



Bullying: Prevention and Intervention Tips for Scout Leaders and Parents

A supplemental training module
for use with accompanying PowerPoint slides

Training Summary

Unfortunately, the prevalence of bullying among children and teenagers is shocking. Researchers report that 70 percent of students have experienced bullying at some point, and 14 percent of those students believe that bullying has had an extreme impact on their lives. The values of Scouting make it clear that bullying cannot be tolerated. Scouting leaders have a unique opportunity to teach respect and acceptance of others.

This training focuses on enabling adult leaders and parents to increase their awareness of the incidence and effects of bullying, to create an antibullying culture in their Scouting units, and to empower Scouts to assist those targeted by bullies wherever it occurs. Strategies for supporting the victims of bullying and for helping Scouts who bully others develop more appropriate social skills are presented as well.

Time Required: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define bullying, including cyberbullying, and recognize it when it occurs.
- Support victims of bullying.
- Redirect Scouts who bully others.
- Create an antibullying culture in their Scouting units that empowers Scouts to assist victims of bullying whenever and wherever it occurs.

Training Formats

This training begins with an interactive discussion supported by PowerPoint slides. Buzz groups then discuss and brainstorm assigned scenarios and report back to the large group during a debriefing/Q&A session that is facilitated by the presenter.

Required Materials

- Set of three buzz group scenarios (one per small group)
- List of references and resources (one per participant)
- PowerPoint presentation: "Bullying: Prevention and Intervention Tips for Scout Leaders and Parents"
- Computer, LCD projector, and screen

Introduction

5 minutes

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Introduce self. If it is a relatively small group, ask participants to introduce themselves and tell what they hope to gain from the session. If the group is too large to do this, ask how many participants are parents, how many are Scout leaders, and ask for volunteers to tell what they hope to gain from the session.

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Ask, **“Why talk about bullying?”** Recap points made by participants during the introduction, and add:

An alarming percentage of young people encounter bullying at one time or another during their school years. Estimates range from 10 percent who report being victims of severe acts to 75 percent who have reported at least one incident of bullying during the past year. The fact that bullying is so common does not change the fact that it can cause serious harm.

Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence can result from being the victim of bullying. In addition, the National Education Association estimates that 160,000 students are absent from school every day simply to avoid being bullied. Low grades, depression, and withdrawal from social situations are other potential results of being victimized.

During the past decade, school shootings, suicides, and other acts of extreme violence by individuals who endured years of bullying have highlighted the fact that bullying is not a harmless and inevitable part of the experience of growing up.

The values of Scouting make it clear that bullying cannot be tolerated, and we in Scouting have a unique opportunity to teach respect and acceptance of others and to create an environment that is safe and healthy for learning. In keeping with the Scout motto, we have a commitment to assist young people to *Be Prepared* to handle the difficult situations they are likely to face.

Definition and Beliefs about Bullying

5 minutes

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What is bullying?

- Bullying is any behavior that is deliberate, hurtful, repeated over time. It is usually characterized by a relationship involving an imbalance of power, such as size or popularity.
- Bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional, social, behavioral, or any combination.
- Bullying can take place just about anywhere: on the bus, at school, at soccer practice, even online via the Internet.

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What are some examples of bullying?

Bullying may take the form of hitting or kicking; stealing or damaging things that belong to the victim; displaying menacing gestures or facial expressions; repeated name-calling, teasing, taunting, spreading damaging rumors, coercion, or forced action; intentional exclusion from the group; and cyberbullying (a topic we will discuss in more detail later).

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What is the difference between bullying and good-natured joking?

Bullying is hurtful behavior that is *intentional*, that happens *repeatedly*, and that involves a perceived *imbalance of power* between the bully and the victim. It is possible that what one person thinks is or intends as good-natured joking, the other person perceives as bullying. It also happens that what starts out as good-natured joking can get out of hand and become bullying.

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Beliefs about Bullying: Fact or Myth?

- ***Bullying toughens you up.***
MYTH. Bullying is more tolerated than any other form of harassment, yet far from “toughening you up,” it can create feelings of anxiety and depression, academic failure, truancy, fear and avoidance of social situations, and in some cases, extremely destructive behavior toward oneself or others.
- ***Kids learn to be bullies from watching others who treat people aggressively in order to succeed in getting what they want.***
FACT.
- ***When adults intervene in bullying, it makes matters worse.***
MYTH. Ignoring bullying may be interpreted as permission to bully. The key to eliminating bullying is for adults who work with kids in all settings to change the climate so that bullying is never tolerated or considered socially acceptable.

Supporting Victims of Bullying

10 minutes

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How can Scout leaders and parents assist the victims of bullying?

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1. Take victims of bullying seriously.

- If a Scout gathers the courage to talk to you about being bullied, be aware that he might be very upset even though he may not show it on the outside. He needs to know that you take the problem seriously and will take action.

- Talk with the Scout where others cannot hear the conversation (i.e., a location appropriate for a Scoutmaster’s conference), and let him know that it is not his fault that he was bullied. Remember Youth Protection policies in holding this conversation, and remain in sight of another adult or trusted youth at all times.
- **Note:** Avoid arranging a mediation session between the victims and those who bullied them to work things out. Because bullying situations generally involve an imbalance of power, victims are likely to continue to feel intimidated if forced to confront those who bullied them, and mediation will not work. It also sends a message to victims that they were equally at fault.
- If the bullying was reported to happen during a Scouting activity, interview bystanders as well as those accused of bullying to gather information about what happened.

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2. Help victims of bullying communicate with others and seek additional help.

- If the victim has not told his parents and is telling you as a trusted adult instead, encourage him to talk to his parents and offer to speak to his parents with him if they want you to.
- Be aware that young people may not be comfortable letting their parents know that they have been bullied because they do not want to disappoint them by appearing to be unable to handle the situation on their own. They may also believe their parents think that bullying will toughen them up and will not take it seriously or be sympathetic. In some cases, the parenting style of the Scout’s parents could be seen as bullying as well.
- ***If a young person confides in you, and you believe that he is in danger from others or is contemplating hurting himself or others, take immediate steps to get him help, in accordance with Youth Protection policies.***

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3. Help victims of bullying develop some strategies to cope with bullying situations that may come up in the future, *but emphasize that it is not their fault that they are being bullied, even if these strategies don’t work.*

- **Use the buddy system** whenever possible to steer clear of bullying. Walk with a friend or group whenever or wherever you feel you are likely to be bullied. Tell trusted adults that you believe more adult supervision is needed in these situations or locations.
- **If you are bullied with insults**, try not to take what is said to you personally. Remind yourself that you are not doing anything wrong—it is those bullying you who are at fault. Then:
 - **Ignore** the person bullying you **and walk away**, or
 - **Stand up for yourself with words** like, “Hey! Cut that out!” or “I’m tired of this and I want you to stop it,” and **then walk away**, or
 - Without attacking back verbally with insults or threats, **try making a joke**, such as “Thanks for the feedback.” or “That was pretty funny. Got any more?” or “Thanks for noticing.” or “You guys finished? I’ve got things to do.” **Then walk away.**

- **If you are danger of physical assault**, take a deep breath and try to stay calm. Showing fear makes those who bully bolder. Then
 - **Call for help, get away as fast as possible**, and tell an adult.
 - **Don't make threats or fight**. This just reinforces the person bullying you and increases the chances that you will get hurt or get in trouble.
 - Then **tell an adult and ask them to help**.
- To help adults help you, **be alert and collect evidence**. As soon as you can, write down what was said and done, who was there, where and when it happened, and what you did. Having more specific information makes it easier for adults to intervene.

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4. Recognize some of the red flags that a Scout may be a victim of bullying:

- Frequent absences from school and other activities, such as troop meetings
- Avoidance of peers, especially in less-supervised situations
- Nervousness around certain peers
- Increased anger and resentment with no apparent cause
- Complaints of feeling sick to avoid activities
- Avoidance of group restrooms
- Physical marks such as cuts or bruises

Redirecting Those Who Bully Others

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How can Scout leaders and parents redirect Scouts who bully others?

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1. Stop bullying immediately.

- If you witness bullying directly, intervene immediately so that it does not escalate.
- After stopping an incident of bullying, use a matter-of-fact tone to identify the behavior you observed, and emphasize that the bullying behavior is unacceptable. It is important to avoid publicly backing a bully into a corner.
- Make it clear that you will address the issue further in private. This approach allows those who bullied save face. It also increases the chances that they will be receptive to your redirection.

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2. Hold Scouts who have bullied others accountable for their actions.

- Stress that the behavior is not acceptable, even if they try to minimize it (e.g., "I only called him a nerd," or "I shoved him because I was in a hurry and he was in my way.") Let them know that they had other options, and that they are fully responsible for their choices.
- Calmly impose consistent and escalating consequences for bullying behavior, while continuing to communicate that you value the Scouts who engaged in this behavior, but they must stop behaving aggressively.

- Encourage the Scouts to apologize or make amends with those they have bullied, but, again, do not set up a mediation session for them to work things out themselves.
- Be alert for the Scout who bullies others who stops his bullying behavior with adults around, then continues bullying or “gets even” when alone with the victims.

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- 3. Avoid labeling *bullies*** when addressing Scouts who have engaged in bullying behaviors directly, or when referring to them while speaking to their parents and others. Talk about the specific unacceptable *behaviors* instead.

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- 4. Pay close attention and **notice when Scouts who have bullied others in the past are behaving appropriately.****
- When young people are making a genuine effort to change for the better, they often continue to receive feedback *only* about their negative behavior. Encourage other adults in the unit to support this effort.
 - Sandwich feedback about how to improve their behavior between positive comments whenever possible.
 - Compliment the Scouts whenever you find a genuine opportunity. Don't be tempted to negate the compliment with follow-up comments such as, “Why can't you always behave this way?”

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- 5. Help the Scouts discover *replacement behaviors* to engage in instead of bullying.**
- Give the Scouts (closely supervised) leadership or teaching roles, and provide them with immediate feedback about what they do well. It is important to do this carefully so that you are helping them develop positive behavior without condoning aggressive behavior or putting them in a position to continue to abuse their power.
 - Whenever possible, tell the Scouts what you *want* them to do, not what you *don't* want. Encourage the Scouts to use their influence in positive ways, such as leading change in causes they care about.

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- 6. Help Scouts who bully develop empathy.** Empathy and aggression are incompatible responses.
- Encourage the Scouts to participate in supervised service activities that foster empathy for people who are different from them, such as spending time with or helping people of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, and religions, or those who have mental or physical disabilities.
 - Showing scenes from movies that depict people being bullied and asking them to discuss how the characters must feel can also be used to develop empathy.

Creating an Anti-Bullying Culture

10 minutes

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How can Scout leaders create an anti-bullying culture in their Scouting units?

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- 1. Be a role model**, and make the adult and youth leaders in your unit aware that young people are always watching their role models. If they see a role model gossip about people, ridicule others, or use physical, verbal, or passive aggression to solve problems, they are more likely to do so themselves. You may occasionally need to look in the mirror to ensure that you are not perceived at times as a bully.

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- 2. If you see any bullying, stop it right away.** Encourage all adult and youth leaders to do so as well. Bullying relationships are often maintained by a lack of action on the part of authority figures and bystanders.

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- 3. If you suspect bullying is happening**, talk individually with Scouts to gain more information. Most bullying occurs when adults are not around; **providing constant adult supervision reduces opportunities for bullying behavior.** Continue to allow the troop to be boy-led, but provide an adult presence at all times.

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- 4. Establish an open-door policy** for Scouts to discuss incidents of bullying that they have experienced or witnessed.

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- 5. Talk to the bystanders** in bullying incidents individually. If they did not help the victim, help them recognize what they could do if it happens again, emphasizing that they should go for help if they do not feel safe intervening directly. If they tried to help, let them know you admire their efforts, even if they were not completely successful. Be even-handed in your investigation, and don't start out with any assumptions. Although unlikely, it is possible that the "victim" has an agenda.

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- 6. Facilitate a discussion with the patrol leaders' council, and then with the troop.**
 - Review the different kinds of bullying and how Scouts may be impacted during troop activities and in other settings. Be sure to mention that repeatedly failing to include an individual can be a form of passive bullying.
 - Ask for volunteers from the PLC to share their insights regarding the level of bullying that Scouts experience or witness during troop activities and in other settings.
 - Review what Scouts should do if they are being bullied, if they see others being bullied, or if they realize that they are bullying others. Talk about how to stand up for victims of bullying when they are a bystander.

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6. Facilitate a discussion with the patrol leaders' council, and then with the troop (con't.).

- Let patrol leaders know that they may be in an excellent position to protect their patrol members from bullying by setting an example and by recognizing bullying in its early stages. If they have concerns about a bullying relationship or incident in their patrol, encourage them to request support from their senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster.
- Ask the PLC to brainstorm ways to communicate to the troop that bullying is unacceptable and how to stand up for Scouts being bullied.
- Encourage the PLC and the troop to make a promise to stand with anyone they see being harassed or bullied.

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6. Facilitate a discussion with the patrol leaders' council, and then with the troop (con't.).

- Emphasize key elements of the Scout Oath and Scout Law:
 - “To help other people at all times . . .”
 - “A Scout is friendly, courteous, kind . . .”
- Make it clear that Scouts are expected to take action and not stand by and watch if they see someone being bullied or hurt. Bullying usually does not occur without an audience. When bystanders watch passively, it increases the chances that the bullying will continue. *Emphasize, however, that they should step in directly only if they feel safe; if they do not feel safe, they should go for help.*
- Empower Scouts to step in to help when others are being bullied by:
 - Being a friend. Sometimes kids get bullied because they do not have any friends to stand up for them.
 - Speaking up and saying something like, “That’s not cool. Let’s get out of here.” This tells those bullying that their actions are unacceptable and also may give other bystanders the courage to speak up and walk away.
 - Asking others to help. The more people say that bullying is not funny or cool, the more likely those who bully are to realize that what they are doing is not OK.
 - Getting an adult, or going with the person who is being bullied to speak to an adult.

Cyberbullying

5 minutes

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What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic communications such as the Internet to harass, threaten, and harm others. Social networking Web sites, as well as e-mail, instant messaging, and cell phone text and voice messages are common venues for cyberbullying.

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What tactics are used by those who cyberbully?

- Spreading damaging gossip, often called “dissing” or “flaming.”
- Harassment—repeatedly sending or forwarding mean or hateful messages; posting embarrassing pictures of victims without their consent.
- Impersonating someone else online and posting damaging information about them or someone else, or using the false identity to trick someone into revealing personal information to someone they believed they trusted.

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What misconceptions do those engaging in cyberbullying often have?

- **“Cyberbullying is not a big deal; no one really gets hurt.”** Cyberbullying can be an extension of the bullying young people are already experiencing at school and elsewhere. Because electronic communication is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, friends and classmates of those bullying may join in and create a situation where there is no place the victim can feel safe. This can be extremely emotionally destructive.
- **“My friends are doing it and think it’s funny, so it’s OK.”** Scouts know that cyberbullying is far from friendly, courteous, and kind.
- **“There’s no way I can get caught.”** Those who cyberbully often have a false sense of security since they can’t be physically seen when they are online. In reality, they can be traced, caught, and even punished.

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What can Scouts do to prevent cyberbullying?

- If you wouldn’t say it in person, don’t say it online. Be kind online.
- Refuse to forward cyberbullying messages. Delete them instead.
- Tell friends to stop cyberbullying.
- Block communication with people who cyberbully.
- Do not give out your passwords or give personal information online.
- Stay away from sites that tolerate and encourage bullying.
- Report cyberbullying to a trusted adult.

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What should Scouts do if they are victims of cyberbullying?

- Never try to seek revenge. This is likely to make matters worse.
- Ask for the cyberbullying to stop, using calm language that is not threatening or emotional.
- Tell the person that you will take other steps if the cyberbullying does not stop.
- If it still does not stop, tell your parent or guardian immediately, even if you are concerned that you may have broken some house rules about Internet use.

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What should parents or Scouts leaders do if a Scout tells them that he is the victim of cyberbullying?

- Reassure the Scout that it is not his fault that he is a victim of cyberbullying and that he did the right thing to tell you. If he has broken your rules of Internet use, let him know that you will address that later, and that your primary concern is his safety and emotional well-being. Communicate that you are glad he trusted you to help him.
- Understand that many young people do not tell their parents that they have been victimized for fear that they will lose their Internet privileges. If they have not told their parents and are telling you as a trusted adult instead, encourage them to talk to their parents. If they are not comfortable doing that, offer talk to their parents with them.
- Parents should encourage Scouts to block bullying messages or delete those messages without reading them. In some situations, however, it may be helpful to keep a record of incidents in case the cyberbullying escalates.
- Parents and Scouts can also report incidents of cyberbullying to Internet service providers.
- If the cyberbullying involves threats, parents should call the police to ensure the Scout's safety.

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Buzz Group Scenarios

15 minutes

Divide participants into small buzz groups of three to five participants each, giving each group a copy of the handout with the three scenarios. **Assign** each group a specific scenario to discuss, brainstorm, and report back on, using the information and tips presented earlier, and focusing on the following questions:

1. Is this bullying?
2. How do you know? (If you don't know, what would you do to find out?)
3. How would you respond as a Scout leader or parent?

If the groups finish early, they are free to discuss the remaining scenarios. They may also discuss situations from their own units if they prefer, omitting names, of course. **Circulate** among the groups to answer questions or provide assistance if needed.

Facilitate the discussion as a representative from each group shares the group's assessment of the scenario.

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References and Resources Acknowledgment

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Conclusion

Conclude the session by thanking the participants for their commitment to preparing young people to face the increasingly complex challenges of their world and to have the courage to apply the values of Scouting.

This unit of supplemental training may be downloaded and copied, without change, for use in Boy Scout training courses and other Boy Scout activities. Please send any suggestion for change or improvement in this unit of supplemental training to supplementaltraining@netbsa.org.

Buzz Group Scenarios

Discuss:

1. Is this bullying?
2. How do you know? (If you don't know, what would you do to find out?)
3. How would you respond as a Scout leader or parent?

SCENARIO 1: Bossy Barty

14-year-old Barty has recently been elected senior patrol Leader. He is now in charge of his first camping trip. You are in your tent the first night and hear Barty's voice saying, "Get back in your tent, you little geek. I don't care if you did drink two Big Gulps on the way out here. I'm in charge now and you better listen to me or you can expect more of what you got at summer camp last month."

SCENARIO 2: Anxious Ahmed

You are having your first Scoutmaster conference with Ahmed, a brand new troop member. When you ask him how he is enjoying Boy Scouts, his face lights up as he says, "I love coming here! No one makes fun of me or pushes me around. The guys in my patrol and all the leaders are nice to me. I think they might even like me." Puzzled you probe, "So, isn't this your first year in middle school, Ahmed? How is school going?" The smile leaves Ahmed's face and his lip begins to quiver. "I hate going to school. The guys on the bus take my lunch money from me every day. I have to carry all my books around because if I go to my locker . . . well, I better not say any more."

SCENARIO 3: Troop Tea Party

During the closing of the troop meeting, Carlos, the senior patrol leader, announces that, once again, several lost items have been turned in. He laughs and says that the items will be returned to their rightful owner when he comes up to claim them and sings "I'm a Little Teapot" for the troop. The Scoutmaster smiles at this time-honored troop tradition designed to teach kids to be more responsible. "And," he thinks to himself, "it usually works."

As Carlos holds up a *Boy Scout Handbook* and the neckerchief slide that 12-year-old Shawn carved at summer camp, Shawn feels himself go pale, and tears well up in his eyes. No matter how hard he tries, he can't seem to remember to gather up his belongings before the closing ceremony. It was bad enough when he first joined the troop and most of his patrol was called up every week to claim dozens of items and sing the teapot song together. But for the last three meetings, he has been the only one. He can't face having the whole troop and all the parents laugh at how stupid he is one more time, or worse, see that he is crying. As Carlos reads the name on the cover of the handbook, Shawn runs for the door of the fellowship hall.

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