

No Place for Hate[®] Activity Library

Being an Upstander: Standing Up to Bullying

Lesson Plan and Overview

According to a [2024 Pew Research Center report](#), one in five teachers recognize bullying as a major issue in their school. Bullying impacts every classroom and every student, be they the target, the witness or the bully—and educators have the opportunity to move students beyond simply knowing that bullying is wrong and toward understanding what they can do about it. By building this awareness and skill set early, students become more confident, empathetic and responsible members of their school community who are prepared to stand up for others rather than remain bystanders.

Grade Level

Grades K-5

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Better understand what bullying is and how to be an upstander.
- Evaluate a variety of possible responses to bullying scenarios and determine which actions reflect upstander behavior.
- Recognize that there are multiple appropriate ways to act as an upstander and that the right choice may depend on the situation.

Materials Needed

- Video or book to begin and frame the lesson. Suggestions are:
 - Books: [Sharing Shalom](#) by Danielle Sharkan; [The Juice Box Bully](#) by Bob Sornson and Maria Dismondy; [I Walk with Vanessa](#) by Kerascoët; [Each Kindness](#) by Jacqueline Woodson.
 - Videos: Sesame Street—[Don't Be a Bully](#) (2:18); PBS Kids—[Arthur the Bully](#) (2:00)
- For grades K-2: Traffic Light Activity
 - [Scenarios for educators](#)
 - [Cards for students](#)
- For grades 3-5: Four Corners Activity
 - [Scenarios for educators](#) (possible PowerPoint display of the scenarios)
 - Numbered corners for students.

Words You Might Use

Upstander: Someone who recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right.

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.

Core Activity

- Introduce the topic of standing up to bullying with a book or video. Some recommendations that you might use are:
 - Books: **Sharing Shalom** by Danielle Sharkan; **The Juice Box Bully** by Bob Sornson and Maria Dismondy; **I Walk with Vanessa** by Kerascoët; **Each Kindness** by Jacqueline Woodson.
 - Questions for books: What lesson did you learn from this story? How did the characters in the book stand up against bullying?
 - Videos: Sesame Street—**Don't Be a Bully** (2:18); PBS Kids--**Arthur the Bully** (2:00)
 - Questions for videos: What did you learn from watching this video? How did the characters in the video call out bullying?
- After students have either listened to a story or watched a video ask them: Is it important to stand up when you see bullying?
- Transition by explaining to students that someone who stands up when they see something happening that is wrong, like bullying, is called an upstander. Ask students to help you come up with a list of actions that would make them an upstander. (The list should include things like: telling an adult, asking a friend if they're okay or if they need help, telling someone that what they're doing is wrong, etc.)
- Grades K-2: Traffic Light Activity
 - Purpose: Through scenarios, students will consider different ways to act as upstanders when incidents of bullying take place. Students will learn through this activity that there is no one right way to be an upstander and that there are always choices they can make to stand up against bullying.
 - Directions for Traffic Light Activity—Stop. Think. Go: Every student will have 3 cards or squares of color paper (red, yellow and green). The teacher will start by reading a scenario (an incident of bullying), followed by ONE possible response. After each possible response is read, students will hold up the colored card that they think best matches the response—red=stop, that's wrong (WRONG OPTION); yellow=I'm not sure (GET HELP); green=yes! That's an upstander! (STAND UP). After each response, let students share why they chose their color

but emphasize that there isn't right or wrong, just thinking about how they can be upstanders.

- Scenarios (for teachers).
- Grades 3-5: Four Corners Activity
 - Purpose: Through scenarios, students will consider different ways to act as upstanders when incidents of bullying take place. Students will learn through this activity that there is no one right way to be an upstander and that there are always choices they can make to stand up against bullying.
 - Directions for Being an Upstander—Four Corners: After each scenario is read, students will go to the numbered corner that most closely aligns with how they would respond. (A note for teachers: if students ask, explain that they should pick the action they would do first OR that most closely aligns with the action they would take.)
 - Scenarios (for teachers—we would recommend either writing the scenarios on the board or projecting them through PowerPoint so students can both see and hear the options).
- After students have returned to their seats from the Traffic Light or Four Corners activity, close by asking them:
 - Why is it important to be an upstander against bullying?
 - Does being an upstander look the same for everyone? Why or why not?
 - What steps can you take moving forward to make sure you always choose to be an upstander?

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- After students have completed the core activity, direct students to turn their list of upstander actions into motivational posters for the hallways in school to remind everyone of how they can be upstanders against bullying.
- Once students in grades 3-5 have completed the core activity above, have those students read the selected picture book to the K-2 classes and lead the conversation with the younger students about the importance of being upstanders against bullying.
- After students in grades 3-5 have completed the core activity, break them into small groups of approximately 4. Ask each group to create a story or graphic novel that teaches about the importance of standing up to bullying. Consider displaying the stories in the classroom or hallways, or having students share their stories with classes in grades K-2.

Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk [What Bullying Is and Is Not](#) with families.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

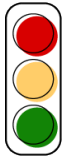
Students will learn about bullying, focusing on what it means to be an upstander. Through discussion and practice with scenarios, students will explore what they can do to interrupt and stop bullying in their school. This will contribute to a classroom and school climate that is more safe, inclusive and respectful.

TRAFFIC LIGHT ACTIVITY

Stop. Think. Go.

For K-2

Scenario 1: At lunch, Mia tries to sit down at a table with some classmates. One student puts their hand on the empty seat and says, "You can't sit here." Mia looks around the cafeteria.

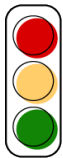


Response 1: You push your books so that there is no room at your table.

Response 2: You quietly tell the lunch monitor about what happened.

Response 3: You stand up and wave to Mia and say: "Mia! Come sit over here!"

Scenario 2: A classmate has curly red hair. Some kids started calling him "Carrot Head" and now almost everyone uses that nickname — even though he has asked them to stop. You can see it makes him sad every time he hears it.

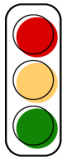


Response 1: You ask "Carrot Head" to join your team at recess.

Response 2: You quietly tell your teacher what is happening.

Response 3: When you hear someone saying the nickname, you say: "He doesn't like that. Let's use his real name."

Scenario 3: Every day at recess the same group of kids plays soccer. A classmate named Darius always asks to play and every day the group says, "No, you're too slow."

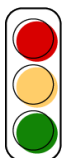


Response 1: You pick all of your friends to join your team first—you don't want someone slow.

Response 2: You quietly go tell the recess monitor what happened.

Response 3: You say to everyone else: "That's not nice. Darius, come play with us!"

Scenario 4: In art class, Eli draws apples and honey to celebrate Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). A classmate leans over and says loudly, "What are THOSE? Your holiday is so weird!"

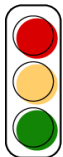


Response 1: You laugh with the rest of your classmates.

Response 2: You quietly go tell the art teacher what was said.

Response 3: You tell your classmate: "Calling someone's holiday is weird is not kind."

Scenario 5: Your class is acting out a story during free time. Everyone gets to pick a character. When Zoe, who is Black, says she wants to be the hero, a classmate says, "Heroes don't look like you." Zoe goes quiet and steps back.

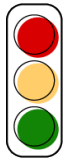


Response 1: You make yourself the hero, and don't say anything to Zoe.

Response 2: You quietly go tell the teacher what was said.

Response 3: You tell your classmate: "That's not true and it was hurtful to say. Zoe, you should be the hero because heroes can look like everyone!"

Scenario 6: In the hallway, you see an older student knock a younger student's backpack off her shoulders on purpose and laugh. She looks scared.

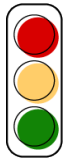


Response 1: You step over their backpack and go to class.

Response 2: You find the closest teacher to tell what happened.

Response 3: You say loudly: "It's not nice to knock someone's backpack off on purpose. Are you okay?"

Scenario 7: At lunch, a classmate named Sofia opens her lunchbox. It has rice and black beans, which is what her family eats at home. Some kids at the table wrinkle their noses and say, "Gross! What is that smell?"

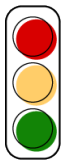


Response 1: You hold your nose and laugh with everyone else.

Response 2: You quietly go tell the lunch monitor what was said.

Response 3: You tell your classmates: "That's not a nice thing to say. Lots of people eat different foods."

Scenario 8: During show-and-tell, a classmate named Leo trips on his way to the front of the room. A few kids burst out laughing. Leo's face turns red and says, "Never mind."



Response 1: You laugh with the rest of your classmates.

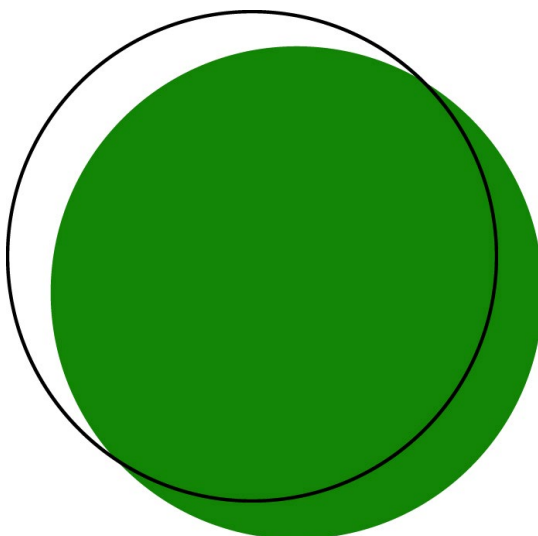
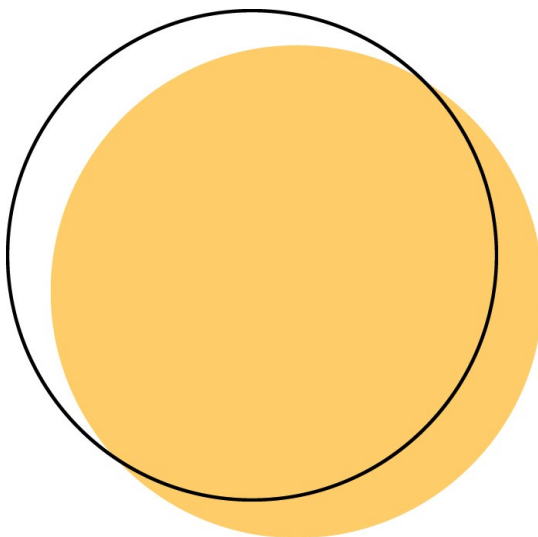
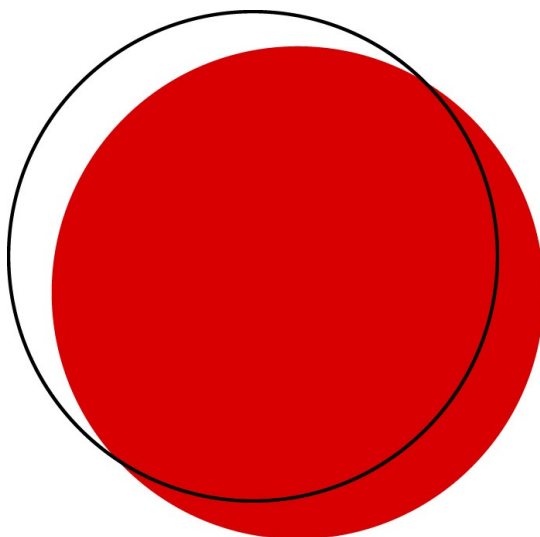
Response 2: You quietly go tell the teacher what happened.

Response 3: You tell your classmates: "That wasn't nice." And ask Leo to do his show and tell if he still wants to.

Red, Yellow and Green Cards

Stop. Think. Go.

Educators, cut out the stoplights below and distribute red, yellow and green to each student.



BEING AN UPSTANDER: Four Corners Scenarios

For Grades 3-5

SCENARIO 1: You are part of a group chat for your class. Someone posts an embarrassing photo of a classmate, Priya, without her permission and writes mean captions. Other students are reacting with laugh emojis.

CORNER 1

Reply in the chat: "This is bullying. Everyone needs to stop and the photo needs to be deleted now."

CORNER 2

Screenshot the messages and show a trusted adult — a parent, teacher or school counselor — right away.

CORNER 3

Reach out to Priya privately to let her know what happened and ask if she wants help reporting it.

CORNER 4

Message the person who posted it privately: "Take this down. This could seriously hurt Priya and you could get in trouble."

SCENARIO 2: A new student, James, recently moved from another country. A group of kids at lunch keeps mocking his accent and repeating his words in an exaggerated way, laughing loudly.

CORNER 1

Sit down next to James, introduce yourself and invite him to join your friend group.

CORNER 2

Say directly to the kids mocking him, "Making fun of someone's accent is racist and mean. Stop it."

CORNER 3

Report the behavior to a teacher or counselor.

CORNER 4

Speak up in front of the group: "James is speaking multiple languages. How many languages do YOU speak?"

SCENARIO 3: The day before your class field trip to go pumpkin picking, your friend Rachel comes up to you looking sad. She explains that she can't go on the field trip because it falls during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

CORNER 1

Tell Rachel, "I think that's unfair. Do you want me to talk to the teacher with you?"

CORNER 2

Ask to meet with the principal and speak to them about how it's important to check holidays before scheduling field trips.

CORNER 3

Tell your parents what Rachel shared with you. Ask them for help in talking with the principal.

CORNER 4

Tell your teacher how upset Rachel is about missing the field trip. Ask if you can bring her back a pumpkin so she doesn't feel as left out.

SCENARIO 4: Your teacher keeps calling a student named Xiomara (PRONOUNCED: see-oh-MAH-rah) by a shortened nickname she never asked for, saying her real name is "too hard to say." Some students have started using the nickname too and Xiomara has told you it bothers her, but she is afraid to say something to the teacher.

CORNER 1

Encourage Xiomara and offer to go WITH her to talk to the teacher so she does not have to go alone.

CORNER 2

Use Xiomara's correct name every single time in class, even when others use the nickname.

CORNER 3

Privately talk to a school counselor or another trusted adult and explain what is happening.

CORNER 4

Politely say to the teacher, "Her name is Xiomara — she hasn't asked to be called anything different."

SCENARIO 5: During gym class, teams are being picked for a game. Every week, the same student, Omar, is picked last and the team captain always sighs loudly and rolls their eyes when Omar joins.

CORNER 1

When it is your turn to pick, choose Omar first and say, "I want Omar on my team."

CORNER 2

Tell the team captain privately, "I've noticed you always react badly when Omar is on your team. That's making him feel unwanted."

CORNER 3

Talk to the gym teacher and what you've noticed and how it is affecting Omar.

CORNER 4

Walk up to Omar before the game and say, "I'm going to make sure you're picked early today. You're a great player."

SCENARIO 6: During a class discussion about world events, a classmate says, "All people from that religion are dangerous — my parents told me." Several classmates nod along. Fatima, who is Muslim, sinks down in her chair.

CORNER 1

Say to everyone, "That's a stereotype and it's harmful. You can't judge an entire group of people based on what some individuals do."

CORNER 2

After class, check in with Fatima and ask if she is okay and if she wants to talk to a teacher together.

CORNER 3

Raise your hand and ask the teacher to address the comment so the class can have a real conversation about bias.

CORNER 4

After class, talk to your classmate and say, "That comment was not okay. Judging a whole group of people this way is exactly how bias and hatred start."

SCENARIO 7: In the locker room, a group of students is hiding another student's belongings as a prank and laughing at his reaction. The student, Tyrone, is starting to panic trying to find his things.

CORNER 1

Help Tyrone locate his belongings and walk out of the locker room with him.

CORNER 2

Say to the group, "This isn't a prank anymore – it's bullying. Give him his stuff back."

CORNER 3

Report the recurring situation to a coach, teacher or counselor.

CORNER 4

Tell Tyler privately, "This keeps happening to you and it's not okay. Do you want me to go with you to report it?"

SCENARIO 8: Your class is assigned a group project and students get to pick their own groups. You notice that a group of students is quietly telling others not to pick Amara, who is one of only two Black students in the class.

CORNER 1

Immediately invite Amara to join your group.

CORNER 2

Say to the students whispering, "What you're doing is excluding and racist, and that's wrong."

CORNER 3

Tell the teacher so they can address the situation with the class.

CORNER 4

Speak up loud enough for others to hear: "Amara, do you want to join us? We'd be lucky to have you."