



## **Bullying**

According to experts, there are more than two million bullies and nearly three million victims in American schools. Without intervention, the problem could become epidemic.

*Bullying* is a means of forcing other people to act or agree to a course of action. It frequently includes disparagement, physical aggression, insulting language, and threats or intimidation. It is important to realize that a bully is a person who feels inferior to those around him. At a subconscious level, bullies believe that their only significance in life, their way to belong, comes from making themselves more powerful than others. Bullies seem to have an instinctive ability to find and pick on weaker people. There is a type of fish, known as the Puffer, which frightens off enemies by puffing itself to a greater size. A bully is like a threatened puffer fish - that is, all puffed up and full of air. The best tool at the bully's disposal is the willingness of other people to be victims. When a bully meets weakness, he thrives. When a bully encounters dignity and assertiveness, he often deflates into nothingness.

### **Suggestions**

1. When you become aware of bullying behaviors either through observation or through report, you need to address the situation directly. You need to stop the behavior and take steps to assess the degree of bullying. If this is an isolated incident, you may speak to the student about his behavior and the effect he is having on others. If it seems to be an on-going problem, you may need to deal with it in a more formal way.
2. Let the victim know it is not their fault and that they can learn some skills and get some help to deal with it.
3. Put the problem of bullying on the class meeting agenda for students to work on together. Hearing the opinions of classmates often takes the wind out of the bully's sail.
4. Focus on the ways in which the students are currently reacting to the bullying. Tell them about the puffer fish. When they learn to change their response to bullying, the bullying is likely to cease.



5. Seek positive outlets through which the person used to bullying others can use her power to contribute to the classroom. Remember that you want to deflate the bullying behavior and not the person doing to bullying. Brainstorm with students about ways to foster a healthy sense of belonging and significance in people who use power in a hurtful way.

### Planning Ahead to Prevent Future Problems

1. Discuss with your students reasons why people use bullying behaviors. Make a list of the reasons. If it hasn't already come up in the discussion, let them know that bullying is learned. Let them know that no matter what happens in other parts of their lives, in your classroom everyone will be learning respectful ways to solve problems, and that it is not okay to treat anyone disrespectfully.
2. Read stories in which some characters bully others. Children's literature and folktales are rich with bullies. The witches, trolls, dragons and monsters in fairy tales all disintegrate when other characters stand up for them. Be sure to note that force or violence isn't necessary to deflate those who seem powerful.
3. Teach children how to assert their opinions and ask for what they want or need in a respectful manner.
4. Role play different responses people have to bullying. Help students see which are effective responses and which are ineffective.

*Would you like to receive one clock hour of training for reading  
"Bullying"?*

*If so, complete the worksheet at*

*[www.tymthetrainer.com/onlinetraining.html](http://www.tymthetrainer.com/onlinetraining.html)*

*and follow the instructions.*

*A one-hour training certificate will be provided.*