

# What is bullying?

## Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)

for Students with Disabilities

For Students

### Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

Bullying is **unwanted, aggressive or mean** behavior that involves a real or perceived **power imbalance** between the involved students. A power imbalance could be when one person is (or is thought to be) more popular, stronger, smarter, or has a higher social status than another person. Bullying is repetitive so it **happens over and over**, or is likely to happen over and over. Bullying can be physical (e.g., pushing), verbal (e.g., calling someone names), relational (e.g., leaving someone out of something), and it can happen in person or online. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place with the use of digital devices and typically occurs on social media or with cell phones.

Bullying can happen to **anyone!** Between 20-30% of students report experiencing traditional bullying and about 15-25% report cyberbullying. Some students are more at risk for being bullied. This includes those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer; racial or ethnic minorities in a school; and students with disabilities.

No one **ever** deserves to be bullied and it is **never** their fault if they are bullied. All students have a right to feel safe.

When we think about bullying we often think about the bully and the victim; however, youth may be involved in bullying in other roles. For example, there are also bystanders who see the bullying happen to others. Some students who see bullying help the victim, which is called being a defender. In contrast, there are also assistants who may act to help the bully and reinforcers who encourage the bully. Finally, there are students who see bullying but do nothing (outsiders).

#### Some examples of bullying are:

- Calling someone mean names
- Hitting, punching, or kicking someone
- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Talking about hurting someone
- Teasing someone
- Posting rumors about someone online
- Posting unkind comments on social media
- Making fun of someone's disability, race, gender, or sexual orientation

#### Some signs your friend is being bullied are:

- They do not want to hang out anymore
- They make changes in what they normally do like quitting an activity or not taking the bus
- They do not care about school anymore
- They change where or what they eat
- They have unexplained injuries
- They are missing personal items (money, electronics, etc.)

**Created by the NIU School Psychology Program.**  
**Find additional handouts on our website at [go.niu.edu/PPAB](http://go.niu.edu/PPAB)**



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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