

Stopping Verbal Abuse TEACHER'S GUIDE

What teachers need to know:

According to a survey of students conducted by The Families and Work Institute:

- Twelve (12) percent of the students said they had been bullied five times or more in the past month.
- Approximately 23 percent admitted they had bullied someone else.
- Eight (8) percent said they had been attacked with a weapon.
- National research shows that three out of four children say they have been bullied.

The profile of a bully (source: *The American Academy of Adolescent & Child Psychiatry*)

Bullies thrive on controlling or dominating others. Often, children and teens who bully have been physical abused or bullied themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home.

The profile of a bully's "victim"

Children targeted by bullies also tend to fit a particular profile. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated or who have few friends. A bully's victims may also be smaller or younger and have a harder time defending themselves.

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

- Define the term "self-confidence" and discuss its importance
- Work independently to compose a personal letter

Project and Purpose:

Discuss self-confidence. Next, have students write themselves a letter about a personal trait they wish they could improve, but why it can be viewed as a good trait. Older students should also include how that trait has served them well throughout their school years.

1. Explain to your students that many times, bullies tease or taunt children who appear vulnerable. One way children can protect themselves from bullies is to demonstrate self-confidence.
2. Ask your students to explain what self-confidence means to them. Tell your students that sometimes self-confidence means feeling good about yourself even though you are not "perfect."
3. Tell students that people often forget just how great they are. We tend to focus on the negative. Help students see how they can turn a negative into a positive. Share the following example with your students:

Singer Kenny Rogers performs a song about a little boy who is getting ready to practice hitting a baseball. Before he begins to practice, the boy tells himself that he is the greatest baseball player ever. Then the boy throws the ball into the air, swings his bat and misses the ball. Before trying again, the boy says how great he is. For the second time, he throws the ball and misses. Undeterred, the youngster tries again. For the third time, he tells himself that he is a great baseball player, throws the ball into the air, swings his bat and misses. That's strike three. By this time, many people would be disappointed by their failure. The boy, however, has a different perspective. In the last verse of the song, he says, "I am the greatest; that is a fact. But even I didn't know I could pitch like that. I am the greatest; that is understood. But even I didn't know I could pitch that good."

5. Ask your students to discuss the song together, completing the sentence, "the morale of that song is..."
6. Next, tell your students that it is their turn to find the positive in what appears to be a negative situation. Assignment: Students must select one of their personal traits that they wish they could improve or change. Then, students will write a letter to themselves in which they will explain why the trait is really something good. Students' letters should offer at least two reasons why the trait is good. **Example:** I wish I were more outgoing. However, being shy and quiet allows me to focus on the people around me and helps me be a

better listener. (Older students should write how this trait has served them well throughout their school years.) Students can complete in class or for homework.

Class Discussion Questions:

- How does bullying affect a person physically? Emotionally? What were some of the examples you saw in the video? Why do you think some students continue to bully others even when they know how much their victims are hurting?
- How do some victims unknowingly give bullies ammunition to use against them?
- Why do some victims refuse to tell someone about a bullying incident? If you were a bullying victim, would you tell your parents or a teacher? Why or why not?

Self-Reflection Questions:

Students can answer the questions anonymously on a sheet of notebook paper or in a journal.

- Do you have someone, other than a parent, in whom you could confide if you were bullied?
- Have you ever witnessed a bullying incident in your school? What were the circumstances? As a witness, do you think you had a responsibility to intervene? Why or why not?
- How does your school handle bullying incidents (warning, detention, suspension, etc.)? Do you agree with the school's measures? Why or why not?

Evaluation:

- Did students analyze the song for its message?
- Did each student write a personal letter about their trait?
- Did students participate in discussion and self-reflection questions?