

IS THAT REALLY BULLYING? HOW TO TELL AND WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

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CVP works to reduce the exposure to and impact of violence among children, teens, and families. We conduct community-focused research and design innovative, evidence-based programs that are implemented, disseminated and sustained across clinical, school and neighborhood settings. Our work is trauma-informed and rooted in racial equity and social justice.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1

Explain what bullying is and is not, myths about bullying, and the importance of bullying prevention programs in schools

2

Understand the forms that bullying can take, including cyber, child roles of involvement, and the impact on school climate

3

Learn best practice strategies for how school staff can help their students involved in ongoing conflicts and bullying

POLL QUESTION

*How has bullying
impacted you?*

WHY BULLYING?

THE PREVALENCE OF BULLYING

Bullying and other forms of aggressive behavior cause significant disruption in our schools

- Nearly **1/4 to 1/3 of students (grades 4-12)** report being involved on a regular basis
- By the time students graduate high school, **nearly all have had personal experience with bullying**—as either as a bully, a victim, or a witness to it.



(Gladden et al., 2014; Polanin et al., 2012; Waasdorp et al., 2017)

THE IMPACT OF BULLYING

- Being either a victim or a perpetrator of bullying is a public health concern linked with serious developmental challenges in multiple domains, including social-emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and health.
- Even being a bystander to bullying is associated with social and emotional difficulties.
- Involvement in bullying, when you are younger, can lead to mental health challenges in adulthood.

(Arseneault et al., 2018; Hysing et al., 2019; McDougall et al., 2015; Sweeting et al., 2020)

WHAT IS BULLYING?

BULLYING DEFINED

Intentional aggressive behavior that typically occurs repeatedly over time (or has the potential to be repeated), in the context of a power differential.

Repeated

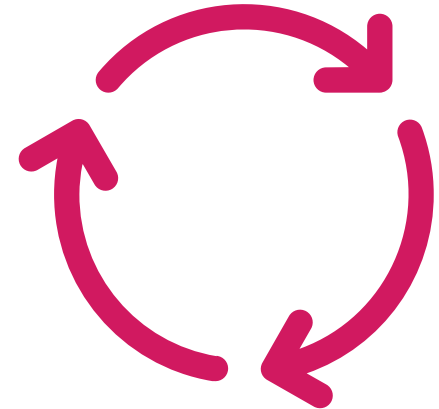
Intentional

Power

(Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus, 1993)

CORE FEATURES: REPEATED

- Often occurs in cycles
- Follows kids across settings
- In cyberbullying, the repetition occurs through sharing/spreading
- Does **NOT** mean we wait for the reoccurrence to intervene
 - If one incident is extremely emotionally taxing for the child, it does not need to be repeated to be considered bullying.



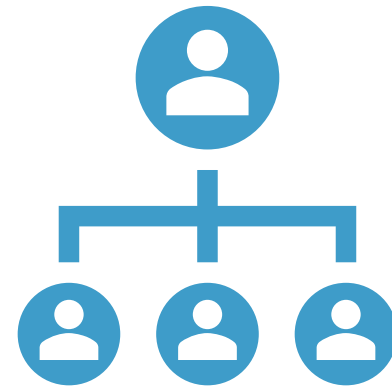
CORE FEATURES: INTENTIONAL

- Actions or words that are meant to harm
 - Hurt feelings
 - Harm to relationships or reputation



CORE FEATURES: POWER

- Complex social dynamics
- Real or perceived power
- Differences in:
 - Physical size
 - Age/grade level
 - Gender
 - Strength
 - Social Status
 - Cyber skills
 - Elevated risk group (LGBTQ, immigration status, disability)



BULLYING IS NOT

- Bullying is always aggressive behavior, but aggressive behaviors are not always bullying.
- Individuals who are bullied have difficulty defending themselves due to the power or status difference that is a hallmark of bullying, making timely adult intervention critical.
 - Fighting
 - Disagreement
 - Conflict

CONFLICT VERSUS BULLYING

Conflict	Bullying
One time event, occasional	Repeated (2 or more times a month)
Not pre-planned, heat of the moment	Intentional and planned
All involved individuals are upset	Victim is most upset
No power differential, equal social standing and/or size	Person bullying has power (e.g., can take away something from victim)
Efforts to solve the problem by all involved	Person bullying does not try to solve the problem (may not see the problem). Victim has little power to provide solutions to solve the problem

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FORMS OF BULLYING

FORMS OF BULLYING

- Overtly aggressive behaviors
 - Distinct beginning and end
 - Physical
 - Direct
 - Involves hitting, pushing, shoving
 - Verbal
 - Direct
 - Name calling, teasing, insults



FORMS OF BULLYING

- Relational/Social/Psychological
 - Indirect or direct
 - Overt or Covert (age differences)
 - Social manipulation to harm another
 - Rumors, gossip
 - Exclusion
 - Withdrawal of friendship (or threats of this)
- Often difficult to identify
 - Not usually as disruptive in the classroom setting

ANOTHER MEDIUM FOR BULLYING

Cyberbullying: *Use of the internet, cell phones, or other technology to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.*

- Not a separate subtype—more the *medium* through which verbal or relational bullying occurs
- Significant overlap between different types
 - Less than 5% will experience only cyberbullying
- Kids who experience cyberbullying are most at risk for internalizing and externalizing symptoms

CYBERBULLYING

- Definitional caveats
 - Power differential twist
 - Electronically savvy
 - Repeated over time?
- Distinctive Experience
 - Fear of losing access to technology
 - Most youth do not report to adults
 - Easier for bullies to underestimate the harm they are causing the victim



POLL QUESTION

*What types of
bullying do you see
or hear about the
most at your
school?*

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

1. ALL BULLIES ARE LONERS AND HAVE NO FRIENDS

- No one type
 - Some repeat how they are treated (reactive)
 - Some seek out ways to use their strengths (proactive)
 - Climb the social ladder
 - Use of physical strength
- Confident and socially successful
 - Bullying behavior ‘rewards’
 - Motivated by desire for power
 - Viewed as popular and need to maintain this

2. BULLYING = 'KIDS BEING KIDS'

- Bullying is NOT a normal part of growing up
 - Does not build character
 - Children who are targets do not 'ask for it'
- Targets of bullying suffer emotionally and socially
 - Low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, even show signs of PTSD
 - Research found causal links of being the target of bullying with negative outcomes over and above any other prior risks a child might have, even 36 years later

(Arseneault, 2018; Ttofi et al., 2011)

3. KIDS CAN HANDLE BULLYING ON THEIR OWN

- Remember the difference between bullying and conflict
 - The target does not have the power to stop it, they **cannot** handle it on their own.
 - This is why they need adult intervention

4. BULLYING IS EASY TO SPOT

- Kids often do not tell
 - Open communication is key
- Children who bully often have high social skills
 - Relational aggressors
 - Ability to manipulate goes both horizontally and vertically (can manipulate adults too!)
 - Awareness of subtle behaviors is key

WHO IS AT RISK FOR BULLYING?

- Children with a notable difference
 - Being overweight or obese
 - LGBT (over 85%)
 - Middle Childhood: Gender non-conforming behaviors
 - Having a physical or cognitive disability
 - Recent immigrants
- Poor emotion regulation skills, impulsivity
 - Depressive or anxiety symptoms
 - ADHD
- Children with poor friendship quality



(O'Brennan et al., 2015; Swearer et al., 2012; Waasdorp et al., 2018; Waasdorp et al., 2020)

IDENTIFYING TARGETS

- More likely to report:
 - Psychosocial problems
 - Worried about going to school
 - Try to avoid taking the bus or eating in the cafeteria
 - Somatic symptoms
 - Repeated health complaints
 - Sore throats, headaches, nausea, poor appetite
 - Sleep troubles
- Higher likelihood of making up illnesses to stay home during school days



(Card & Hodges, 2008; Faith et al., 2015; Kowalski, et al., 2014; Kowalski & Limber, 2013)

ROLES

- Children who are victims
- Children who bully
- ‘Bully-victims’
- Witness or bystander
 - Play a key role in reinforcing bullying, allowing it to continue, or discouraging it.

(Pöyhönen et al., 2012; Salmivalli, 2014)

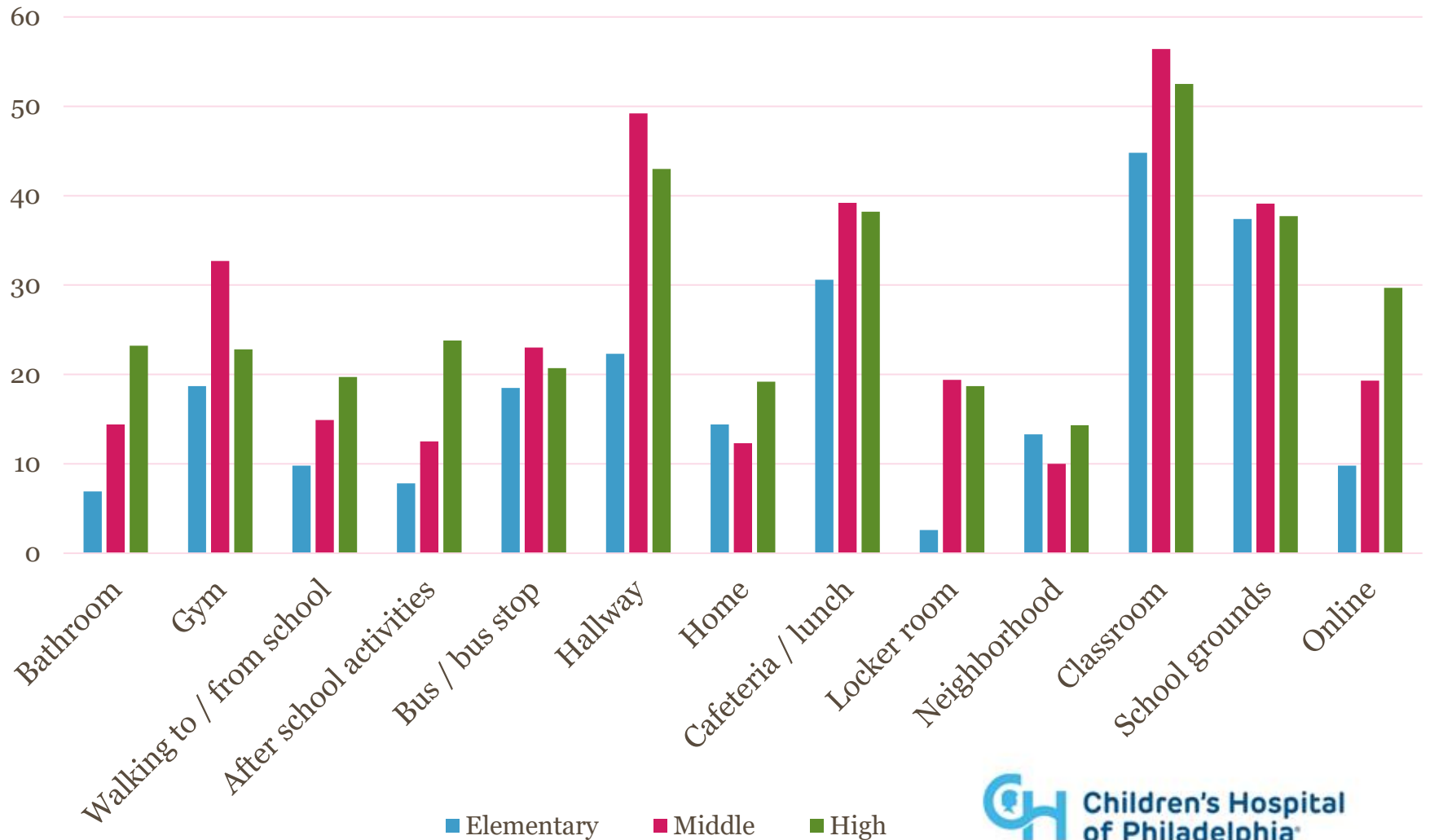
BYSTANDER BEHAVIORS

- Assist
 - Join in, help restrain, exclude
- Reinforce
 - Laugh, circle around/cheer
- Defending (a.k.a. “Upstander”)
 - Stop the bully/comfort the victim
- Outside/Passive Responses
 - Witness, but try to avoid or try not to get involved
 - See a negative post and take no action



WHERE DOES BULLYING OCCUR?

LOCATIONS OF BULLYING



THE FRONT LINES...

- Educators are often on the front lines
 - Powerful impact on students
 - Relationships shape perceptions and behaviors
 - Beliefs that bullying is normative
 - ↑ likelihood of expecting children to resolve on their own → increases in aggression and bullying
 - Responses matter
 - How educators respond/intervene will impact the situation



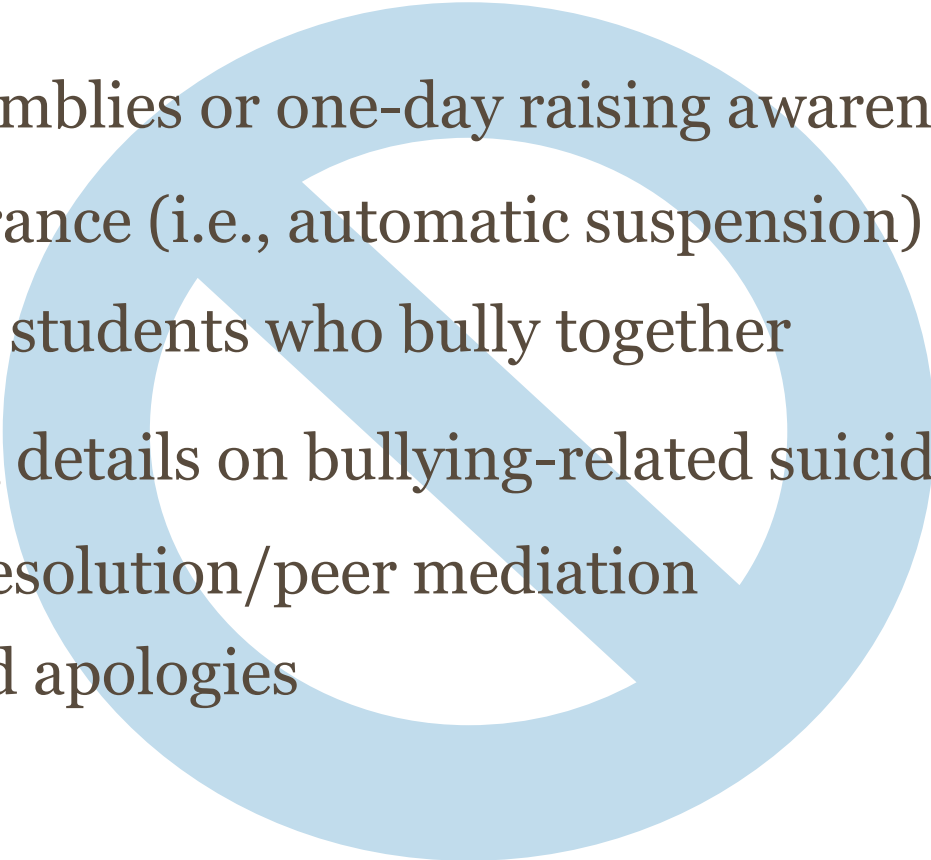
(Konishi et al., 2010; Waasdorp et al., 2019)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

POLL QUESTION

*How is your school
addressing
bullying?*

STRATEGIES NOT RECOMMENDED

- 
- Brief assemblies or one-day raising awareness events
 - Zero tolerance (i.e., automatic suspension) policies
 - Grouping students who bully together
 - Providing details on bullying-related suicides
 - Conflict resolution/peer mediation
 - Forced apologies

(HRSA; Limber; Bradshaw, 2013, 2018; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011)

RECOMMENDED CORE COMPONENTS

- Multi-component programs
 - Training for all school staff
 - Activities for students
 - Parent activities
 - School-wide initiatives
- Continuum of positive supports
- Data-driven processes



(e.g., Ttofi & Farrington, 2011)

WHAT WORKS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

- **Focus** on social-emotional skills
- **Support & reinforce** positive academic & social behavior through comprehensive systems
- **Foster** respectful, supportive relationships
- **Invest** in multiyear, multi-component programs
- **Coordinate** classroom, school- & community-wide
- **Implement** universal prevention efforts

(Bradshaw, 2018; Gottfredson et al., 2004; Greenberg et al., 2003; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000)

MULTI-TIERED PREVENTION APPROACHES

Indicated (1-5%):

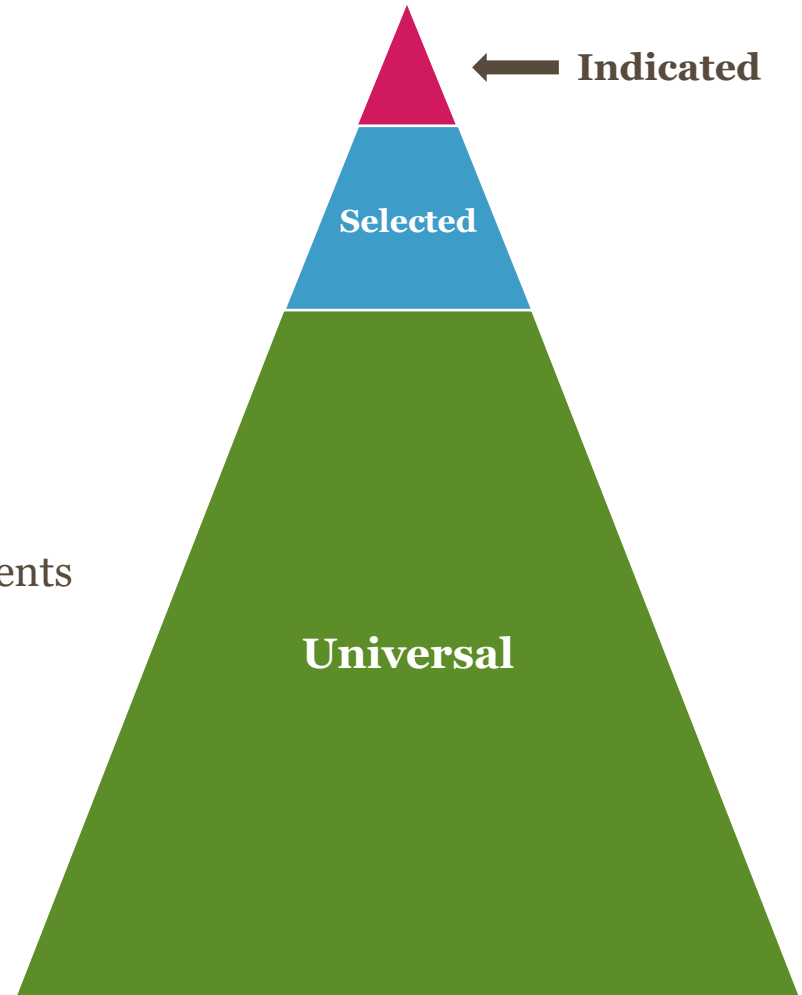
- Strategies to address needs of individual students with intensive needs
- Wraparound supports

Selected (5-10%):

- Targeted, Group Interventions
- Small, needs-based groups for at-risk students who do not respond to universal strategies
- High efficiency/ Rapid response

Universal Interventions (80-90%)

- Core Curriculum
- All settings, all students
- Preventive, proactive
- School-wide or classroom systems for ALL students and staff



Three-tier public health model/ Multi-tiered System of Supports

CHANGE THE SCRIPT . . .

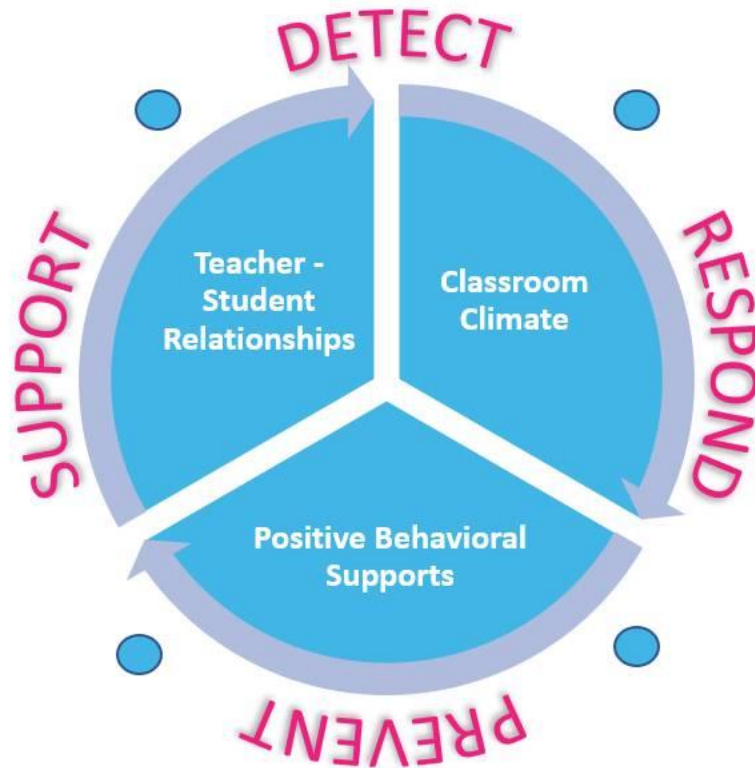


**STOPPING
BULLYING**



**PREVENTING
BULLYING**

IT IS COMPLEX... BUT IT STARTS WITH YOU



The Bullying Classroom Check-Up (2021)

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

- Create rules that specifically focus on desired social behaviors
 - Post them for all to see
- Teach and model these rules
- Reinforce kindness and inclusion

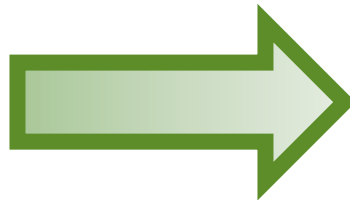
BE SAFE

BE RESPECTFUL

**INCLUDE
EVERYONE**

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS

- Teach:
 - Listening and communication skills
 - Anger management strategies
 - Coping skills



INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS

- Coach students to think before they react:
 - Accidents happen
 - It's okay to get upset, but pausing to think before you react can prevent unwarranted conflict



CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

- Encourage self-awareness and expression:
 - Have students identify different body clues they experience and share the corresponding feeling.
 - Example: Butterflies in the stomach could indicate anxiety or fear.



CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

- Talk about feelings:
 - Pay attention to and talk about different face and body clues students may show
 - Check in with students about their emotions
 - Teach feelings words that students can use and display a list in the classroom



SAD



ANXIOUS



SURPRISED



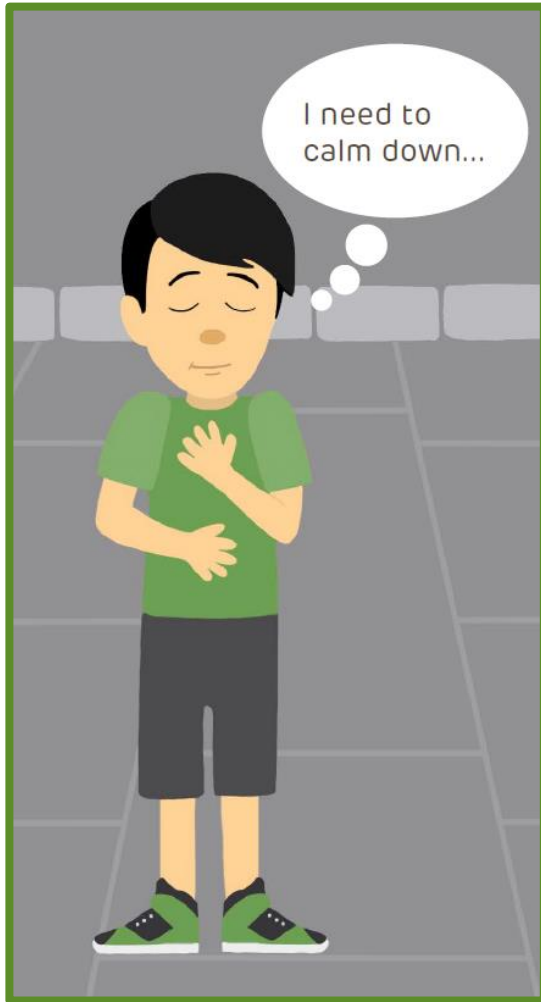
MAD

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

- Encourage students to notice how others are feeling:
 - Have students practice reading each other's face and body clues and/or act out different feelings
 - Promote checking in with others who aren't feeling well



CLASSROOM STRATEGIES



- Practice calming down
 - Deep breathing
 - Think about relaxing images, places and or phrases
 - Counting
 - Talking to yourself (out loud or in your head)

A STRONG FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS

- Build positive relationships early
- Question your own beliefs about bullying and how these might impact your responses



CHOOSING YOUR APPROACH

Think about your school

Foster good communication among staff and administration

Conduct a needs assessment with students & staff to gauge levels of bullying and problem locations

Support teachers to work on aggression & bullying rather than ignoring it

Consider which staff members can lead your bullying prevention initiative

Integrate the problem with already existing efforts, if relevant

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

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- Kohl's Cares Foundation
- Private family donation
- Institutional funding from CVP (Center for Violence Prevention at CHOP)

Special thanks to our School-Based Bullying Prevention and Social-Emotional Learning Team at CHOP!

RESOURCES

[Bullying Prevention Programs at CVP](#)

[All About Bullying Fact Sheets](#)

[Bullying Prevention Workshops](#)

Share these workshops with parents.

[Preventing Bullying in Schools](#)

This book expands on the points discussed in this presentation. Attendees can use the code PBIS21 for a 20% discount at checkout or purchase from the link.

