

Bullying is a public health concern. A defending bystander can make a difference (bullying stops within 10 seconds 57 percent of the time). Bystanders can play different roles in bullying situations: outsiders (witness the bullying situation, but do not get involved); defenders (help); reinforcers (encourage bullying); assistants (join in bullying). Cyberbullying also causes public health concern. Those who have mental health problems are also more likely to be bullied.

Some of the reasons why bystanders don't intervene are: fear of retaliation, fear of losing friends, not knowing the kids involved or the whole situation or not trusting that adults will address the bullying or believing that they will make it worse. Ignorance as to what to do in regards to bullying is another reason.

Sometimes bystanders do intervene because they are friends with the person being bullied or just because they believe bullying is wrong, see the target of bullying as innocent and believe teachers or school staff will deal with it.

Defending the person being bullied, changing the subject, questioning the bullying behavior, using humor to lighten up a situation or openly stating an objection to bullying, are all the ways that a bystander can make a positive difference in a bullying situation.. Also reaching out to the bullied person to express support or concern is very important. Bystanders should not be afraid to report the incident. Also bystanders can make a positive difference by being more inclusive of others in school's groups, having empathy for others, being in the proximity of the bullied kid and getting involved with bullying prevention efforts.

Schools must address bullying consistently so students can have good expectations in the role they have when it comes to preventing bullying. Everyone in school can play a role in being a good role model, rewarding positive behavior, and setting the tone for healthy relationships. All this will help bystanders make a positive difference in addressing bullying.

It's important to remember that some children may not want to admit to others that they have been bullied or have bullied others.