Definitions Related to Name-Calling, Bullying and Bias

Anti-bias: An active commitment to challenging prejudice, stereotyping and all forms of discrimination.

Bias: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

Bullying: Repeated actions or threats of action directed toward a person by one or more people who have (or are perceived to have) more power or status than their target in order to cause fear, distress or harm. Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological or any combination of these three. Bullying behaviors can include name-calling, obscene gesturing, malicious teasing, rumors, slander, social exclusion, damaging a person’s belongings, threats and physical violence.

Cyberbullying: The intentional and repeated mistreatment of others through the use of technology, such as computers, cell phones and other electronic devices.

Name-calling: The use of language to defame, demean or degrade individuals or groups.

Roles in Bullying and Bias Incidents*

Target: Someone against whom mistreatment is directed.
Aggressor: Someone who says or does something harmful or malicious to another person intentionally and unprovoked.

- In a study of 500,000 3rd to 12th graders, 17% of students reported that they have been bullied at least 2-3 times in the last month. [1]
- Approximately 20% of young people report experiencing cyberbullying in their lifetimes. [2]

Bystander: Someone who sees bias or bullying and does not say or do anything.

- In a study of 500,000 3rd to 12th graders, 10% of students reported that they have bullied someone at least 2-3 times in the last month. [3]
- In a survey of 655 13- to 18-year-olds, approximately 1 in 10 teens reported that they have cyberbullied someone online or by text message. [4]

Ally: Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else.

- More than half of bullying behaviors will stop in less than ten seconds when another student intervenes. [6]

*When discussing bullying and bias, it must be made clear that definitions are describing the person's behavior in a given situation, not defining the individual. While the A World of Difference® Institute uses nouns (e.g., aggressor) rather than adjectives (e.g., aggressive) in describing the roles in bias and bullying incidents, the intent is not to label or typecast a person, but to describe the role that person is playing in a specific place and time.


