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### Bullying and Victimization

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**Bullying and Victimization**  
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**Overview & Rationale**

In this module, students will discuss concepts related to bullying and victimization. Using clips from Sesame Street, students will consider what it means to be a bully, victim, and bystander, as well as how teachers, parents, and educators can intervene. Additionally, this module will help students think critically about some of the potential impacts of bullying and victimization on development across the lifespan.

**\*\*\*NOTE\*\*\***

*It is very easy for class conversations about bullying and victimization to turn personal as almost everyone has a story. While sharing personal experiences can be a valuable educational tool, be mindful of students' tendencies to overshare as it can make other students uncomfortable. You should also make it clear that while (reasonable and appropriate) sharing is welcome, it is completely optional and no one will be required to talk about their own experiences if they don't want to. This is also a great place to plug your university's counseling services center or other such resources.*

**Potential classes**

Early Social and Emotional Development, Lifespan Development, Child Development, Early Childhood Education, Introductory Psychology, Adolescence,

**Potential format**

This module can be used or modified for use in online, hybrid, or face-to-face courses.

**Topical Reading Suggestions**

Hong, J. S., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). A review of research on bullying and peer victimization in school: An ecological system analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*(4), 311-322.

Card, N. A., Stucky, B. D., Sawalani, G. M., & Little, T. D. (2008). Direct and indirect aggression during childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic review of gender differences, intercorrelations, and relations to maladjustment. *Child Development, 79*(5), 1185-1229.

Vitoroulis, I., & Vaillancourt, T. (2015). Meta-analytic results of ethnic group differences in peer victimization. *Aggressive Behavior, 41*(2), 149-170.

Juvonen, J., & Graham, S. (2014). Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. *Annual Review of Psychology, 65*(1), 159-185.

Troop-Gordon, W. (2017). Peer victimization in adolescence: The nature, progression, and consequences of being bullied within a developmental context. *Journal of adolescence, 55*, 116-128.

Cherry, K. (June 2, 2022). *Identity vs. Role Confusion in Psychosocial Development*. VeryWell Mind <https://www.verywellmind.com/identity-versus-confusion-2795735>

Godleski, S. A., Kamper, K. E., Ostrov, J. M., Hart, E. J., & Blakely-McClure, S. J. (2015). Peer victimization and peer rejection during early childhood. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 44*(3), 380-392.

## Video clips

- [Sesame Street tackles Bullying \(CNN\)](#) (5:30)
- [Don't be a Bully](#)
- [Helping Kids Resolve Conflicts](#) (3:48)
- [The Good Birds Club](#) (16:14)
- [Standing up to a Bully](#) (1:06)
- [Reporting Bullying](#) (0:37)
- [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 1: Introduction](#) (5:06)
- [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 2: What is bullying?](#) (8:23)
- [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 3: What do I do?](#) (10:51)
- [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 4: The Child's Perspective](#) (3:51)
- [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 5: Final Thoughts](#) (3:00)

## Activities

### 1. What is bullying?

- a. Before class, students should read Hong & Espelage (2012) and Juvonen & Graham, 2014 to get some background information on bullying and victimization. During class, watch [Sesame Street tackles Bullying \(CNN\)](#) (5:30), [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 1: Introduction](#) (5:06), and [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 2: What is bullying?](#) (8:23). In pairs, groups, or a discussion-board format, students can explore some FAQs and myths/misconceptions about what bullying is... and what it is not.
- b. Bullying can start as early as age 3, but there are a lot of individual and contextual differences in bullying across the lifespan. Students could consider differences in bullying and victimization across factors like age, gender, ethnicity, (recommended readings: Card et al., 2008; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015).
- c. In [Don't be a Bully](#) (2:19), Pino steals a ball away from, Googel, and Narf, prompting Narf to call him a bully. After arguing about whether or not Pino is, in fact, a bully, the monsters realize they don't know what a bully is. They then sing about what it means to be a bully, including specific examples of what to do and what not to do. Students could consider some of the behaviors identified in the song (e.g., being nice, sharing), and could develop their own lesson plan for teaching children how not to be a bully.

### 2. What can adults do?

- a. For parents, teachers, and administrators, it can be difficult to recognize bullying, but also to know when to intervene. You could start out with a discussion of "when should adults step in?", recognizing that this point varies by developmental stage.
- b. Have students watch [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 3: What do I do?](#) (10:51). Students could work in groups to design an educational pamphlet, campaign (or Sesame Street segment!) to teach adults how to intervene in a bullying situation. In a development course, each group should be assigned a different developmental stage (early childhood, middle childhood, late childhood, adolescence) to focus on. [*This could be done as an in-class activity, a discussion board prompt, or a full-semester project.*]

### 3. Dealing with bullying

- a. Have students watch [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 4: The Child's Perspective](#) (3:51) (note that it references [The Good Birds Club](#), and might be helpful to have students watch that first). In this clip, several bullying experts discuss bullying from a child's perspective. Have students engage in a role-playing activity where one student is the bully and one is an adult. Students could take turns practicing what the child might say and how the adult might respond. This activity focuses on understanding both the

child's perspective, and also on the importance of warm, supportive, responding from adults.

- b. **Finding an adult:** In [Happy to Be Me: An Anti-bullying Discussion 4: The Child's Perspective](#) (3:51), the experts mention finding an adult as one potential strategy for dealing with bullying. In [Reporting Bullying](#) (0:37), Elmo & his friend Chicken seek out an adult (Chris Colfer) for support in a bullying situation. [Standing up to a Bully](#) (1:06) also references finding an adult. Students could be assigned an interview project where they interview a teacher, coach, or other adult who commonly interacts with children to identify some strategies this adult uses to deal with bullying situations. This project can take a variety of different focuses, including identifying prevention and intervention strategies or a research paper that compares their comments to the bullying/victimization literature.
- 4. Impacts on identity development.** The peer relations literature clearly shows that anything that makes an adolescent stand out puts them at risk for being victimized by their peers.
- a. Have students read Juvonen & Graham, 2014 and consider why some adolescents may be at heightened risk for experiencing victimization. In [The Good Birds Club](#) (16:14), Big Bird receives an invitation to join a group, but when he gets there, he is rejected because of his size. Abby uses her magic to change various aspects of Big Bird's features to fit in, which ultimately backfires.
  - b. Consider the impact on an adolescent who keeps changing various aspects of their appearance in an effort to fit in. Have students read Troop-Gordon (2017) and Cherry (2022) and consider how bullying during adolescence might impact Erikson's 5th stage of development (identity vs. role confusion). How did bullying impact Big Bird's identity and self-confidence?
- 5. Peer Rejection**
- a. Rejection and withdrawal are closely related to victimization (recommended reading: Godleski et al., 2015). In [Helping Kids Resolve Conflicts](#) (3:48), Elmo struggles with being rejected from a group of peers who are playing a game. At first he accepts being told no and goes to play by himself, but with the encouragement of his teacher, he comes up with a creative way to join the peer group. Have students consider the actions of Elmo, the teacher, and the other children.
    - i. What else could/should the teacher do to help resolve a situation where a child is being left out or excluded
    - ii. Did Elmo handle the situation well? Is there anything else he could/should have done? Back up your answers with evidence from the book/readings
    - iii. Were the other children aware that their behaviors were hurtful?

**Supplemental Materials:** none

#### **Related Topics**

- [School Readiness](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Social-Emotional Development](#)
- [Peer Relationships & Friendships](#)
- [Identity Development](#)