



How Common is it?

- The majority of bullying takes place at school: 1 in 4 U.S. students say they have been bullied at school. ([National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015](#))
- 70% of children have seen bullying in their schools. 62% witnessed bullying two or more times in the last month and 41% witness bullying once a week or more. ([nobullying.com, 2014](#))
- 64 percent of children who were bullied did not report the incident; only 36 percent reported the bullying. ([Petrosina, Guckenburg, DeVoe, and Hanson, 2010](#))
- More than half of bullying situations **stop** when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied. ([Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig, 2001](#))
- When peers intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds, 57% of the time. ([signewhitson.com, 2015](#))

What Is Bullying, Exactly?

Bullying is **unwanted, aggressive behavior** that involves a real or perceived **power imbalance**. Bullying involves unwanted behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

In conflict, most children self-monitor their behavior and generally stop negative behavior when they realize they are hurting another child. However, in bullying situations, children **continue** the hurtful behavior even after they realize the behavior is hurting someone else. Further, the negative or hurtful behavior **persists** and is repeated as the feelings of power and control increase. **Bullying rarely occurs between evenly matched opponents; the child bullying almost always has more power, in some way, than the target.**

Who Bullies? Who Gets Bullied?

There is no mold for who can bully or who can be bullied. Bullying is a *behavior*, **not an identity**. Anyone can bully, and anyone can be bullied. Those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources—popularity, strength, cognitive ability—and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics—or not. Any student can exhibit bullying behavior – male or female, popular or less popular, students with good grades, and those who struggle academically. Teachers and parents need to focus on a student's behavior, not their profile or 'label' when determining if bullying is happening.

Remember, bullying is usually about an imbalance of power.



What is the Impact?

Some believe bullying makes children tougher and is not a serious problem, but the reality is that students who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, which often last into adulthood
- Increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns and other health complaints
- Loss in interest in activities formerly enjoyed
- Decreased academic achievement, including decreased GPA and lower standardized test scores, as well as decreased overall school participation
- Increased school absences, skipping school, or dropping out of school

Bullying is not a “rite of passage” but a threat to student well-being.

Bullying Misperceptions

MYTH: “Ignoring bullying will make it go away.”

FACT: Ignoring bullying will **not** make it go away. In fact, ignoring situations involving bullying often makes the situation worse, because it sends a message that the target is powerless and unable to do anything about the behavior and gives the person doing the bullying emotional satisfaction.

MYTH: “Children and even adults who bully are mostly loners with few social skills.”

FACT: Individuals who bully usually do **not** lack friends. In fact, much research finds that those who bully have **larger** friendship networks than other children. Importantly, they usually have at least a small group of friends who support and encourage their bullying behavior. Children (and adults) who bully also generally have more leadership skills than targets of bullying or children not involved in bullying.

MYTH: “Bullied kids need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.”

FACT: Some children have the confidence and skills to stop bullying when it happens, but many do not. Moreover, children shouldn't be expected to deal with bullying on their own. Bullying is a form of victimization and peer abuse. Just as society does not expect victims of other types of abuse to “deal with the situation on their own,” we should never expect this from children who are targets of bullying. Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop bullying, as do other children who witness or observe bullying.



YOU Can Make a Difference! WE Can Make a Difference!

At School

According to the [Center for Disease Control](#), promising elements of bullying prevention programs include:

- Using school rules and behavior management methods to address bullying.
- Implementing and enforcing a school-wide bullying prevention policy.
- Encouraging cooperation between school staff, parents, and other professionals to discuss and address the seriousness of bullying.
- Reinforcing positive, 'kindness-counts' behavior in students and staff.

The Power of Peers

Ironically, **peers have perhaps the greatest power** to prevent and overcome bullying behavior.

- **Student bystanders** are usually aware of bullying situations **before adults** in schools.
- Research suggests that **peers are present during nine out of every 10 incidents of bullying** but intervene on behalf of victims less than 20% of the time.
- The same study documents that when peers do intervene on behalf of the student being bullied, 57% of the bullying situations stop within 10 seconds. ([Youth Voice Project](#)). This holds true regardless of the specific words the bystander uses. In other words, it's not how a young person intervenes so much as simply the fact that he or she *does* intervene, that brings about the desired change in stopping the bullying behavior.
- **Educating our youth that their voice *can and does* make a difference is an empowering message with implications far beyond bullying prevention.**

A Message for Families and Children

Hope starves when it seems there is no plausible way out of a crisis. Fear and anxiety often become overwhelming, alluding children and their families from seeking help – emotionally, socially, physically, academically, or spiritually. Often, children may not be able to see a way out of the painful situation. It is helpful to know others have been where they are and have found their way through the hurt. Few things are more powerful than seeing possibilities and feeling hope. **As you hear or learn about hope-filled stories, please share those with us at <mailto:lauri@lifeisastorybook.com?subject=My Story>.**

There is power in our shared stories. Words matter. Kindness Counts.