

# LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION



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## **SNAPSHOTS FOR BULLYING PREVENTION** IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

[OVERCOMINGOBSTACLES.ORG](http://OVERCOMINGOBSTACLES.ORG)

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# INTRODUCTION

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The following *Snapshots for Bullying Prevention* help you engage your students in critical thought—they will learn and practice respectful communication, understand what it feels like to be the victim of bullying, identify negative forms of peer pressure, and much more. Some of the material in this handbook may be emotionally difficult for your students, and it will be up to you to decide whether or not the content is appropriate for the class.

These snapshots were designed to supplement the lessons found in the Overcoming Obstacles Middle and High School level curriculum. We hope you find them helpful in your efforts to stop bullying in your school. Please contact us at [info@overcomingobstacles.org](mailto:info@overcomingobstacles.org) if you have any questions about Overcoming Obstacles.

# Snapshots | BULLYING PREVENTION

## PUT-DOWNS MAKE US FEEL...

20 MINUTES

**OBJECTIVE:** Students identify the emotions connected to put-downs and bullying.

Ask your students to think about a time when they heard someone being made fun of, teased, or put down. Tell students they will use this incident to answer some questions.

Distribute an index card to each student. Ask students to answer on the index card the following questions about the incident, telling them that they should not use names or other identifying information in their responses and that they will share their responses with the class:

- Why was the person being teased or put down?
- How do you think this teasing made the person feel?
- How did you feel when you heard this teasing?
- What emotions came to mind as you answered these questions? Write a list at the bottom of your card.

When students have finished writing, collect all of the cards. Shuffle the cards and redistribute them throughout the class. Go around the room and ask students to read only the emotions listed at the bottom of their cards. As these are read, ask students to raise their hands if they have ever felt the emotion being described (*and not necessarily because of teasing or bullying*).

Next, divide students into groups of three. Ask group members to share their cards with one another. Have groups take a few minutes to brainstorm how a bystander might have defused the teasing mentioned on the card. Ask a few groups for their ideas. (*Responses may include telling the bully to stop and leading the victim away from the situation.*)

To conclude the activity, ask students why people use put-downs. Have they ever witnessed this outside of school, in their homes, or in their neighborhoods? Ask students to think of strategies that will help them to stop putting down and teasing other people. And ask them how they feel about teasing someone in the future after identifying the emotions that people feel when being teased or put down. Would students ever want to feel like that?

**OBJECTIVE:** Students learn and practice respectful communication.

Pair students. Give them several minutes to tell their partners two things they like about themselves.

Bring students back together and have them sit in a circle. Explain to students that in many tribal communities, people use a “talking stick” to ensure that each person in the circle has a turn to share his or her ideas and opinions with the rest of the tribe. Explain that the rules of the talking stick are:

- The person holding the stick has the right to speak.
- Everyone else is expected to listen with respect.
- Do not use negative comments when talking about another person.
- When you are finished talking, pass the stick to another person.

Hand one student the talking stick. Have this student introduce his or her partner and share what they said. When finished, the student should pass the talking stick to the student on his or her right. This student should introduce his or her partner and repeat the task. The stick should move all the way around the circle until every student has participated.

After the stick has gone around the circle once and all partners have been introduced, give the class a topic that you would like them to talk about. Then give the talking stick to a student in the circle. Ask that student to share his or her ideas and opinions on the given topic with the rest of the class. When he or she is finished, he or she should pass the stick to someone who would like to speak next. Explain that, this time, the talking stick does not need to go around the circle—it can be passed to anyone who feels ready to speak. Let students pass the stick until everyone has been heard.

To conclude the activity, review the rules used during the talking-stick meeting: one person speaks at a time if they choose, listen to the student speaking, and no put-downs or name-calling. Compliment those students who followed the rules throughout the entire activity.

Ask students to identify other times when this circle and the talking stick might be useful (*for example, resolving conflicts during team sports, sharing opinions about a heated issue*). Tell students that the talking stick will remain in the classroom and will be used whenever anyone feels that a respectful meeting is needed.

## IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students understand how it feels to be a victim of bullying.

Have students imagine that they will have to spend an entire school day without speaking to, sitting with, or hanging out with their friends. Give students time to fully understand this scenario.

Explain to students that people who are bullied often feel alone and may have only a few friends. Ask students why they think this is the case.

To conclude, discuss as a class how it would feel to be alienated for a day. Then ask:

- Would you ever want to feel like that?
- Would you want other people to feel like that?
- What are ways that you could ensure others don't have to experience this loneliness?

## THE SILENCE OF OUR FRIENDS

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students will understand the importance of friendship as well as the responsibilities and expectations that come with it.

Read this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to your class: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Ask them to think about the meaning of this quote and write in a journal what they think Dr. King would have to say about bullying.

## A PLACE AT THE TABLE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students will consider what it feels like to be in an exclusionary group as well as what it feels like to be excluded.

Ask students to write about a lunchroom situation where a group of students will not let another person sit at their table. Ask them to address these questions: What would you do as a person already sitting at the table? What would you do as the person trying to sit at the table? What is the best resolution to this situation?

## A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

20 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students will see bullying from many different perspectives.

Ask students to write for five minutes from the point of view of a bully. They should address these questions:

- Why do you act the way that you do?
- How do you feel about the way you treat people?

Then ask students to write for five minutes from the point of view of the bully's family. Address these questions:

- How do you treat the bully at home?
- What is your home life like?

Next, they should write for five minutes from the point of view of the bully's only friend:

- Why do you like the bully?
- What do you get out of being friends with him or her?

Finally, discuss the different perspectives as a class.

## AN IMPORTANT LIST

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students consider how bullying could prevent their accomplishments.

Ask students to imagine a world where they aren't affected by what others think, where they can be themselves, make decisions, and express themselves without fear of being mocked or judged. Have each student, with this in mind, create a list of all of the things that he or she would attempt, do, or accomplish without fear of ridicule. Assure students that they will not have to share their answers. As students work, offer suggestions (*for example, try out for the school play, start a new club, wear a favorite sweatshirt or sweater to school, become friends with a new person*).

To conclude, have students review their lists and ask what bullying and teasing hold them back from doing. If any volunteers are willing, ask a few students to share some of their answers.

## IT'S ON THE CARD

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students identify the different feelings that victims of teasing and insults experience.

Have students arrange their desks or chairs in a circle. Distribute one index card to each student. Have students write the numbers one through eight on their index card. Explain that they should write one or two words on the index card (*next to the appropriate number*) describing how they would feel in each of the following situations. Students should not include any identifying information on their cards. Read these situations aloud:

- You are the last one picked for a team.
- You are the winner of a class election.
- Someone says you look great in your class picture.
- Someone in the class makes fun of your new shoes.
- Someone you like a lot invites you to a party.
- Someone you admire calls you a loser.
- There is a rumor about you embarrassing yourself at a party.
- Someone you hurt accepts your apology.

Collect the index cards, shuffle them, and redistribute them. Have volunteers share their card responses with the class.

To conclude the activity, ask if some students had difficulty expressing their feelings about the situations. Look for similarities between student responses and point these out to the class. Remind students that some emotions and reactions are universal and they should remember this as they interact with others.

## UNDER PRESSURE

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to identify forms of negative peer pressure

Explain to students that sometimes peer pressure can be a form of bullying. Have students reflect on a time when they felt peer pressure to do something that conflicted with their values. Have students write about the internal conflict that they experienced. Ask volunteers to present to the class.



**OBJECTIVE:** Students discuss the impact that bullying has on their school environment.

Review with students the definition of “bullying.” (*Merriam-Webster defines “bullying” as “abuse or mistreatment.”*)

Ask students to raise their hands if they or someone they know could answer “yes” to any of the following questions:

- Have you, or someone you know, ever felt pressure to help someone cheat on a test?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever been teased in school or teased another person in school?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever threatened a classmate online?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever felt pressure from another student to do something against school rules?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever felt any pressure to give a classmate money?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever felt any relationship pressure from someone at school?
- Have you, or someone you know, ever been the subject of a rumor?

Tell your class to think about how many questions they answered “yes” to, and then ask, “Is there a bullying problem in our school?” Ask students to raise their hands if their answer is “yes.” Conclude the activity by discussing ways students can help create a better school environment.

**OBJECTIVE:** Students take on a leadership role to help end bullying in their school.

Ask students to imagine that they are the principal of a school that has a bullying problem. What can you as the principal do? Have volunteers share their answers. Then, ask students what they would say to the bullies if they were in their office. Finally, ask students what they would say to the victims of bullying.

## I PLEDGE

15 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students identify and pledge not to copy the actions of bullies.

Ask students, “What do bullies do?” Give students a few minutes to think quietly. (*Student responses may include: intimidate others, start rumors, shove someone in the hallway, etc.*)

Hand out index cards to students. Ask students to answer the question by making a list on the index card that includes as many ideas as they would like to share. They should not write their names on the card. When students are finished, collect the cards. Create two columns on the board, one labeled “Physical” and the other labeled “Verbal.”

Ask for two volunteers to come to the board. Explain that you will read the responses on the index cards. After you read each idea, the class will identify each as physical or verbal bullying. The volunteers will write each idea in the appropriate column on the board.

When you have finished classifying every idea from the index cards, take out a piece of poster board. In large letters write “AS A CLASS WE PLEDGE NOT TO” across the top of the poster board.

Ask students to refer to the “Physical” and “Verbal” columns on the board and also to think about their own ideas about bullying. As a class, decide which words and actions to include in the pledge for a bully-free classroom. By including these ideas, students are committing to avoid saying or doing them. As students share ideas, write them on the poster board.

When you finish writing, have all students sign their names on the bottom of the poster board. Hang the poster in the classroom or on the door.

## PASSING THE MESSAGE ALONG

10 MINUTES

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**OBJECTIVE:** Students share with a younger audience what they have learned about bullying.

Explain to students that they will each write a letter about bullying to a younger student. Students should include a personal story about bullying, pointers on how to avoid being a bully, ideas about standing up to a bully, and different steps to take to have a bully-free school. Remind your class that they should write appropriately for younger students.

If possible, distribute the letters to a younger class and solicit their feedback. Share and discuss this feedback with your class. If it’s not possible to actually distribute the letters, have students read some or all of their letters aloud and encourage class feedback as to how the advice and stories might help a younger person. Ask if students wish that they had received a letter about bullying to read when they were younger.