



Bullying Awareness

Youth Ministries Safety



It is vital that youth leaders and volunteers be aware of the signs of bullying in the ministry they are serving. For instance, kids who bully can be...

- Any size
- Any age
- Any grade
- Any gender



It is also important that youth leaders and volunteers know how the bullied (bully-victim) perceived as different from other peers. For instance,

- If they are overweight
- If they are disabled
- If they wear glasses
- If they are new to the group/program
- If they are weak, depressed, anxious, or less popular

You may face some or all these situations in your ministry. The way you respond to bullying and role model appropriate behavior sets the stage for a great youth ministry or one that can lead to very unhappy consequences.

According to the American Camp Association (ACA), bullying can happen in four ways:

- Physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying (through technology).



There Are Several
Defining Characteristics
of Bullying





- **First**, it is an intentional act, not an accident.
- **Second**, it almost always involves repeat occurrences. It is rarely random or singular.
- **Finally**, it must involve a power differential. A fight between two kids of equal power is not bullying. Bullying is a fight where one child has some advantage or power over the other.



There are many warning signs that may indicate that one of your youth is affected by bullying – either being bullied or bullying others. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the signs of bullying during your ministry activities. Be observant for signs of bullying or incidents of inappropriate hazing activity among the young people in your group.




According to www.stopbullying.gov, it is important to talk with young people who show signs of being bullied or bullying others. These warning signs can also point to other issues or problems, such as depression or substance abuse. Talking to a youth can help identify the root of the problem. Look for changes in the young person. However, be aware that not all youth who are bullied exhibit warning signs.



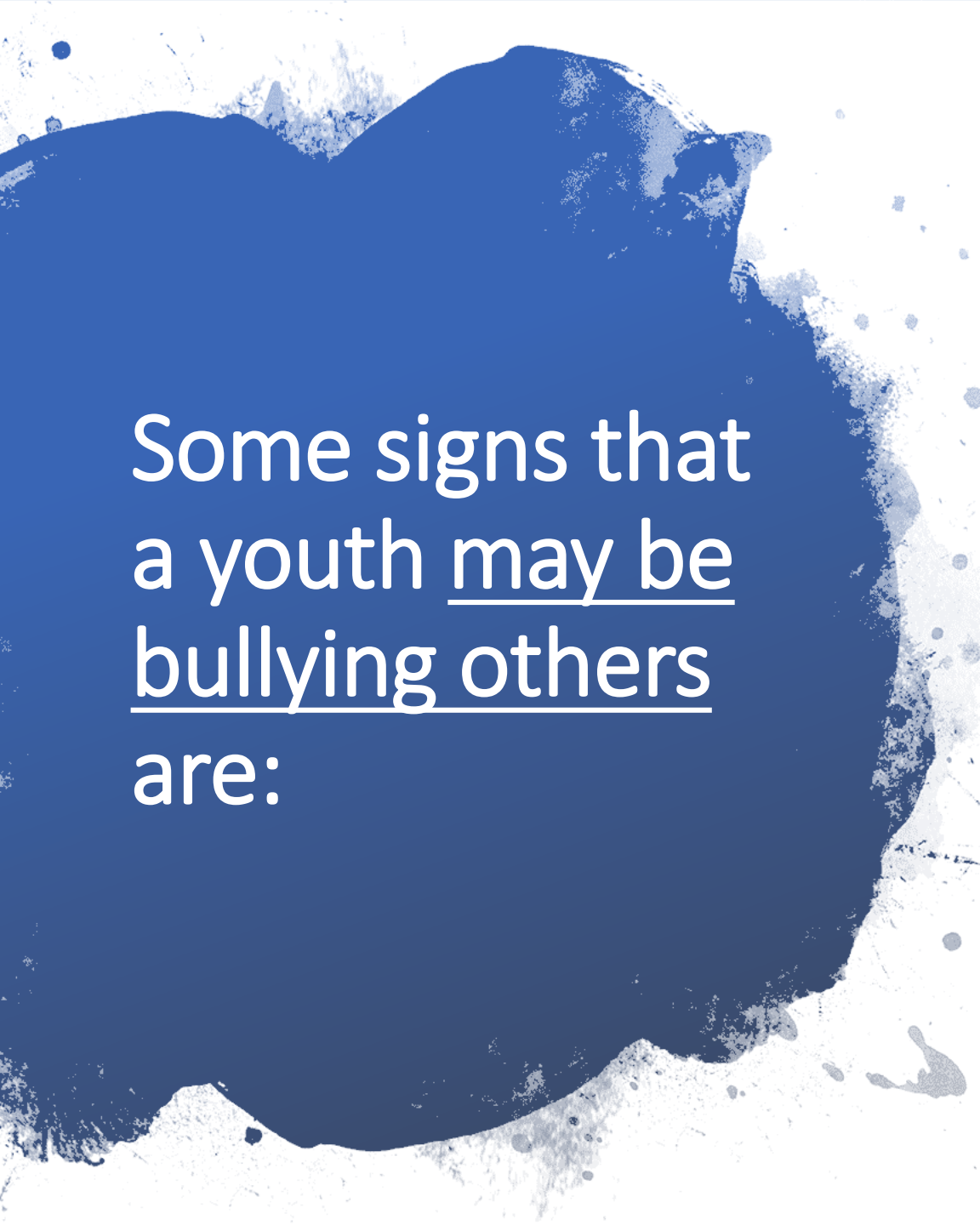
Experts agree that there are a variety of ways
to tell if a young person is being bullied.

The following list of signs have been provided
by www.stopbullying.gov



Some signs that
may point to a
young person
being bullied are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, or personal items
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away, harming themselves, or talking about suicide



Some signs that
a youth may be
bullying others
are:

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

Recognizing symptoms in youth is only part of the solution

Good youth ministry practices minimize the issue with proactive initiatives to address the problem.

Strong statements and "zero-tolerance" policies are relatively easy to approve, but rarely effective in solving the problem.

Rather, educational programs that promote a healthy social climate have been found to work much better.

Some suggestions for promoting a healthy social climate in your ministry include:

- 1. Create an environment where communication between youth leaders, volunteers and young people is the norm.** When youth feel comfortable talking to the ministry staff, they will be more likely to ask for adult involvement.
- 2. Spend time interacting with young people.** Research shows that 67 percent of bullying occurs when adults are not present.
- 3. Be a good example of kindness.** Youth learn about power relationships by watching adults closest to them. Any time a youth ministry staff member speaks to another in a mean or abusive way, it teaches young people that bullying is okay.

Some
suggestions for
promoting a
healthy social
climate in your
ministry include:

- 4. Teach healthy anti-bullying habits early.**
Coach young people on both what not to do (hitting, teasing, gossiping) and what to do (kindness, empathy, fair play). Teaching youth when to walk away from a situation; to say "NO" firmly; and when to get adults involved are skills that will reduce the victimization that is always a part of bullying. Remember, repetition helps. This should not be a one-time conversation, but a persistent part of their life experience.

Some
suggestions for
promoting a
healthy social
climate in your
ministry include:

5. **Establish anti-bullying rules.** The youth in your group should understand that bullying is not a normal part of the church environment. It is not acceptable to bully, be bullied, or stand by and watch other young people being bullied. Consequences should be appropriate and consistently applied.

Some
suggestions for
promoting a
healthy social
climate in your
ministry include:

6. **Implement a reporting process.** If you provide a bridge that starts with communication, young people will feel an empowerment that helps resolve problems before they become catastrophic.



For more information on Youth Safety visit:

NAD Youth Safety website

www.NADYouthSafety.org

Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

<https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/camp-safety>