
“Same Page” Understanding of Violence, Respect, and Bullying

1

Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

Students, staff, and parents agree that violence should not be part of the school experience. However, the concept of bullying—how it is defined, behaviors that are considered bullying, and to what degree it is an acceptable part of childhood—varies from person to person. This ambiguity is one reason that many students bully without realizing that their actions are a type of bullying.

Having all staff, students, and parents agree on a common definition of violence, bullying, and other unacceptable behaviors can be challenging. Each person’s unique life experience influences how they define violence and if and when violence is ever acceptable. These influences may include, but are not limited to:

- gender;
- age;
- urban, suburban, or rural upbringing;
- experience with bullying; and
- experience with domestic violence.

2 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION



We don't have to like everyone, but we do need to treat everyone respectfully.

To lessen violent and bullying behaviors, students need to understand the definitions of violence and bullying as well as their various manifestations. Violent and bullying behaviors then need to be replaced with respect and other pro-social behaviors—behaviors that fulfill the bully's needs previously met through violence and bullying.

Instilling respect and citizenship is an aspect of every state curriculum. Most school administrators and classroom teachers talk about respect, expect respect, and put up posters encouraging respectful behavior. Students often hear, "Treat others with respect," "Use a respectful tone," "Respect your elders," and, "Talk to me with respect." It becomes obvious that respect is of value to adults. In fact, as a central concept in many ethical theories, respectful behavior is considered the very essence of morality and the foundation of all other moral duties and obligations.

However, many children, especially children who do not have respectful role models, do not know what adults, or the larger community, mean by respect. For these children, specific examples of respectful behaviors are not necessarily obvious or "no-brainers."

To encourage respectful, nonviolent behavior, students need to understand what respect looks and sounds like. Then, when students display respectful behaviors, staff need to make sure students are reinforced by acknowledging exactly what was appreciated and offer rewards that show their appreciation.

The following lessons will help develop a "same page" understanding of the types of behaviors the teacher and school community consider respectful, violent, and bullying.

DEFINING VIOLENCE

This lesson will define violence and demonstrate specific examples of behaviors considered violent. Some examples are obvious and others will generate debate.



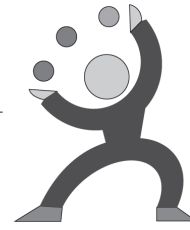
Materials:
a one-liter water bottle filled with water
adult volunteer

GOAL: Students will understand what violence means and which behaviors are considered violent and unacceptable at school.



Time: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY



1 Ask a volunteer to get a dictionary or use the Internet to find the definition of violence. Ask the volunteer to give the definition only when requested. While this is happening, ask the other students what they think are the definitions of violence. Remember, you are not asking for examples, you want to define violence.

Ask the volunteer to read the definition; write the dictionary definition on the board. Common definitions include:

- physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing;
- abusive or unjust exercise of power;
- great roughness and force, often causing severe injury or damage; or
- in law: the unlawful use of physical force; intimidation by exciting fear that such force will be used.

2 Ask for a student volunteer to join you at the front of the class. State that you are going to pretend to hit the student but won't actually do it. Be sure that all students understand this is a demonstration and that you will not actually hit anyone. Making sure not to make physical contact, pretend to hit the student volunteer on the arm or head. Ask the class, *"If I hit someone, is it violence?"* Solicit opinions from the class. Ultimately, the answer is, *"Yes, it is violence because it fits the definition of violence."*

Continue the demonstration by saying and acting out, but not actually doing, the following; *"So, would it be considered violence if I pinch someone, pull their hair, flick their ear, kick them, push them, or poke them?"*

The concept that these behaviors would be considered violent is usually obvious. However, this discussion should make it clear to all students that touching or hitting another in a way that is undesired or hurtful will not be tolerated.

Have the student volunteer sit back down.

4 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION



Students often bring up, “But what if . . . ?” and, “But what about . . . ?” questions. Discussing these questions ensures a greater chance of understanding and buy-in from your students. It also shows that the students are involved and thinking about the topic, but don’t let the questions take over the whole lesson.

But What If . . . ?

“But what if you are playing two-hand touch football and you have to hit the person carrying the ball?”

After some discussion most students conclude there is a difference between hitting someone who doesn’t want to be hit or is not expecting it and someone who expects to be touched. When you are playing football, or other sports, or just messing around with your friends, then contact is expected. This would be an acceptable behavior as long as it is not purposely hurtful and follows the rules. Remember, in sports there is a penalty for inappropriate touch or purposely hurtful contact.



Reminding all the students that you are just acting and will not really hurt anyone role models the importance of asking for trust and honoring that trust. Due to media influence, some students believe that doing the unexpected is actually funny and an indication of a good sense of humor. The unexpected often is funny, but not when someone’s trust is violated.

3

Call up another student volunteer. Let the student and class know you will be acting out another scenario. Remind everyone that you will not actually hurt the volunteer or even touch the volunteer. Proceed to make believe you are throwing the one-liter water bottle (or something similar) at the volunteer. Instead of actually throwing the bottle, hold the bottle up in the air with one hand and walk quickly toward the student so that it looks like the bottle in your hand will hit the student—remember not to actually make contact.

Ask the class, “*If I purposely throw something at someone and hit them, is it violence?*” Solicit answers. After a brief discussion, inform the class the answer is yes, because someone might get hurt or feel intimidated.

But What If . . . ?

“But what if someone asks you to throw them an eraser or a ball? Is that violence?”

Answer the question with a demonstration of what appropriate throwing of an object to another looks and sounds like. Turn to the volunteer, call the student’s name, and make eye contact. Indicate that you will be tossing the item, watch, and wait until the student puts their hands in a catching position. Then toss with the appropriate amount of force so that the item may be easily caught.

Ask the students if that action would be considered violence. Most will agree that it was not violence. Finally, make it clear that you called

the person's name, waited for a response, and then made sure the person was ready to catch what was being thrown. Only then did you toss the object, and in a manner that was easy for them to catch.

Remind the students that throwing something to someone who is not expecting it, doesn't want the object to be thrown at them, or throwing it much harder than expected is inappropriate, mean, and would be considered violent, disrespectful misbehavior.

Have the student volunteer sit back down.



If a student demonstrates a *pattern* of throwing or tossing objects in a disrespectful or violent manner, try a consequence that prohibits the student from throwing or tossing *anything* to another student until a staff member teaches and practices proper throwing or tossing techniques with different objects at various distances. This choice of consequence will help to determine if the student is actually lacking a skill or is purposely misbehaving. Either way, the student will learn the skill through role modeling and role-playing, and create a bond with an adult while having a positive learning experience. These benefits are very effective in replacing misbehavior with appropriate social skills.

4

Call up a third student volunteer. Remind the students this is a role-play and no one will be hurt. Stand about ten feet from the volunteer. Pretend that you are going to throw the water bottle, then carry it through the air toward the student, but past the student as if the bottle were whizzing right by the student's head.

Explain to the students that since you were only ten feet away, you could hit the volunteer if you wanted to, but you are purposely missing. Ask the class, "*Is it violence if I throw something near someone to scare them, but purposely miss?*" Discuss the student responses. This time expect to hear a combination of, "yes," "no," and, "it depends." Ask each respondent to explain why they answered the way they did. This discussion is a processing opportunity for the students and should be given ample time.

Ultimately remind the students that according to the definition used at the beginning of this lesson, it would be considered violence if it was meant to scare, threaten, or intimidate. Make it clear that such a threat or act of intimidation is unacceptable behavior on the school campus.

6 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION



Students who have experienced domestic violence may view such threatening or intimidating behavior as common. It is possible they have been taught that physical contact is the difference between violence and nonviolence. These children may not easily accept that the *threat* of violence or intimidation would be considered violent. Private meetings with these children may be necessary to make sure they understand that threats will not be tolerated in the school or at any school-related function.

5

For the next scenario, ask an adult volunteer to act as the target. (Discuss this scenario with the adult before it is acted out.) If an adult is not available, use an inanimate object, such as a stuffed animal, a doll, or a drawing of a person. *Do not use a student volunteer.*

Act out the following:

Walk up to the adult volunteer, and with a harsh voice, a stern look, and a pointed finger, say, *“Hey you little nerd, you really bug me and I’m going to get you after school!”* Then powerfully turn and walk away.

Pause for a moment and then turn to the students and ask, *“Was that violence?”* After a brief discussion, make it clear the answer is yes, because of the threat of violence. This clear demonstration leads us to discuss a more ambiguous situation, which follows.

6

Stand as far from the adult volunteer as possible. Then, in a relatively soft tone—do not raise your voice, do not threaten—but one in which all can hear, say, *“Hey, would you please do me a favor? I really like you and think you’re a pretty nice person. I was thinking about you. Would you please explain to all of us how you get dressed in the morning?”* Now, in a more condescending tone, add, *“I mean, let’s face it; everyone knows you are not the brightest bulb in the box, always needing extra help and all. I’m sure we are all wondering how you get dressed in the morning. Do you have your mommy do it? Or do you have to hire someone to help you with your socks and undies?”*

The adult volunteer should just stand there looking sad and hurt. Pause to let the power of the moment settle.

Then ask the class if that was an example of violence. After a brief discussion, you will notice most students will respond, *“Yes, it is violence.”* Challenge this response with, *“But I didn’t yell or swear or threaten. In fact, I used polite words.”* This is an opportunity for the students to formulate and articulate why they think such behavior is unacceptable.

But What About . . . ?

This time *you* ask the class, "*But what about 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me?'*" This should generate a good discussion.

Activity: Other "Sticks and Stones" Sayings

Share the following sayings with the students:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can really, really hurt."

"Sticks and stones may break my bones . . . so don't throw sticks and stones."

Ask the students if they can think of other sayings.

But What If . . . ?

"But what if you are just kidding around with someone? You know, just teasing?"

Your response might include: "*Teasing is fun for all the people involved. It is not meant to embarrass someone or to be mean and hurtful. Teasing creates friendships and brings people closer together. The types of words used in the role-play were intended to humiliate, meaning it wasn't teasing or just kidding around. It was taunting or bullying.*" (See Chapter 8 on Playful Teasing vs. Hurtful Taunting.)

By the end of the discussion, make it clear that the comments you made to the adult volunteer had characteristics of violence by reviewing the definition of violence and pointing out that the statements were intended to abuse the person. Although being called names is different than being hit by a fist or a rock, name calling, put downs, and threatening violence are very hurtful and unacceptable on the school campus.

Final Thoughts

Tell the students you are not only talking about types of violence to make sure they don't act violently toward others, but to help them understand that they shouldn't accept it if they experience or witness violence. The lessons in Chapter 6, Responding to a Bully, and Chapter 7, The Power of Bystanders, will teach your students what do if they are a target or witness violent behaviors.

8 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION

WHAT IS BULLYING AND RESPECT?

This lesson will have each student consider specific examples of respectful behavior as well as bullying and disrespectful behavior. The lesson is designed to exercise the students' critical thinking skills as well as offer adults the opportunity to articulate specific behaviors they want to encourage or diminish. In addition, students will gain a deeper insight into what their peers are thinking in regard to appropriate behavior. This insight may influence their actions through positive peer pressure.



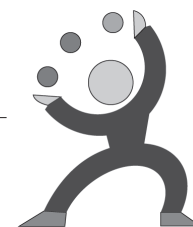
Materials:
paper
pencil
dictionary

GOAL: Students will define and give specific examples of respect, disrespect, and bullying.



Time: 45 minutes

ACTIVITY



1

Ask a volunteer to get a dictionary or use the Internet to find the definition of bullying. Ask the volunteer to give the definition only when requested. While this is happening, ask the other students what they think are the definitions of bully and bullying. Remember, you are not asking for examples, you want to define bullying.

Ask the student who researched the word to read the definitions they found. Our dictionary has defined bully and bullying as follows:

Bully:

- a person who hurts or frightens other, weaker people
- a cruel and brutal person
- one habitually cruel to others who are weaker

Bullying:

- behavior that ridicules, humiliates, or harms another person; may be repeated over time
- to discourage or frighten with threats

- systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more people
- to intimidate with superior strength



Punctuate the conversation by stating that bullying is when a person or group of people use a power they have—such as physical, verbal, or social—to intimidate or hurt one or more people who have less power.

Suggested Script:

Bullying is when a person, or group of people, uses power—such as physical, verbal, or social—to harass or intimidate one or more people who have less power.

There are many different types of bullying, such as:

Physical: *Physical bullying is action oriented. It includes hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, or taking or damaging a person's property.*

Verbal: *Verbal bullying is the use of words to hurt or humiliate another person. It includes name-calling, insulting, put-downs, and making threats or rude comments.*

Relational (also known as social aggression): *Relational bullying is the use of relationships to hurt others. It includes using the silent treatment, preventing people from playing with others, and spreading rumors and lies.*

Cyber: *Cyber bullying is the use of technology to hurt or humiliate others. It includes using computers and the Internet, e-mails, Instant Messaging (IM), cell phones (i.e., text messaging), and digital photography to embarrass or exclude others.*



Ask a different volunteer to look up the definition of respect. Ask the volunteer not to give out the definition until you call on them. While this is happening, ask the other students what they think are definitions of respect. Get approximately four definitions from the class and put them on the board.

Ask the student who researched the word what definitions they found. In our dictionary, respect is defined as:

Respect:

- a feeling of appreciation
- regarded with honor or esteem
- to show consideration or appreciation
- polite expressions

Historically, the word "bully" had positive meanings. However, today it means to abuse or harass another.



To find out if your state has a bullying law and a legal definition of the term bullying, check out <http://www.bullypolice.org>.

10 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION

3 Discuss specific examples of what respect is, what it looks like, how it plays out, etc. Give a couple of examples, such as holding the door open for the next person, saying, “thank you,” or “excuse me,” or picking up something that another person dropped. Many of these examples would be considered common courtesy. Come up with other interesting and not necessarily common examples as well, such as flushing the toilet after use, washing your hands after using the toilet, or quietly and politely telling someone that their pants are unzipped.

4 Next, hand out paper. On the board, create a chart such as the one shown in Figure 1.1 below. The students should do the same on their paper.

Figure 1.1

¹ <i>Respect</i>	² <i>Disrespect</i>	³ <i>Bullying</i>

Ask the students to write down two or three new examples of respect, disrespect, and bullying in the appropriate columns.

5 After the students complete their examples, go around the room and count off 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, etc., so every student is a number 1, 2, or 3.



Taking turns is an example of respectful, cooperative behavior.

6 Start at one end of the room. The first group of numbers 1, 2, and 3 will all come to the board together. All “number ones” will write their example of respect, all “number twos” will write their example of disrespect, and all “number threes” will write their example of bullying. When a student sits down, for instance, a number one, the next number one will come up.



If a student comes to the board and a previous person has already written their example on the board, ask the student to think of another example. If they can't come up with anything, ask them to make a check next to the example they were going to write to indicate that they thought of the same example.

Figure 1.2 below shows an example of student work:

Figure 1.2

1 Respect	2 Disrespect	3 Bullying
✓✓ Saying "please" and "thank you" Asking someone if they need help or how they need help Burping quietly Being nice	Spreading rumors Burping in someone's face ✓ Swearing at someone Leaving your mess for someone else to clean up	Telling others not to be friends with the new kid Every day you destroy someone's property ✓✓ Picking on someone Making someone cry



When everyone has had a turn, review what was written on the board. Some examples will be self-explanatory and some will need more discussion. Be as specific as possible. In other words, if a student writes in the respect column, "Be nice to your brother," ask what "nice" means, what "nice" looks like, or specific examples of "nice" behavior.

Final Thoughts

Beyond defining bullying, we need to have the long-term goal of encouraging respect. An effective way to accomplish this is for the staff to role model respectful behavior, especially during times of high stress.

Remember, catch your students being respectful. Try using the four-to-one rule, which suggests that teachers have at least four positive interactions with students or give students at least four positive comments for every negative or corrective comment. Research shows when teachers have at least four positive interactions with students for each negative or corrective interaction, appropriate behavior increases, inappropriate behavior decreases, and relationships between students and teacher improve.

12 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION

GROUND RULES

Ground rules are agreements about expected behavior. This lesson is designed to take your students' understanding of various types of violence and incorporate it into their daily interactions. Since it is not practical to consider every example of how violence may be expressed, we offer four basic ground rules—meaning the *four basic things you may not hurt*.



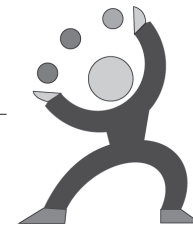
Materials per student:
one half-sheet of
letter-size paper
pencil

**GOAL: Students will learn
the four ground rules.**



Time: 15–20 minutes

ACTIVITY



1

Hand out a half-sheet of standard letter-size paper (approximately $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}''$).

Say to the class, “A ground rule is an agreement of expected behavior that everyone is expected to follow. In order to help us to get along with each other, we have four basic ground rules. Please write the following on your paper.”

Write on the board:

Ground Rules

I will not hurt:

1. Myself

Explain that it is unacceptable to hurt yourself, just like we may not hurt others. Ask the students if they can think of examples of hurting themselves. Examples may include:

- Saying hurtful things to yourself such as, “I am such an idiot,” “I am such a loser,” “I wish I was dead.”
- Hurting yourself by hitting objects, such as punching or kicking walls or refrigerators, which can damage your hand or foot. (The part about damaging property comes later.)
- Pulling your hair out, scratching yourself deeply, or cutting yourself with a sharp object.



Sometimes, after discussing the dangers of hurting oneself with elementary students, important discoveries concerning young students who are engaging in such actions are brought to the attention of adults. Fortunately, this gives adults the opportunity to intercede and assist students in getting professional help.



Add ground rule number two to the list.

Ground Rules

I will not hurt:

1. Myself
2. Others

Explain that purposeful hurting or the threat of hurting another person is against the rules. The details of this type of hurting are explained in the earlier activity "Defining Violence." If you have not had that discussion with your students, read through the activity and incorporate the concepts covered into the conversation.

But What If . . . ?

But what if you have to hit someone to defend yourself?

Your response might include: *"Self-defense means you have no choice but to protect your body. And, you should use only enough force to protect yourself until you can safely remove yourself from the situation. As an example, if someone grabs you, you can push them off, or hit them if necessary, to get away. However, you don't have the right to beat them up. If you do, then you will also be blamed for being violent."*



Add ground rule number three to the list.

Ground Rules

I will not hurt:

1. Myself
2. Others
3. Animals

Purposeful hurting of animals is unacceptable. It is important to discuss the difference between such behavior and acceptable activities such as hunting and fishing. Hunting and fishing are acceptable exceptions

14 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION

to the ground rules as long as certain rules are followed. In most states, there are rules in regard to hunter safety classes, getting a license, and hunting or fishing in season. Hunters and fishers are considered ethical and respectful if they kill in the least painful way possible and plan to use the meat or skin. Examples of unacceptable hurting of animals include:

- not caring about an animal's physical or emotional needs,
- enjoying causing animals pain, and
- using an animal as a negative outlet for one's own emotions.

Most students agree that hurting animals is wrong, but when offered specific examples of how some people have purposely hurt an animal, some students have admitted that they are guilty of such behavior. These hurtful behaviors include:

- being mean to a pet because of something that happened at school,
- killing insects or frogs just for fun or because others were doing it, and
- cutting up caterpillars or earthworms just to see them squirm.

Let the students know that if they have done this before, they should forgive themselves. However, they now know that such behavior is wrong and may even be against the law (all states have some form of animal cruelty law).



Some children may come from families who have a different standard of how to treat animals. If this is an issue for a student, a private discussion may be warranted.



Add ground rule number four to the list.

Ground Rules

I will not hurt:

1. Myself
2. Others
3. Animals

4. Property

Property is defined as something of value to someone. Examples may include a computer, a book, a shirt, a toy, a rock in someone's collection, etc.

Explain that sometimes you have to stop and think if something is someone's property or not. For instance, a log used as a border in someone's garden is that person's property, but a log rotting in the woods is not necessarily property. Another example might be a newspaper. If the newspaper is sitting on someone's desk, it should be considered someone's property. If it is in the school's recycle bin, it is no longer anyone's property.

Optional: At this point, the students should have written all four ground rules on their piece of paper. Ask them to take their paper and fold it in half. Then half again. And then a third time. Ask your students to take off their left shoe and place the piece of paper in the shoe. Have them put their shoe back on. Then say, *"After school, when your parents ask you what you learned in school today, take off your shoe, pull out your piece of paper and discuss the ground rules with them."*

Activity: Property or Not Property

Have students read the poem "Hector the Collector" by Shel Silverstein. Then have the students come up with their own lists of things that some might consider valuable and others might consider junk.

Final Thoughts

This chapter has explored behaviors that will not be tolerated at school. Remember, it is very important to teach and reinforce the specific behaviors you want to encourage.

Teaching lessons about violence and respect will increase your students' understanding of which behaviors are not acceptable and which behaviors are encouraged. These clearly defined concepts will decrease misbehavior and therefore increase teaching time. In addition, your students will understand that by following the ground rules, they will be happier and life will be more pleasant.

STATISTICS AND STUDIES

- Research has found that bullying is most likely to occur in schools where there is a lack of adult supervision during breaks, where teachers and students are indifferent to or accept bullying behavior, and where rules against bullying are not consistently enforced. (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999)
- "Bullying is a complex phenomenon. It's not something that will go away with an easy, one-shot solution. And I think we're mistaken if we believe that one school assembly is going to do the trick, and if the school does that, they can say, 'Well we dealt with bullying this year. Great, let's move on.' In order to reduce

16 HOW TO STOP BULLYING AND SOCIAL AGGRESSION

bullying at a school requires a culture change at the school [sic], requires all the adults and the students together saying, 'This is something that we don't accept, and we are going to look out for each other and report and talk about this as a form of peer abuse.' And one doesn't get that climate or culture change overnight. So I think the most effective programs are those that are very comprehensive, that involve not just the students and a classroom teacher but every adult at a school. The bus drivers should feel they have a role in bullying prevention, a cafeteria worker, certainly the parents should feel they have a role in helping to create a bully-free atmosphere at the school. So I think the best programs out there, and the data I think would support this, are very comprehensive." (Chamberlain, 2003)

- Seventy-four percent of eight- to eleven-year-old students said teasing and bullying occur at their schools. (Talking With Kids About Tough Issues: A National Survey of Parents and Kids, Kaiser Family Foundation and Nickelodeon, 2001)
- Forty-three percent of high school and 37 percent of middle school boys believe it is okay to hit or threaten a person who makes them angry. Nineteen percent of the girls agree. (2000 Report Card: Report #1, The Ethics of American Youth: Violence and Substance Abuse: Data & Commentary, Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2001)
- Eighty-seven percent of teens said school shootings are motivated by a desire to "get back at those who have hurt them." (Myers, 2001)
- Over the course of a year, nearly one-fourth of students across grades reported that they had been harassed or bullied on school property because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability. (Austin, et al., 2002)
- Ten percent of students who drop out of school do so because of repeated bullying. (Weinhold & Weinhold, 1998)
- Dan Olweus, considered the father of bullying research and a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen (Norway), defines bullying as "exposing a person repeatedly, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students." (Olweus, 1999)
- The Mayo Clinic and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* define bullying as a specific type of aggression in which:
 - the behavior is intended to harm or disturb,
 - there is an imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one, and
 - the behavior occurs repeatedly over time. (Mayo Clinic, 2001)
- "In the past, bullying behavior was dichotomized—students were classified as either bullies or victims, but, kids [often] report that they're both." (Crawford, 2002)