



LESSON PLAN: DON'T JUST STAND BY

OVERVIEW: Students discuss what it means to be a bystander to bullying and why it is often difficult to intervene and support peers who are affected by bullying. They brainstorm ways to overcome these challenges and are provided with specific strategies for "taking a stand" against name-calling and bullying. Students then apply these principles by writing responses to advice column letters, role-playing solutions, and writing about real-life bystander situations with which they have been confronted.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to explain the negative impact of bystander behavior and their responsibility to do something about name-calling and bullying
- Students will be able to identify strategies to overcome the challenges that stop them from being effective allies to others
- Students will be able to apply the strategies they have learned

AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL: Grades 6-8

TIME: 80 minutes or two class periods

MATERIALS: Chart paper/markers; pens; Students handouts: *Take a Stand and Lend a Hand* and *Don't Just Stand By*

PROCEDURE:

PART 1—INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

Pose one or both of the following scenarios to the class:

- You're in the locker room after gym and one of your classmates keeps making insulting remarks to a much smaller student who has the locker next to you. What do you do?
- The student who sits next to you in math class is spreading mean rumors about another classmate that you know are all lies. Do you say something?

For each scenario, ask students to respond to the following questions:

- What is the right thing to do in this situation?
- What do you think most students you know would actually do in this situation?



Ask students to consider the discrepancy between their responses to the questions above. Ask them what they think stops people from doing the "right thing" in situations like the ones you posed (e.g., fear, ignorance, peer pressure, prejudice). Capture their responses on a sheet of chart paper.

PART 2—IDENTIFYING WAYS TO BE AN ALLY (20 MINUTES)

Point out that we've all been a *bystander* to bullying behavior at one time or another in our lives. Ask students what a bystander is (you can define it as someone who witnesses an incident, but doesn't take part in it). Note that bystanders are not to blame for bullying, but if they laugh at it, ignore it, or simply do nothing, they may play a part in keeping it going.

Return to the list of reasons why students sometimes stop short of doing the "right thing" and brainstorm ways to overcome these challenges so that students can be better friends and allies to those who are targeted for name-calling and bullying.

Distribute the handout, *Take a Stand and Lend a Hand*, which offers strategies for intervening safely when students are bystanders to name-calling or bullying. Review this information with students and ask them if they have anything to add to the list of ways to overcome barriers to doing the "right thing."

PART 3—APPLYING "TAKING A STAND" (40 MINUTES)

Distribute the handout, *Don't Just Stand By*, which includes two letters in the style of an advice column. Each letter is written by a student who is a bystander to bullying and needs some guidance about what to do. Individually or in pairs, ask students to write responses to one or both letters that incorporate some of the strategies you have discussed for taking a stand against name-calling and bullying.

When students have completed their letters, ask for some volunteers to share their responses and to highlight strategies for taking a stand that are safe and realistic. Alternatively you can ask for volunteers to role-play each situation. Students can act each scenario out twice—the first time just the bullying incident, and the second time with the bystander(s) "lending a hand."

This activity can also be followed up by asking students to anonymously write advice column style letters that represent real bystander situations with which they have been confronted. These can be read, discussed and responded to in class from time to time to reinforce the values discussed in this lesson and to support students as they work to apply these principles to their lives.



Take a Stand and Lend a Hand

Name-calling and bullying are problems that everyone must help to solve. It may not be your fault that some students bully, but if you ignore it, laugh at it, or do nothing in response to bullying that you witness, you may be a part of the problem. Being an ally or a friend to someone who is being picked on may feel uncomfortable or scary, but there are safe ways in which we can all "Take a Stand and Lend a Hand."

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

Ask yourself, "Is it my job to help?" Think about how YOU might feel if the bullying was happening to you. You and other students can lend a hand, even when you aren't close friends with the people being bullied. Your school will be a better place if you help stop bullying. And making your school a better place is EVERYONE'S job!

WHAT CAN I DO?

Lots of things! Think about what may work for you:

- Don't just stand there...SAY SOMETHING!
- People who bully may think they're being funny or "cool." If you feel safe, tell the person to STOP the bullying behavior. Say you don't like it and that it isn't funny.
- DON'T BULLY BACK! It won't help if you use mean names or actions. And it could make things worse.

BUT WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL SAFE TELLING STUDENTS WHO BULLY TO STOP?

That's OK. No one should put himself or herself in an unsafe situation. How ELSE can you lend a hand when bullying happens?

- Say kind words to the person who is being bullied, such as "I'm sorry about what happened," and "I don't like it!" Help them understand that it's not their fault. Be a friend. Invite that student to do things with you, like sitting together at lunch or working together on a project. EVERYONE NEEDS A FRIEND!
- Tell that student to talk to someone about what happened. Offer to help by going along.
- Pay attention to the other students who see the bullying. (These people are called, "bystanders.") Are any of them laughing, or joining in with the bullying? These people are part of the problem.
- Let those bystanders know that they're not helping! DON'T be one of them!
- *Tell an adult.* (This is IMPORTANT!!) Chances are, the person who is being bullied



needs help from an adult. AND the student who is doing the bullying probably does, too. Often, the bullying does not get reported. Think about who you could tell in your school—a teacher, counselor, cafeteria or playground aid, principal, bus driver, or other adults you feel comfortable telling. If you need help telling, take a friend along.

WHY DON'T SOME STUDENTS TELL WHEN THEY SEE BULLYING?

They may not want others to think they are "tattling." They may be afraid that the students who bully will pick on them next. They may think their friends will make fun of them for trying to help. Telling is very important! Reporting that someone is getting bullied or hurt in some other way is NOT "tattling." Adults at school can help. Ask them to help keep you safe after telling. Explain to your friends that bullying is NOT fair and encourage them to join in helping!

WHAT IF THE BULLYING DOESN'T HAPPEN AT SCHOOL?

If there is an adult around, report the bullying to an adult (your youth group leader, sports coach, etc.) No matter where the bullying happens, you should talk to your parents about bullying that you see or know about. Ask them for their ideas about how to help. We ALL must do our part! People who are bullied deserve to feel safe and welcome at school and in their neighborhoods. Everyone does!

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Don't Just Stand By

We've all been a *bystander* to bullying behavior at one time or another in our lives. A bystander is someone who witnesses an incident, but doesn't take part in it. Bystanders are not to blame for bullying, but if they laugh at it, ignore it, or simply do nothing, they may play a part in keeping it going. Name-calling and bullying are problems that everyone must help to solve. And there are ways that we can all get involved without putting ourselves at risk or harming our standing with peers.

Read the Fact Sheet entitled *Take a Stand and Lend a Hand*, which provides some tips for taking a stand against name-calling and bullying. Then use this information to help you write a response to the *Dear Gabby* letters below. When you are finished, try role-playing each situation. Act each scenario out twice—the first time just the bullying incident, and the second time with the bystander(s) "lending a hand."

Dear Gabby,

My family just moved from a big city to the suburbs, so now I have to take the bus to school every day. There's this one kid who sits next to me every morning. I guess you can say he's the typical "nerd." His nose is always in a book, he wears glasses that are too big for his face, and his clothes are not very stylish. You get the point. Anyway, there's this group of thugs who taunt the poor guy every day. They call him "loser," make fun of the way he talks, try to trip him—the whole works. Most of the other kids either laugh or ignore it, and the bus driver does absolutely nothing. I guess you can lump me in with the ones who pretty much ignore it. I feel bad for the kid, but what can I do? I'm the new guy at my middle school and it's hard enough to make friends without everyone thinking I'm best buddies with the class "nerd." Besides, the thugs are like twice my size, so it's not like I can teach them a lesson or anything. Still, this problem keeps nagging at me. What do you think I should do, Gabby?

Sincerely stressed,

Concerned in Connecticut

Dear Concerned,



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Dear Gabby,

There's this kid in my class named Jason. He was really popular when we were in elementary school, but now he gets picked on all the time because he's into dance and acts a little like a girl. They call him "Queer Eye" and basically torture him on a daily basis. He's pretty good at just pre-tending they don't exist, but it drives me crazy. Once, when some kids were giving Jason a hard time, I told them to cut it out. Forget it—they called me a lesbian for like a month after that. I'm just not sure there's any use getting involved. What do you think, Gabby?

Yours bluely,

Fed-Up in Florida

Dear Fed-Up,