
BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

RECOMMENDED LESSON

Verbal Bullying

This lesson outlines one simple way to integrate the Bystander Revolution Verbal Bullying video playlist and discussion questions into an elementary school classroom setting.

Grade Level:
Elementary School

Estimated Time:
45 minutes

**Common Core
ELA Standards
Grades 3–5:**
SL.1.B, SL.1.C,
SL.1.D, SL.2, SL.3,
SL.5, W.2.A, W.2.B,
W.2.C, W.2.D,
W.2.E, W.2.F,
W.3, W.4

OVERVIEW

Students will discuss what verbal bullying is, along with suggestions for actions they can take when they witness or experience it. Students will watch videos with personal advice from celebrities and students, share their own experiences, and debate the merits of different prevention, intervention, and coping strategies. The lesson concludes with an opportunity for the educator to recap the lessons learned and present an optional homework assignment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Define the term “verbal bullying.”
- Empathize with peers who are the targets of verbal bullying.
- Summarize solutions heard from celebrities and students.
- Compare and contrast different prevention, intervention, and coping strategies.
- Apply the strategies to help themselves and others when they encounter verbal bullying.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Computer & internet access
- LCD projector (optional)
- [Verbal Bullying video playlist](#)
- Pens/pencils & paper

PREPARATION

- First, watch the Verbal Bullying video playlist.
- Familiarize yourself with the definition of verbal bullying.

PROCEDURE

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Introduce the topic by asking students the following questions:

- What comes to mind when you hear the words “verbal bullying”?
- Can anyone name any other kinds of bullying?
- What are some of the ways that people can hurt other people’s feelings with words?

Then explain to students that the definition of verbal bullying is: *using words with the intent to harm or gain power over another person, e.g., hurtful name-calling, malicious teasing, insults, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, inappropriate sexual comments, and other verbal attacks.*

KEY QUESTION

How can students prevent verbal bullying and lessen its effects?

DEFINITION

Verbal bullying is: using words with the intent to harm or gain power over another person, e.g., hurtful name-calling, malicious teasing, insults, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, inappropriate sexual comments, and other verbal attacks.

Videos & Discussion

(25 minutes)

Introduce the video and discussion segment by explaining to students that they are about to watch short videos from celebrities and students talking about their personal experiences with verbal bullying. Instruct students to think about a time they have witnessed or experienced verbal bullying and whether the advice in the videos would have helped.



FEATURED SOLUTION

INTERRUPT BULLYING

If it feels safe to do so, consider saying something when you see bullying. Even one small comment is better than silence. If you can't speak up, you can always support the person who was bullied afterward.

Play videos 1-2 of the [Verbal Bullying playlist](#). After viewing these videos, you can use the sample questions below to lead a conversation, as time permits. Each sample question has several follow-up questions that may be useful in the discussion.

1. Why do some people make fun of others or call them hurtful names?

- Is it because they think it's funny?
- Could they think making someone feel bad will make them feel good?
- Could it be that sometimes people speak without thinking first?
- Do you think they sometimes don't understand how harmful or mean their words are?

2. Why is it important to call people out for using language you believe is hurtful?

- Do you think some people aren't even aware that certain words are hurtful?
- Do you think letting people get away with using insensitive words can lead to bigger problems later?
- Do you think people sometimes underestimate how much power their words can have?
- Could speaking up help them realize that what they said was wrong?
Could it keep them from saying the same thing again in the future?

Play videos 3-4 then continue the discussion:

3. Is it easier for the person who's being bullied or the people who see it happening to stop verbal bullying? Why?

- Do you believe one person saying something can make a difference?
- If someone was saying mean things to you, would you want someone else to step in and help you?

4. What are examples of things you could say to someone who verbally bullies others or uses offensive language, like racist slurs?

- Can you point out that what they said isn't acceptable or funny?
- Can you explain that the words they used may make others feel bad?
- Should someone ever attack the person bullying by bullying them back? Could that make things worse?

5. Can you give an example of how you might help prevent verbal bullying from happening in the first place?

- Can speaking up whenever you hear something you think is hurtful or mean make a difference?
- Do you think positivity can spread to others and help them change?

Play videos 5-6 then continue the discussion:

6. Why is it important to go up to someone after they've been bullied and show them kindness?

- Is it because people who are bullied often feel alone?
- Do you think a small gesture could make someone who was bullied feel better?
- Should you wait for someone to come talk to you about how they feel, or should you ask them first? Why?

7. What are examples of things you can say to someone after they've been verbally bullied?

- Could you reassure them that the insults aren't true?
- Can you compliment them to remind them of their positive qualities?
- Do you think it would help if someone said something simple like, "I'm sorry that happened," "you didn't deserve that," or "I think you're awesome"?

Play videos 7-8 then continue the discussion:

8. If you are being verbally bullied, do you think you should try to ignore what people are saying?

- When is it a good idea to ignore verbal bullying?
- If you show the person who is bullying you that their words don't have an impact on you, do you think that could help?
- If you take an insult as a compliment, like Brian did when he was called "weird," how do you think that could help?

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

Tell someone who has been bullied that you see what's happening to them and feel bad about it. Help them see that they don't deserve the way they are being treated.

9. Can liking the things that make you different make negative words hurt less?

- If you were comfortable with the things people made fun of you for, do you think you wouldn't care as much? Why or why not?
- Why might it be an advantage to be different from everyone else?
- What do you love about yourself that is different from other people?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

(5 minutes)

Ask students to write two sentences about something they would do differently, or could improve upon, if they encounter verbal bullying in the future. If time permits, ask students to share what they've written with the class.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Recap what students can do if they witness verbal bullying and aren't sure what to do. Ask students when they would consider the following strategies:

When would you...

- tell the person doing the bullying that their words are hurtful?
- offer support to the person who was bullied?
- tell a teacher or parent?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Watch a video and reflect in writing

Have students visit bystanderrevolution.org and watch another video of their choosing. Ask students to write a letter to the person in the video, telling them why they agree or disagree with the advice presented. Ask them to tell the person how they might apply what was said to their own life.

2. The Weekly Stand

The Weekly Stand is a list of 52 simple, fun, transformative actions bystanders can take to reduce bullying and improve school culture. Each action contains helpful background information, suggested strategies and phrases to use, and a video for inspiration.

Have students go to bystanderrevolution.org/weekly, choose one of the actions to complete, and then turn in proof that they did it through some creative means: a photo, a screenshot, a short video, an essay, or even a comic strip.

ABOUT BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

Bystander Revolution is an online resource offering practical, crowdsourced advice about simple things individuals can do to take the power out of bullying.