

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION STARTERS

Years 3-4: The essence of bullying

Steps to run the discussion

This discussion starter supports teachers to scaffold a collaborative discussion with students as a whole class or in small groups. The discussion requires about 20 minutes and consists of five steps. (Refer to [How to use](#) for more information.)

1. Present the definition of bullying

Share the [definition of bullying](#) with your students. Explain that this is how bullying is generally defined by society; however, in order to fully understand bullying, we need to unpack the ideas.

2. Choose one Inquiry question

Choose from one of the three Inquiry questions. Think about the current level of understanding and specific needs of your class when selecting the question.

Allow about 20 minutes for the discussion of one Inquiry question (including reflection). The Inquiry questions are designed to encourage students to think deeply about many issues surrounding the concept of bullying. Your students may come up with a variety of responses. As the students provide their responses, listen carefully and consider the key ideas underpinning these responses.

3. Ask students to provide justification for their answers

When students respond, it is essential that they always give reasons for their responses. Some questions may be grammatically closed (yes/no), but the student's justification for their response will enable the ideas presented to remain conceptually open for ongoing discussion. If students provide a 'yes/no' answer, ask: 'Why do you think that?'

The provision of justification enables all participants to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning underpinning the responses. This in turn gives opportunity for students to build on the ideas of others, make considered connections and explore disagreement respectfully.

4. Use one or two appropriate Probing questions (more if you have longer than 20 minutes)

Use one or two appropriate probing questions to deepen the students' line of inquiry. The probing questions are based on the response, or you can use the general 'procedural' questions of inquiry. You can also use a probing question to encourage students to think about alternative perspectives.

5. Reflect on thinking and learning

At the conclusion of the discussion, take five minutes to reflect on the learning:

- How did we work as a community of learners?
- What new thinking and learning has taken place for our class community today?
- How can we apply this new thinking and learning to our relationships with peers at school and beyond?

Three inquiry questions

Inquiry question 1: What are the main features of bullying?

Probing questions:

- How do we recognise bullying?
- Can it sometimes be difficult to recognise bullying?
- In what ways do some people bully others?
- Is bullying the same in person and online?
- Is there ever a time when it would be acceptable for a person to bully another?

Inquiry question 2: How does a person feel if they are bullied?

Probing questions:

- Have you ever been bullied? How did it make you feel?
- Do you know someone who has been bullied? How do you think they may have felt?
- Does bullying feel different if it happens in an online environment?
- Do you think the person who bullies others would feel good about their behaviour?
- If someone bullies you, is it then appropriate to bully them also?
- How should we respond if we are bullied?

Inquiry question 3: What are the key differences between bullying and arguing/fighting with someone?

Probing questions:

- What makes these differences important?
- Why is it important to recognise these differences?
- How can we help others to recognise these differences?
- Why do we sometimes confuse bullying with other negative behaviours?
- Can the act of treating someone unkindly lead to bullying?
- Is this different online?

Additional probing questions (procedural questions)

- Why do you think that? (justification)
- Can anyone build on that idea?
- How are these ideas connected?
- In what ways are these ideas similar/different?
- Does anyone have an alternative suggestion/different possibility?
- Can you clarify that?
- Could there be another way to think about this?
- Does anyone have a different reason?
- What might someone say if they disagreed with this?
- How can we know this is accurate/true?
- What might follow from this?
- Can you think of a time when that wouldn't be the case?