



Ideas to Bring Down Bullying

Create a climate where bullying is unacceptable and respect and responsibility are the norm with these ideas.

► ED GERETY

OUR WORDS AND OUR ACTIONS WILL ALWAYS DO ONE OF TWO THINGS: THEY WILL EITHER TEAR PEOPLE DOWN OR BUILD PEOPLE UP. The

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center 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.

When there is apathy, resignation, and the attitude that “it’s part of growing up,” bullying will continue to be an issue and a major problem at schools.

Questions to Ask

Studies have shown that the most effective approach to create a culture of respect is to have a school-wide agreement and commitment to end bullying. Programs work when the entire school community is involved. Teachers, administrators, students, parents, coaches, cafeteria staff, aides, and other individuals who are a part of the school community must be aware of the school agreement: Bullying and teasing are unacceptable.

- What does your school do to create a culture and climate where bullying is unacceptable?
- What does your school do to foster respect and responsibility around treating one another with kindness?

- Is the entire school community involved in building respect?

Actions to Take

Try some of the following actions to help create a culture of respect in your school.

1. RESPECT DAY. Invite the entire school community to wear a ribbon in your school colors to symbolize respect for yourself and one another. This will create an awareness of the importance of respect. Hang posters throughout your school that have powerful messages or quotes about respect, character, and kindness. Create one big poster or banner where each person can trace their hand in various colored markers and sign their name around a saying of your choice such as “united we stand” or “respect yourself and one another.” This becomes an ongoing reminder of each person’s commitment to being respectful of one another. Contact your local newspaper and invite them to write a story about your day.

2. NO JOKE! PLEDGE. At the beginning of the school year, create a pledge that students and teachers can read daily and agree to. It can be placed in each classroom or at the entrance of the school. It could be a statement such as: “No joke! Our school is a place where students are safe to be themselves and to learn. I will not tease, bully, or hurt

anyone. Everyone at our school is here to help one another. We are a community.”

3. CARING CARDS. Gather a list of local and national hotline numbers and Web sites that specialize in the issues students at your school may be facing such as drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, violence, and depression. Print these numbers and Web sites on one side of a business card. On the other side of the card print an inspirational quote or saying of your choice. Distribute the caring cards to each student at your school during homeroom or at an all school event.

4. YOU’VE GOT A FRIEND. Mix it up at lunch. Start a fun challenge where students find someone new to sit with at lunch that they normally wouldn’t. Create a box of questions with candy taped to them and have student leaders take turns allowing the students who are doing the challenge to draw a question. It will encourage students to learn new things that they have in common with the other person.

5. RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS. Catch someone in the act! Create a Random Acts of Kindness box that can be placed either in the cafeteria or in the front office. When teachers and students witness a random act of kindness by another person they fill out a form that describes the act and acknowledges the person who committed the act by name. Place the form in the box. Have a drawing daily over the course of a month. Each selected student who acted in kindness will receive a credit toward a purchase in the school store or a special gift.

6. COMMUNITY AWARENESS NIGHT. Host a special night at your school where the community comes together to participate in a forum about the issues that the youth of today are facing. Explore the questions around what causes bullying and what can be done as an individual, as a family, and as a community to stop it. Implement the solutions that are generated from this event. Celebrate the community’s commitment to working together to make a difference.

7. TAP INTO TALENT. Embrace the diversity and uniqueness within your school! Find people who are talented in the areas of art, music, hobbies, sports, and more. Give them an opportunity to showcase their talents


at schoolwide events, games, and assemblies. This will provide an opportunity for everyone to learn something about someone that they may not have known before.

8. BEYOND THE CLASSROOM. Create a section in your school newspaper or Web site to highlight different teachers on a regular basis. Ask the teachers you highlight to share some unique experiences they have had, hobbies they enjoy, and lessons learned in life. This helps to create a community of respect and appreciation for the uniqueness and diversity in your school.

9. MAKE YOUR MARK. Design a mural that can be painted on a designated wall at your school. The mural should contain a positive picture with powerful words such as respect, gratitude, kindness, appreciation, or unity. Invite the talented artists at your school to help with designing and painting the mural. A mural is a powerful statement, that can be viewed by everyone on a daily basis as a reminder of the importance of respect and appreciation for all people.

10. IT’S YOUR CHOICE. There are many different areas that influence the choices and decisions that students make: friends, family, religion, attitude, the media, and past experiences. The pressure to fit in and be accepted can at times feel overwhelming. Here are five questions students can ask themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed and are faced with making a difficult choice or decision. Have students write these questions down and post them in a place that they look at often.

- Is this choice consistent with what I believe in?
- Am I being influenced in a positive or negative way?
- Will this choice hurt me or another?
- Will this choice bring me closer to my goals and dreams?
- How will I feel about this choice in one week, in one month, in one year?

To build up respect and bring down bullying takes a whole community. It starts with one person—and that one person is you. 

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