

Session 97: What to Do If Someone Bullies You

courage • personal responsibility • self-respect • assertiveness

Session 97 provides skills and strategies students can use if they are being bullied. This session is a follow-up to Session 96.

Students will

- understand that the words of someone who bullies them should never be taken personally
- review what they can do if they are bullied
- understand that they don't have to shoulder bullying alone
- reflect on the fact that bystanders can become upstanders who help

Materials

- handouts: "If You're Being Bullied" from Session 96 (page 225) and "The Real Deal About Bullying" from Session 95 (pages 221–222)
- "If You Are Bullied: Do's and Don'ts" chart from Session 95 (see page 219)
- *optional*: student journals

Preparation. Have on hand some extra copies of the handouts so students who forgot to bring theirs or were absent during Session 95 or 96 will have personal copies.

Introduction and Discussion. Have students bring their "If You're Being Bullied" handouts to the circle. Ask: **What questions came up for you as you read through this?** Respond to questions and comments kids had about what they read.

Remind students that if they've ever been bullied, they're not alone. At least 50 percent of kids in all age groups are bullied.* Consider sharing your own story if you've ever been bullied, too. Doing so will help kids who've been bullied feel less alone and safer about opening up.

If anyone reveals having been bullied, allow time for discussion. Refer to both handouts and to the chart. Say: **If you're being bullied it's really important to remember that you have worth and value just as you are, no matter what the other person says or does.** Discuss.

Say: **Let's take another look at the story from a real student you heard in the last session. I'm going to be asking several of you to play the roles of the kids in this story. Then we're going to think about what the boy who was being bullied might have done to help himself.** Read the story aloud to your class:

"There is a boy at school who gets bullied all the time. It started last year and still goes on. Everyone I know, except me and my best friends, tease him. I

feel so bad for him. I think he should learn better comebacks.

"Last year I was hoping they'd forget about him over the summer, but right after summer break was over, they kept bullying him. I wish it could stop, but it doesn't. I feel so bad for him."

Ask for a volunteer to play the role of the boy who was being bullied. Have two groups play the roles of the kids who bullied and the bystanders. Afterward, ask students: **What assertive comeback could this boy use to be an upstander for himself?** ("I don't deserve to be treated this way." "I'm not listening to you anymore.") Have the boy choose a comeback and speak up assertively. Then ask the class: **What other things could he do to deal with the bullying?** Discuss students' ideas, focusing on the "Do's and Don'ts."

Note: Sessions 107, Bullied on the Playground, and 109, Physically Bullied by a Group, address physical bullying in more depth and include a handout, "Keep Yourself Safe from Physical Harm." See page 250.

Ask the bystanders to face the class next, and ask: **What could these students have done to help instead of remaining silent?** Finally, ask the kids who bullied to face the class. Have the class suggest what these students should or could have done differently, especially those in the group who had guilty feelings about contributing to the bullying. Discuss, addressing students' fears about speaking out and their concerns about not going along with the crowd.

* New York University Child Study Center, January 2010.

Wrap-up. Stress that in all three roles—the person who’s bullied, the bystanders, or the student or students who are bullying—there are positive choices everyone can make. Reiterate that students who are being bullied do not ever deserve to be bullied.

Follow-up. Have students review with a trusted friend or family member things they can do to help themselves if they are ever bullied, and what might stand in the way of advocating for themselves. Suggest that they write about this in their journals, too.

“What If?” Questions About Getting Help from Adults

Students are likely to have concerns about telling an adult about bullying. Here are some questions they may ask and responses you can give:

“What if someone hurts me and they threaten to do it again if I tell?” Tell students: People threaten because they’re afraid of getting in trouble. If someone threatens your physical or emotional safety in any way, don’t remain silent. Talk to a trusted adult as quickly as you can.

“What if they tell me they’re going to wait for me off the school grounds?” Tell students: This is all the more reason to talk to an adult, like the teacher or guidance counselor. The school has rules that are meant to protect you in school and on the way home. If you remain silent, you put yourself at greater risk.

“What if telling makes it worse?” Tell students: If this happens, it’s time for a family grown-up (a parent or guardian) to meet with the principal. Adults at school and at home have an

obligation to keep you safe. Don’t let yourself be defeated by someone else’s cruelty.

“What if it’s someone from my group of friends who is threatening me? I feel like I need to be loyal.” Tell students to think about this: If your best friend was being threatened, what advice would you give? Wouldn’t you want to make sure your best friend was safe? So if the same thing is happening to you, you need to treat yourself like you would a good friend. Another thing to think about: If someone in your group is threatening or hurting you, do you really want to be loyal to this person?

“What if I’m too scared to tell anyone?” Tell students: By going to an adult, you can help yourself stop feeling scared. Plus, if you get help, you may help other kids find the courage to get help, too. One thing you might do is talk to an adult about how you can deal with the person who’s picking on you. You can decide what to say and role-play it first for practice. If this assertive approach doesn’t work, the adult can talk to the person who’s bullying you.