why the group have decided that some strategies may be more effective than others.

Careful consideration will need to be given to strategy '**use violence against the person doing the bully**'. Discuss the potential difficulties with this strategy e.g. any violence in school is unacceptable and could escalate the bullying.

**Activity: Three-step plan (see Resource Four)**

The aim of the following activity is to allow children to begin to consider ways in which they, the group or class, can start to challenge bullying in their group, class, or school.

Divide the children into small groups of 3-5. Hand out copies of the three-step plan worksheet and ask them to complete the worksheet by deciding on what:

- I can do to challenge bullying
- Our group/class can do to challenge bullying
- Our group/school can do to challenge bullying

Now ask each group to feedback to the whole group what they came up with. You may wish to consider incorporating some of the suggestions that the young people come up with into your group or school's anti-bullying policy or statement.

## Resource One: Bystanders

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## Resource Two: First They Came poem

### First They Came

First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists and I did not speak out - for I was not a communist.

Next they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me and there was no one left, to speak out for me.

by Pastor Martin Niemöller

**Resource Three (a): What can I do?**

**Tell an adult**

**Tell an older child**

**Encourage the bullied person to tell someone**

**Show your disapproval to the bully**

**Walk away and ignore the bullying**

**Tell the bully to stop**

**Use violence against the bully to make them stop**

**Form a friendship group for the person being bullied to make sure they are not isolated**

**Go and get a group of mates to help you stop the bullying**

### **Tell an Adult:**

Most adults will want to know if bullying is taking place. You may need to be persistent to ensure that the adult recognises that something needs to be done. If necessary ask them what they are going to do. This is not about 'grassing or snitching' but about keeping safe.

- **Tell an older child:**

It may be a good idea for a child to talk to someone older about the bullying. They may be able to offer support in stopping the bullying or advising what to do next.

- **Encourage the bullied person to tell someone:**

It is important that the child being bullied talks to someone they can trust about the bullying. Hopefully this person will help the bullied person think of ways of making the bullying stop.

- **Show your disapproval to the bully:**

You can do this by showing your or saying something to them. By telling the child doing the bullying that you do not think what they are doing is right, you can make them think twice about their behaviour. It may make the bullying stop.

- **Walk away and ignore the bullying**

If you see someone being bullied, it may be tempting to ignore it. However, children should always try and stop it where this is safe to do. If they do nothing then they are saying that the bullying is ok (colluding). Walking away deprive the bully of an audience.

- **Tell the bully to stop, if it is safe to do so:**

Be assertive and tell the bully to stop. It may make them think twice about their actions. It is important to make sure that the child is safe and the bully does not take action against them for speaking out.

- **Use violence against the bully to make them stop:**

It is important to understand that using violence against the bully could get the child into trouble and will often only escalate the problem. This is not the answer to stop bullying!

- **Go and get a group of mates to help you stop the bullying:**

This can be a very effective way of stopping bullies. A child and a group of mates can tell the bully that what they are doing is wrong. By acting in a group it can be less scary than speaking out alone. This is the power of the bystander.

- **Form a friendship group for the person being bullied to make sure they are not isolated**

This is a very effective way of stopping the bullying because it limits the power of the bully who is more likely to target people who do not have friends. Friends tend to stick up for each other so the group immediately supports the bullied person.

# Resource Four: Three-step plan

*What can I do?* .....

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*What can our class or group do?*.....

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*What can our school do?*.....

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