



### IMPORTANCE OF BYSTANDERS

Bystanders are important because:

- Bullying most often takes place in front of peers
- It almost never happens when adults are watching
- Most bystanders want to do something to stop the bully
- Bullies like an audience. If the audience shows disapproval, the bullies are discouraged from continuing.

Sometimes bystanders, without realizing it, can make a situation even worse by:

- instigating the bullying by prodding the bully to begin,
- encouraging the bullying by laughing, cheering, or making comments that further stimulate the bully,
- joining in the bullying once it has begun,
- passively accepting bullying by watching and doing nothing,
- or providing the audience a bully craves.

Bystanders can intervene and be part of the solution by:

- Discouraging the bullying,
- Defending the target,
- Redirecting the situation away from bullying,
- Getting help from their peers,
- Or reporting the act to adults.

Why is it bystanders don't intervene more often?

- None of my business
- Fear of becoming a target
- Feel powerless
- Don't like the target
- Fear retribution
- Telling adults won't help or may even make it worse
- Don't know what to do

Adults need to educate students about strategies for bystanders to intervene in bullying situations. Students need to learn to become more active bystanders by standing up for the bullied students rather than merely standing by. Studies show that if a bystander discourages the bully, there is a 50% chance that the bullying will stop.



**STRAUSS ESMAY ASSOCIATES, LLP**  
**Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying Prevention Training Program**  
**INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO RESPOND TO BULLYING**  
**(SCRIPT EXCERPTS)**

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**APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO RESPOND TO BULLYING**

No matter how deliberate you are in trying to prevent bullying behaviors, incidents will happen.

Below are examples using actual strategic language you can use, and specific actions you can take to assure immediate, appropriate, effective, and consistent responses by all staff members to a bullying incident.

Appropriate and effective interventions **always** include:

- Immediately responding to the incident using a calm, rational, but firm tone of voice.
- Using body language that communicates authority, but does not invade the personal space of any student involved in the incident.
- Actions or verbal responses that do not cause embarrassment or a loss of emotion, or provoke vulnerable and/or overly sensitive reactions.
- Positioning yourself between the students using bullying behavior and the student being bullied, so that you can block eye contact between the two, to prevent gestures that would allow continued victimization or escalation of the incident.
- Taking the attention off the student or students who were being targeted.
- Paying close attention to the student or students who were being targeted. Take notice of their actions and reactions, words, body language, and any behavior or expression that communicates fear for their own safety and/or verbalizes a retaliation plan towards the bully.
- Addressing the students who were in the area and may have witnessed the incident, as well as those involved.
- Informing all students involved in the incident of what steps you will take next, and/or that you will be reporting this incident to the administration.
- Supporting and following-up with all students involved in the incident.
- Monitoring future behaviors.
- Verbalizing future behavioral expectations that will not permit retaliation of any kind.

**Never:**

- Remove or separate the student or students who are being targeted from the initial intervention.
- Doubt the fact that you have the responsibility to intervene.
- Ignore the incident.
- Accept the attitudes of “just teasing”, “just kidding”, “boys will be boys”, “you’re friends, you can work it out.”
- Engage in verbal or physical arguments/disputes.
- Display your anger.
- Make accusations or excuse bullying, teasing, threatening, or intimidating behavior.
- Leave the student who is being targeted alone with the student or students who are using the bullying behavior.
- Rely on or assign a student to report a bullying incident to administration. It is your responsibility to report the incident!