
BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

RECOMMENDED LESSON

Break the Cycle

This lesson outlines one simple way to integrate the Bystander Revolution Break the Cycle video playlist and discussion questions into an elementary school classroom setting.

Grade Level:
Elementary School

Estimated Time:
45 minutes

**Common Core
ELA Standards
Grades 3–5:**
SL.1.B, SL.1.C,
SL.1.D, SL.2, SL.3,
SL.5, W.2.A, W.2.B,
W.2.C, W.2.D,
W.2.E, W.2.F,
W.3, W.4

OVERVIEW

Students will discuss the concept of breaking the “cycle of bullying.” Students will watch videos with personal advice from celebrities and students sharing their views on how to address bullying behavior with kindness and understanding. Students will discuss ways they can create an environment where everyone feels included, and bullying behavior doesn’t continue. The lesson concludes with an opportunity for the educator to recap the lessons learned and present an optional homework assignment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of breaking the “cycle of bullying.”
- Empathize with peers who have bullied others, in addition to those who have been bullied.
- Summarize advice heard from celebrities and students.
- Compare and contrast different prevention and intervention strategies.
- Apply the strategies to help themselves and others when they encounter bullying.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Computer & internet access
- LCD projector (optional)
- [Break the Cycle video playlist](#)
- Pens/pencils & paper

PREPARATION

- First, watch the [Break the Cycle video playlist](#).
- Familiarize yourself with key concepts.

PROCEDURE

Introduction

(5 minutes)

Introduce the topic by asking students the following questions:

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “cycle of bullying”?
- Do you think when people experience bullying behavior, they are more likely to repeat it?
- Why would someone who is bullied go on to bully others?
- Could responding to those who bully with kindness and understanding, instead of anger, reduce the spread of bullying?

KEY QUESTION

How can kindness and understanding help targets of bullying, as well as those who bully?

DEFINITION

The cycle of bullying is: A sequence of bullying events in which one instance of bullying leads to further bullying. For example, someone who has been bullied may go on to bully others, and bystanders who witness bullying may adopt the behavior in an attempt to retaliate or defend.

Videos & Discussion

(25 minutes)

Introduce the video and discussion segment by explaining to students that they are about to watch short videos from celebrities and students talking about breaking the cycle of bullying. Instruct students to think about a time they have seen bullying and whether the advice in the videos would have helped.



FEATURED SOLUTION

BREAK THE CYCLE

Don't fight bullying by trying to humiliate or attack the person doing the bullying. Perpetuating abuse only makes things worse.

Play video 1 of the [Break the Cycle playlist](#). After viewing the video, you can use the sample questions below to lead a conversation, as time permits. Each sample question has several follow-up questions that may be useful in the discussion.

1. How did you feel watching the video about people who used to bully others? Did it change how you think about people who bully?

- Do you think people can change?
- Do you think someone who bullies is always a "bully" and someone who gets bullied is always a "target"?
- Have you ever treated anyone unkindly? Have you ever been treated unkindly?

2. Can you remember a time when you realized something you were doing was wrong?

- Do you think everyone makes mistakes?
- Do you think when people treat others badly, it's always on purpose?
- Do you think sometimes they might not realize how they are making others feel?
- When you think about your own mistakes, does it help you understand how others might do things you disagree with?

Play videos 2–3 then continue the discussion:

3. How can bullying be like a chain reaction? What could a cycle of bullying be?

- Could it be that people who are bullied may go on to bully other people?
- Could it be that once someone starts to bully others, it can be hard to stop?
- Do you think that bullying behavior can be contagious? Why?

4. What is empathy? How do you think empathy could help in a bullying situation?

- Is it the ability to imagine and understand the feelings of someone else?
- Can having empathy help you realize that someone bullying you may be going through their own problems?
- Can empathizing with someone who is bullying help you figure out how you might be able to help them?
- What can we gain by trying to imagine the feelings of others?

Play videos 4–5 then continue the discussion:

5. Do you agree with the idea that “hurt people hurt people”? Why or why not?

- Do you think people hurt others because they have their own problems?
- Do you think that when people bully others, the reasons may not have anything to do with the person being picked on?

6. Do you think talking to the person who’s bullying is a good strategy? Why or why not?

- Can giving someone who is bullying a chance to explain what they are going through help to stop the behavior?
- Do you think they might not have anyone to talk to about their own problems?
- Can you think of reasons why punishing someone who bullies might not always be the best solution?

7. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has a quote, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” How can that quote apply to putting an end to bullying?

- What does Martin Luther King Jr. mean when he says that only light can drive out darkness and only love can drive out hate?
- Could it be that being mean to people who bully usually makes things worse?
- Can being kind toward people who bully help to reduce bullying? Why or why not?
- What are examples of ways that people can work to prevent bullying before it happens?
- Do you believe that people who bully need love too? Why?

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

If someone is bullying you, consider putting yourself in their shoes and try to imagine why they’re acting this way. Often, you’ll find it has more to do with their own personal problems than it has to do with anything about you.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

(5 minutes)

Ask students to write two sentences about something they would do differently, or could improve upon, if they interact with someone who is bullying others in the future. If time permits, ask students to share what they've written with the class.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Recap what students can do if they witness bullying and aren't sure what to do. Ask students when they would consider the following strategies:

When would you...

- show kindness to someone who is bullying?
- remember that being a "bully" is a temporary role?
- try to help someone who is bullying?
- forgive someone who is bullying?
- tell a teacher or parent?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

1. Watch a video and reflect in writing

Have students visit bystanderrevolution.org and watch another video of their choosing. Ask students to write a letter to the person in the video, telling them why they agree or disagree with the advice presented. Ask them to tell the person how they might apply what was said to their own life.

2. The Weekly Stand

The Weekly Stand is a list of 52 simple, fun, transformative actions bystanders can take to reduce bullying and improve school culture. Each action contains helpful background information, suggested strategies and phrases to use, and a video for inspiration.

Have students go to bystanderrevolution.org/weekly, choose one of the actions to complete, and then turn in proof that they did it through some creative means: a photo, a screenshot, a short video, an essay, or even a comic strip.

ABOUT BYSTANDER REVOLUTION

Bystander Revolution is an online resource offering practical, crowdsourced advice about simple things individuals can do to take the power out of bullying.