

# **A Research Definition of Bullying**

**Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher**

**A person is being bullied when he/she is *exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons.* Negative action is when a person *intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact, through words or in other ways.* Note that bullying is both overt and covert behaviors.**

**The following are examples of bullying behaviors. Remember, bullying is a pattern of behavior that is repeated over time against the same person(s) with a noted power differential.**

- 1. Saying hurtful and unpleasant things**
- 2. Making fun of others**
- 3. Using mean and hurtful nicknames**
- 4. Completely overlooking someone**
- 5. Deliberately excluding someone from a group of friends**
- 6. Hitting, kicking, pulling hair, pushing or shutting a person inside**
- 7. Telling lies**
- 8. Spreading false rumors**
- 9. Sending mean notes**
- 10. Trying to get other students to dislike another person**

**NOTE:** The literature suggests not labeling a student as a bully or victim. Instead, call it bullying and/or victim behavior that the student is exhibiting.

**Direct bullying behaviors (overt) involve behaviors that are observable and that are usually expressed by physical and verbal means. Usually direct bullying involves relatively open attacks on a victim and are “in front of your face” behaviors.**

**However, bullying behavior is not always hitting, kicking, teasing, or name calling. Children who bully others may use subversive acts that hurt just as much, but are harder to detect. Examples of indirect bullying are leaving others out on purpose, spreading rumors to destroy another’s reputation or getting others to dislike another person. This is covert bullying or “behind your face” behaviors.**

**Bullying begins at an early age with students demonstrating behaviors like biting, pinching or scratching. Teasing and taunting may follow with glaring and staring. Shoving, pushing, and tripping may ensue along with pestering and fighting. Boys may name call, steal lunch money and threaten younger boys while girls may ignore and exclude others or undermine friendships.**

**Thus, bullying can start small and get out of hand unless there is consistency with what is expected. Everyone should have the same expectations and be on the same page. If someone is being bullied at home, at play and/or at school, the behavior should be reported to a trusted adult. The information should be factual and, if possible, logged in a journal describing the type of bullying, where and when it is happening, who is involved, and how the victim reacts to the bullying. It is important to determine if the victim is provocative. How the information is conveyed is very important.**