

Be UPSTANDING

Learn what bullying is and what to do about it.



By Dr. Susan Swearer

It is going to happen to everyone at some point. Yes, even you. You will be teased about something. Someone will be mean to you. Maybe sometime you will feel left out or hurt. The good thing is, those usually are temporary actions and feelings.

But when teasing and mean words cross the line and become bullying, it's time to step in and step up.



What Bullying Is

Three factors define bullying:

- It is mean behavior done on purpose.
- There is a power imbalance — bullies are usually bigger or older or stronger or more popular, or other factors.
- Bullying is repeated. It has to happen several times to be defined as bullying, which is different from teasing and/or being mean a time or two.

CONTINUED >





VERBAL BULLYING

Three out of four young people will experience bullying during their school years. Both guys and girls can experience one or all four forms of bullying:

- **Verbal:** saying mean things, calling others mean names, saying threatening things, and using words to intimidate and harass.
- **Physical:** hitting, pushing, kicking, shoving and being physically aggressive.
- **Relational:** leaving someone out of a group, inviting everyone to a party except one or two people and trying to damage someone's reputation (like by spreading rumors).



ELECTRONIC BULLYING



- **Electronic:** using social media to engage in verbal and relational bullying by blocking people from group chats, kicking someone off a game or group chat, and using social media platforms or messaging to intimidate and harass. Bullies often use all four forms.



THE BULLYING DYNAMIC

The Bullying Dynamic

There are many ways guys and girls can experience or participate in bullying. In this "bullying dynamic," some people might even be involved in multiple roles at the same time or different roles at different times.

Think about these roles:

- **Target:** The target of bullying.
- **Bully:** The person doing the bullying.
- **Bully-Target:** A person who both bullies others and is bullied.
- **Bystander:** Someone who observes bullying happening to others.
- **Not involved:** Someone who does not experience or witness bullying.
- **Upstander:** The person who stands up when he or she sees bullying happening.

Bullying is often related to other problems, such as feelings of sadness and depression, anxiety, not wanting to go to school, and problems with friends and family.

People who were involved in bullying when they were kids can experience some of these problems as adults. It is important not to be involved in bullying at all. It can cause lifelong problems.

From elementary to middle to high school, bullying can look different. Bullying by younger kids tends to be more physical and verbal. In high school, bullying might be more relational and electronic.

CONTINUED >



TARGET



BULLY



BULLY-TARGET



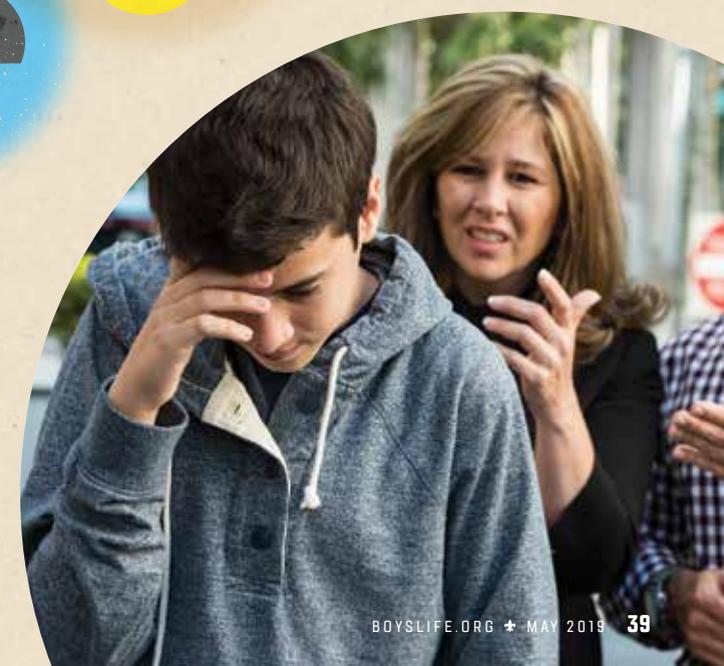
BYSTANDER



NOT INVOLVED



UPSTANDER





WE CAN ALL *Be* UPSTANDERS

Be an Upstander

Bullying is complicated. The good news is that we can all be upstanders — people who are prepared to do the right thing at the right moment. If you see someone being bullied or you know of someone being bullied, here's how you can be an upstander:

- Tell the person that the bullying is not OK.
- Encourage him or her with simple, positive statements, such as “You deserve to be treated better.”
- Ask the person if he or she needs help.
- Offer to go with the person to tell a trusted adult.
- Include in your group the person being bullied.
- Help the person to not feel alone.
- Offer kindness and a smile.

Sometimes simple acts like a smile or a compliment can really change a person's day. Targets of bullying often feel very alone, and upstanders can help everyone feel supported and included. ✦

Dr. Susan Swearer is co-director of the **Bullying Research Network** and the Willa Cather Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

For more information about bullying and what to do about it, visit go.boyslife.org/resources and go.boyslife.org/books

Netsmartz: go.boyslife.org/netsmartz

Government anti-bullying site: go.boyslife.org/stopbullying

BULLYING IS NOT OK

