

## Educator Guide for **Myth or Truth?** For Elementary School Students

For many years, bullying was thought to be a normal part of childhood and that those who were bullied just needed to toughen up and deal with it. Together, let's find out the reality behind some of these common misperceptions.

### **Steps to use in the classroom:**

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- Print copies of the quiz for each student
- Instruct them to read each statement and determine if it's a myth about bullying or the truth
- Allow time for students to complete their answers

**Note:** One of the options is that students can respond to each statement and then have a discussion, or finish all of the statements, and then discuss.

**Once students have had time to think through their responses, then talk through each question, options include:**

- Presenter read each statement to the class, then share the information provided in the responses, and can add in their own perspective, or
- Students take turns reading each question, providing their reasoning on why they think it's the truth or a myth, or
- Students separate into groups, each takes a statement, discusses their answers, then each group takes a turn presenting to the class.

### **Myth or Truth Quiz and Potential Responses:**

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#### **1. Words will never hurt you. (myth)**

**Response:** Yeah, you have heard this one before. People used to think bullying was just physical. Now we know better. Words may not leave bruises or broken bones, but they can leave scars on the inside and make kids feel bad about themselves.

#### **2. Kids bully through cell phones and while online. (truth)**

**Response:** Bullying doesn't just happen face to face, but also through the use of technology. Examples include sending mean text messages, posting videos, stories, or photos that make fun of someone, and spreading rumors online—all just because it seems like fun. You know what makes it even worse? Sometimes it's done anonymously, so you don't even know who's trying to hurt you.

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### 3. Some kids deserve being bullied. (myth)

**Response:** No one EVER deserves to be hurt or harmed. The way people act or look is never a reason to bully them. Everyone deserves to be safe and treated with respect. If you are being bullied, it is NOT your fault!

### 4. Telling a teacher about bullying is the same as tattling. (myth)

**Response:** Tattling means sharing petty secrets or information about someone to get them in trouble. Telling means reporting a harmful or dangerous situation to an adult to help protect someone. If you're being bullied, tell an adult right away! It's not tattling. When you are being hurt or harmed, it's a big deal. You need someone you can trust on your side. You have the right to tell.

### 5. Someone who is being bullied can also bully others. (truth)

**Response:** The role that any student plays in a bullying situation can change. Somebody who was bullied one day might make fun of someone else the next day. Or the opposite could be true: the kid who laughed with other kids at a fight yesterday might ask the new kid with no friends to sit with him or her at lunch today. That's why it's important to not label another kids as a "bully." When someone is labeled, everyone starts to think of them in that way.

### 6. Bullying is a normal part of childhood. (myth)

**Response:** Normal? That's a messed up definition of "normal." Getting beat up, left out of activities, made fun of, laughed at, or gossiped about is normal? It's not. There is nothing normal about being bullied.

### 7. Being bullied will make students tougher. (myth)

**Response:** Tougher? Nope. The truth is, bullying can make someone feel bad about him- or herself. Sometimes kids who bully might think that it's cool, fun, or just no big deal, but think about it — what is cool or fun about hurting someone? If kids think about why they are bullying, they can then rethink those reasons and change their behavior.

### 8. If you're being bullied, it's okay to fight back. (myth)

**Response:** If you're being bullied and ever feel like fighting back, DON'T! Trying to get even with someone who bullies is never a good idea. If you fight back, the bullying will likely become much worse. And the adults may see you as part of the problem.

### 9. Students who see bullying can change the situation. (truth)

**Response:** In many bullying situations, there is a group who sees, or witnesses, the bullying. This group is really important. They may not be getting bullied or be the ones bullying, but their reaction can make a big difference. Think about it: Have you ever seen a group watching a fight? There are some who look, then walk away; there are others who watch and say nothing; there are those who cheer it on; and then there are those who tell a grown up to get help. How they respond can really change the situation.

### 10. If you ignore bullying, it will go away. (myth)

**Response:** If you ignore your homework, does it go away? No, of course not. Neither does bullying. If you try ignoring someone, you will soon realize how hard it is to ignore someone who goes to school with you, rides your bus, or is always online. Also, if the kid who is bullying realizes you are avoiding them, it can create more bullying, since that provides the sense of power the kid bullying seeks. It can be hard to figure out what to do when you're being bullied, but work on a plan and get a parent or other trusted adult to help.

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### **11. Students who are bullied should just learn to deal with it. (myth)**

**Response:** How does someone go about learning to accept being hurt, harmed, or humiliated? Everyone deserves to be safe, and to go to school feeling accepted, included, and respected.

### **12. Cyberbullying starts in middle school. (myth)**

**Response:** Cyberbullying can begin as soon as kids have access to a cell phone, tablet device, or computer through texting or gaming. Cyberbullying can start for many kids long before they are able to use social networking sites, such as Facebook or Instagram, which require users to be at least 13 years of age. There is potential for cyberbullying whenever kids are using technology to interact, especially when they do so unsupervised.