

Just For Kids!

August, 2008

Question: Who are bullies and what is bullying? Am I a bully when I tease my friends?

Answer:

Let's take a closer look at bullies, and bullying, by answering five questions.



Who is a bully? A bully may hit you, push you, or tell stories that aren't true. A bully may take your stuff, leave you out, tease you, name-call, or tell others not to be your friend. A bully may be larger or smaller than you; bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Boys can bully boys or girls. Girls can bully girls or boys. Your feelings do not matter to a bully. In fact, a bully enjoys making his or her target feel afraid or upset enough to cry.

What does a bully do? A bully's behavior is often called "bullying." Bullying is when you keep doing something to someone and he or she has asked you to stop. It's like a fly who hangs around your food while you're trying to eat. No matter what you do, or try, the fly will not go away. A bully, like the fly, does not give up.

When does bullying happen? A bully can be found any time of the day (or night).

Where is a bully most often found? Bullies may target someone in their classroom but a bully does not want to be caught. Bullying most often happens on the playground, at recess, lunch, and on school buses. Bullying also happens outside of school, like at games and the movies.

Why do some students bully other kids and why does it work? Bullies often bully others for power or attention. Sometimes a bully is angry or sad so he or she is mean to others. When someone is being bullied, he or she usually feels hurt, afraid, lonely, and sad. A bully makes you feel bad about yourself. You may do things you don't want to do because you're scared. Worse, you may be too upset or ashamed to tell an adult you are a bully's target (what the bully hopes for – to keep it a secret).

Now that we've looked at bullying, let's answer your second question. When you have friends, there will be times when you hurt their feelings. Sometimes we tease our friends and we don't know how much it may have hurt them until later. When this happens, you've made a mistake; you're not a bully.

You become a bully when you *keep teasing* someone and he or she has asked you to stop. It's *not okay* to hurt someone to make others laugh or to gain popularity. It's *not okay* to make fun of someone because he or she is different from you. If you pick on someone over and over again and do not care how you are making him or her feel, you are being a bully. That's the difference between kids having fun and bullies hurting others.

Resources: KidsHealth. "Dealing With Bullies." <http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/bullies.html> (accessed August, 2008).

