
BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

RECOMMENDED LESSON

Social Bullying

This lesson outlines one simple way to integrate the Bystander Revolution Social Bullying video playlist and discussion questions into a middle school classroom setting.

Grade Level:
Middle School

Estimated Time:
45 minutes

**Common Core
ELA Standards
Grades 6–8:**
R.7, SL.1.B,
SL.1.C, SL.1.D,
SL.2, SL.3, SL.5,
W.2.A, W.2.B,
W.2.C, W.2.D,
W.2.E, W.2.F,
W.3, W.4

OVERVIEW

Students will discuss what social bullying is, along with suggestions for safe actions they can take when they witness or experience it. Students will watch videos with personal advice on social bullying from celebrities, leaders, and students; share their own experiences; and debate the merits of different prevention, intervention, and coping strategies. The lesson concludes with an opportunity for the educator to discuss resources available to students at the school, and present an optional homework assignment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Define the term “social bullying.”
- Summarize solutions heard from celebrities, leaders, and students.
- Compare and contrast different prevention, intervention, and coping strategies.
- Apply the strategies to help themselves and others when they encounter social bullying.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Computer & internet access
- LCD projector (optional)
- [Social Bullying video playlist](#)
- Pens/pencils & paper

PREPARATION

- First, watch the Social Bullying video playlist.
- Familiarize yourself with the definition of social bullying.
- Copy the **Graphic Organizer** (pg.7), one for each student.

PROCEDURE

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Introduce the topic by asking students the following questions:

- What comes to mind when you hear the words “social bullying”?
- Do you think cliques or peer pressure play a role in how people treat others at school?
- How do rumors start and spread?
- Do you think people ever get bullied by their own friends?
- Does exclusion count as bullying?

KEY QUESTION

How do social dynamics impact the ways we treat our peers, for better or for worse?

DEFINITION

Social bullying is: direct or covert bullying that intends to cause harm by damaging someone’s relationships or social status. Social bullying often occurs among friends and peer groups, e.g., excluding others from social activities, spreading rumors intended to damage someone’s reputation, humiliating someone in front of others, or withdrawing attention and friendship from a person.

Then explain to students that the definition of social bullying is: *direct or covert bullying that intends to cause harm by damaging someone’s relationships or social status. Social bullying often occurs among friends and peer groups, e.g., excluding others from social activities, spreading rumors intended to damage someone’s reputation, humiliating someone in front of others, or withdrawing attention and friendship from a person.*

Video Viewing

(15 minutes)

Introduce the video playlist by explaining to students that they are about to watch 6 short, unscripted videos from celebrities, leaders, and students talking about their personal experiences with social bullying. Instruct students to keep in mind any experiences they have had with social bullying and to consider whether the solutions presented in the videos would work in those situations. Provide students with the **Graphic Organizer** to keep track of their reactions. Then show the following 10-minute **playlist**.



Discussion

(15 minutes)

Below are some sample questions you might use to lead a conversation, as time permits. Each sample question has several possible follow-up questions that may be useful in the discussion.

1. Is social bullying as hurtful as other types of bullying? Why?

- Does it hurt more to be bullied or excluded by your own friends?
- What effect does being isolated have?
- Is it harder for teachers or parents to detect social bullying? Why?

FEATURED SOLUTION

QUESTION RUMORS

Questioning a rumor is a great way to stop it in its tracks. When someone passes along a rumor, ask them how they know whether it’s true.

2. Why would someone bully their own friends?

- Could it be to make themselves feel more powerful or in control?
- Might they do it out of jealousy? Why?
- Is it possible that they may be dealing with their own issues or insecurities, so they attempt to make someone feel more vulnerable?
- Is it because people often fall into specific roles in a group dynamic, and they feel pressured to fulfill certain expectations?

3. Do you think people find it easier to bully others when they're in a group? Why?

- Does having followers make someone who is bullying feel more powerful?
- Can silent or passive bystanders make the person who is bullying feel confident or justified in their behavior?
- Could the validation of a group make them less likely to question their actions?
- Can laughing along with the person bullying, or even standing by and saying nothing, make them think that what they are doing is okay?

4. If you are uncomfortable with how your friends treat you, what are examples of things you can do about it?

- Can you tell them how you feel and ask them to change the way they treat you?
- If your friends are bullying others or pressuring you into bullying others, can you tell them to stop, or say that it isn't cool and you won't participate?
- If talking to your friend or friends doesn't help, could you try to make new friends?

5. Can having empathy for a target of social bullying help you avoid joining in the behavior?

- How can it be helpful to step into someone's shoes and imagine their situation?
- If you know how it feels to be excluded or gossiped about, do you think you would be more likely to help someone else who is currently in that position?
- Do you think asking your friends to imagine themselves as the person being bullied could inspire them to stop bullying too?

6. What are examples of things you can do when you hear a rumor about someone?

- Could you make the decision not to spread it? How would that help?
- Could you ask your friends where they heard it? How might that help?
- Is it ever appropriate to do your own research into it?
When would that work?

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

Is there someone in your class that you've noticed looking down? Reach out to them and invite them to hang out with your friends, even if they're not normally part of your group. That tiny gesture could make a world of difference to them.

- If you questioned your friends when they were spreading a rumor, what do you think would happen?
- If someone knows there is a rumor being spread about them, could it be helpful to go up to them and tell them you don't believe it?

7. Why does Melissa Joan Hart think it's important for people to step out of cliques?

- What are the benefits of having friends in different social groups?
- How can reaching out to new people help you? How could it help them?
- What are some strategies that could help you meet new people?

8. In Tony Robbins' video, he tells the story of a group of kids who dressed up to support a peer who was bullied. Why do you think it was such an effective strategy?

- Do you think the group showing support made others reconsider how they treated the kid who was being bullied?
- Did the group make being kind look more fun than being mean?
- Do you think it helped that some popular students were in the group showing support?
- Is this an example of peer pressure being used for good?

9. Do you think Parker is right, that a student's example is more powerful than an adult's? Why?

- Have you ever looked to your peers, or to older students, as examples of how you should act?
- Do you think your peers would be more likely to listen to you than a teacher if you told them to stop bullying?
- Do you think people would be less likely to bully if they were in a school where no one else bullied?

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

Be a supportive friend. Look at your own behavior, and ask yourself honestly, "Do I increase or decrease the self-confidence of my friends?" You could be bullying your friends without even being aware of it.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

(5 minutes)

Ask students to reflect on Kate's story (video #2) about a time her friends turned on someone in their own friend group. Ask students to write a paragraph about what they would do in that situation to (a) address the bullying and (b) show support for the girl who was being bullied. If time permits, ask students to share what they've written with the class.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Let students know that if they are being bullied or know someone else who is, there are free, anonymous resources listed on bystanderrevolution.org/help. If there are resources available within your school, like a guidance counselor or social worker, you can make students aware of those options as well. You should also emphasize that if students are in danger or are witnessing an emergency, they should tell a teacher or guidance counselor, or call 911.

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Watch a video and reflect in writing

Have students visit bystanderrevolution.org and watch another video of their choosing. Ask students to write a letter to the person in the video, telling them why they agree or disagree with the advice presented. Ask them to tell the person how they might apply what was said to their own life.

2. The Weekly Stand

The Weekly Stand is a list of 52 simple, fun, transformative actions bystanders can take to reduce bullying and improve school culture. Each action contains helpful background information, suggested strategies and phrases to use, and a video for inspiration.

Have students go to bystanderrevolution.org/weekly, choose one of the actions to complete, and then turn in proof that they did it through some creative means: a photo, a screenshot, a short video, an essay, or even a comic strip.

ABOUT BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

Bystander Revolution is an online resource offering practical, crowdsourced advice about simple things individuals can do to take the power out of bullying.

As you watch these videos keep in mind any experiences you have had with social bullying. Consider whether the solutions presented in the videos would have worked in those situations. Use the notes column to keep track of comments, questions, or thoughts you may have.

| VIDEO | NAME | NOTES |
|---|--------------------------|-------|
| 1  | Question Rumors | |
| 2  | Kate | |
| 3  | Parker | |
| 4  | Tony Robbins | |
| 5  | Melissa Joan Hart | |
| 6  | Lily Collins | |