

Educator Guide for **Myth or Truth?**

For Middle and High 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:

- 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:

1. Bullying is the same as arguing. (myth)

Response: People argue about lots of things. Let's say you and a classmate get into an argument about who's the best hip-hop performer. That isn't bullying, it's conflict. Conflict is a disagreement, or argument, in which both sides express their views. It would be bullying, though, if your classmate told everyone to not hang with you because of the disagreement and got them to gossip about you. This would be considered bullying, as the intention is to hurt someone else. A power imbalance (like being outnumbered) is also a trademark of bullying.

2. Bullying only happens in middle school. (myth)

Response: While bullying does peak in middle school, kids can bully even before they leave the sandbox, calling others names, leaving someone out on purpose, or making fun of others. It can start early, and continues through elementary as well as middle and high schools.

3. People bully through cell phones and while online. (truth)

Response: If you own a cell phone or are online, you've probably seen it or been targeted by mean or inappropriate behavior. It's called cyberbullying, and it includes things like sending mean texts, posting gossip or embarrassing pictures, and uploading cruel videos—all just because it seems like fun. Because cyberbullying is out there for the world to see, it can be particularly devastating.

4. 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. Even though words don't leave bruises or broken bones, words can be like weapons, inflicting great emotional pain — and the scars on a heart can last a long time.

5. Teens who are being bullied may not want to tell anyone, especially an adult. (truth)

Response: Why don't teens want to tell? For starters, it's not something that's easy to talk about, with anyone, let alone your parents or teachers. Lots of teens think they need to deal with bullying on their own. But, know this: no one needs to go through bullying alone.

6. Some people deserve to be bullied. (myth)

Response: No one EVER deserves to be bullied. The way people act or look is never a reason to bully them. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and consideration.

7. Telling a teacher about bullying is the same as tattling (or being a snitch). (myth)

Response: It's not an easy thing to tell an adult about someone's bad behavior. It means they will probably be disciplined or reprimanded, and that's something you may not want to see happen. But know this: 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.

8. Bullying is just a normal part of growing up. (myth)

Response: Normal? That's a messed up definition of "normal." A lot of adults said this for years as a response to bullying, but that was before the effects of bullying were understood. Getting beat up, left out of social situations, made fun of, laughed at, ridiculed, or gossiped about is normal? It's not. There is nothing normal about being bullied.

9. Being bullied makes you tougher. (myth)

Response: Tougher? Nope. This is another one that people believed for a lot of years, even generations. It was used to justify bad behavior. The truth is, bullying makes you feel scared, alone, worried, sad, and bad about yourself.

10. Bullying can be about wanting to feel in power and control. (truth)

Response: Bullying is defined by someone's behavior. Kids who bully want to have control over others, and they use it on purpose to intimidate, hurt, or harass. Should those who hurt, harm, or humiliate have power over others? Think about it. Wouldn't it be cool if those who included others, were kind, and helped people had the power and respect?

11. 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. 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. No one deserves to be bullied, and you have a right to feel safe at school.

12. 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 in an environment in which they feel accepted, included, and respected. In fact, it's their legal right to be safe at school.

13. Cyberbullying can happen anonymously. (truth)

Response: Cyberbullying can be anonymous, which can sometimes make it even harder to deal with. Targets might not know who the bully is or why they are being targeted. Even if cyberbullying is anonymous, save everything – emails, messages, posts, screenshots. Print them out or save them on our computer or phone. You can also report harassing comments, fake profiles, or inappropriate photos to the social media provider. You have a right to feel safe in online spaces.

14. Cyberbullying is less harmful because it doesn't happen face-to-face. (myth)

Response: Imagine posting a photo of yourself online. Someone else makes a mean, mocking comment about it. Soon, that photo has been shared, liked, reposted – even made into a meme. Thousands of people have seen it, even people you don't know. Cyberbullying can be hurtful because it's public, it spreads quickly, and it's 24/7.