

What YOU Can Do About Bullying

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You're an adult who cares about kids.

Maybe you're a parent, a teacher, a school volunteer, a janitor, secretary, neighbor, or community member.

And a kid has come to you to tell you s/he is being bullied by a peer.

What can you do? What do you do?

Here's a list to get you started. (These are mechanisms of interruption and intervention, not prevention. Looking for prevention? Ask Leah how: leah@with-respect.com)

1. The number one deterrent to bullying behavior is adult presence. Encouraging students to avoid isolation and actually placing themselves near adults is a good first step. Being the adult whose space they can be in is perfect. But it isn't always conducive. Who are the adults in the most likely environments that bullying occurs for that student? Hallways? Playground? Lunch room? School bus? Who are specific adults that you can talk to, possibly with the student, who might be willing to be "available" simply by being around and keeping an eye open for the student. It would be perfect if when that child enters the adult's eye view, there was a verbal greeting exchanged between the adult and the student. This should, of course, be discussed and agreed upon with the child. The intentional recognition allows all within the area to be aware that there is a witness to anything that might happen. You'd be amazed at how much this can reduce occurrence.
2. Research tells us that the stronger kids' social networks are the less likely they are to be recurring targets for bullying behavior. What can you do to increase this student's social network? Can you be the transportation to dance or science camp? Can you become a youth leader in the community, something this student would specifically be interested in? Consider other community involvement opportunities; boys and girls clubs, 4H, community pantries, animal shelters... What is the part of the picture missing for this student to be involved? Consider how you can facilitate their participation happening.
3. Say something. If you see bullying happening, step in. In my opinion, things like name-calling, rough physical contact ("bumping" into people in the halls, tripping), threatening body language all need to be called out in the moment. The more adults that can and will do that, the less of the behaviors will occur. Many of

these behaviors are the subtlety of bullying. They can be precursors or intermittent reminders. When a blind-eye (or ear) is turned it is the same as accepting and condoning the behaviors.

4. Often, those targeted by bullying behavior have issues with self-esteem. What can you do to promote this specific student's self-perception? Maybe it's creating the opportunity for them to do something well for which they can earn praise and positive recognition. Weeding the garden, mowing the lawn, entering an art or writing contest, mentoring younger children, or serving in the community as a youth representative. Think outside the box a variety of ways you can support the development of a student's sense of self. A great resource is the [40 Developmental Assets of the Search Institute](#).
5. Spearhead a committee or task force for your school, organization, or community that directly addresses bullying with systemic ideas that are implemented to create the necessary change. If you and your organization are ready, Leah offers a program that can help. Contact her today: leah@with-respect.com

There are ways to interrupt, intervene, stop, and prevent bullying. But they require we DO SOMETHING. Waiting for others to do something and then blaming them when they don't is not working.

The bottom line is we have to come together to battle this symptom of what's gone wrong in our systems. I'd love to engage in more conversation about what you're doing and how I can support your work. [Contact me today](#) and let's see what we can DO!