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# The Bullying Triangle



*An Activity for Fifth and Sixth Graders*



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## *An Activity for Fifth and Sixth Graders*

### Purpose

1. To increase awareness among fifth and sixth graders of the three parts of the bullying triangle: bully, target, and witness are interrelated;
2. To show students how the three elements in the triangle are connected;
3. To increase problem-solving skills, especially an understanding of consequences of a response.

### Preparation

#### Prepare yourself

Read the resources available at <http://www.theringofvalor.com>, especially *A Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Other Program Leaders, From victim to target, From spectator to witness, and Bullying fundamentals*.

I suggest that *The Ring of Valor: No Bullying* activities follow classroom activities found in the core *Ring of Valor* program at our website. Understanding courage and heroism provides the foundation for the discussion on bullying and practicing related skills.

#### Prepare the cards

Photocopy the list of bully, victim, and witness responses. If you are not using a color printer, cut out each response and paste to three different colors of 4x6 cards associated with each element in the triangle. For discussion purposes, let's say we use the following colors.

Color	Element of triangle
Green	Witness
Blue	Target
Red	Bullying

Paste all the witness incidents to one color, target incidents to another color, and bullying incidents to a third.

Some of the cards are open-ended and allow the teacher to add new incidents of any of the three types:

The person who is bullying...

The target...  
Other kids who saw what happened...<sup>1</sup>

You should now have three decks of cards (bully, target, witness), one for each group of colors.

### Prepare room

Place three chairs; each labeled in large lettering for each of the triangle points: *Target*, *Spectators*, and *Bully*.

Stand behind each chair and talk with the children briefly about that element in the triangle.

Emphasize that *targets* cannot help being targeted. They are NOT at fault. They are NOT responsible for being targets. However, they can choose not to act like a victim. If a bully demands their lunch money, they don't have to give it to him. If the bully wants to make them cry, then can hold their head up and be defiant. Of course there is a risk in refusing to give the bully what he or she wants. It takes courage to do the right thing.

Spectators may not like what the bully is doing but are too afraid to stop the cruelty. Or they might not want to give the victim the opportunity to stand up to the bully. In some cases, the spectators may ally themselves with the bully and join in with the cruelty.

Bullies seem to be motivated by power. But the true motivation is anger and sadness and fear. It is NOT natural to be deliberately cruel. Predatory behavior shows that something is wrong in the person's life. Bullies are often, maybe almost always the victims of someone else's bullying. People who bully need a lot of help and encouragement to change. Regardless of the origins of the bullying, the bully must be stopped and there should be consequences for the bullying.

## Implementation

### Introduce the Bullying Triangle to students

Ask your group to describe what "bullying" means. List their comments on a chalkboard. Try to find common themes through the comments.

Draw a large triangle on the chalkboard and title it "*The Bullying Triangle*." The bullying triangle identifies three different participants in a bullying circumstance. Give children an opportunity to identify the participants. If they identify the bully, the witnesses, or the targets, write those terms on one of the points. After several minutes of discussion, add any points overlooked by your group.

Discuss the relationship between each point. Use the "three-legged stool" metaphor for bullying. If we remove any of the three legs, the three points in the triangle, then bullying collapses. In other words, a bully needs both a victim and spectators (audience). Change the bully, the bullying stops. If spectators step in to support the target, the bullying stops. If the target refuses to be a victim, the bullying stops (at least with this target).

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<sup>1</sup> If you create cards with additional responses by the bully, targets, or witnesses, please send them to me. I would love to add them to future revisions of this document. Send your suggestions to [casmith@ksu.edu](mailto:casmith@ksu.edu). I will include your name and school as a reference to the new material.



### Ask for volunteers to read for each part

Shuffle cards in each of the three decks.

Give one card from each deck to the narrator standing behind the chair for that element. First, the person behind the “bully” reads the bully card followed by the “target” and then the “witness.”

### Discuss circumstance

Ask the three readers, “What is happening here? Is it going right? Or is it going wrong? Why? What’s going to happen next?”

After they have a chance to comment, open up the conversation to the group. Don’t take the time to try to identify the “right” response to the bully’s behavior. The purpose of this activity is to provide many examples showing how the three elements in the triangle relate to each other.

### Repeat the round

After a few minutes of discussion, repeat the round with three new volunteers and three new random cards.

## Evaluation

At the conclusion of this activity, children should be able to name the three parts of the bully triangle.

Children should know that stopping bullying requires accomplishment for each element: help children who bully to stop, help targets to refuse to be victims, and to help onlookers become witnesses who will intervene and stop the bullying if necessary.

<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened tell the person who is bullying to stop</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened do not see what is happening to the target</b></p>
<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened run away</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened do what the bullying person does</b></p>
<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened tell the person who is bullying to stop</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened laugh at the target</b></p>



<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened stare at the target</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened physically stop the person who is bullying</b></p>
<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened walk over to stand silently next to the target</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened run to get a teacher</b></p>
<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened call the person doing the bullying names</b></p>	<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened</b></p>

<p><b>Other kids who saw what happened</b></p>	<p><b>The target cries</b></p>
<p><b>The target runs to tell a teacher</b></p>	<p><b>The target hits the person who is bullying</b></p>
<p><b>The target ignores the bullying person</b></p>	<p><b>The target later reports what happened to a teacher</b></p>



<p><b>The target makes a joke about what is happening</b></p>	<p><b>The target only looks the bullying person in the eyes</b></p>
<p><b>The target begs the person doing the bullying to stop</b></p>	<p><b>The target pretends nothing is happening</b></p>
<p><b>The target screams and yells at the person doing the bullying</b></p>	<p><b>The target runs away</b></p>



<p><b>The target stands up to the bullying person</b></p>	<p><b>The target stands tall, calm, and confident</b></p>
<p><b>The target says in a strong voice, “Stop what you are doing. It is wrong.</b></p>	<p><b>The target reacts the way the bullying person wants</b></p>
<p><b>The target</b></p>	<p><b>The target</b></p>



<p><b>The person who is bullying calls the target a “moron” and pushes the target down</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying tells the target to get up from the bus seat and go to the back row</b></p>
<p><b>The person who is bullying pokes the target in the chest and tells the target to stay off the playground</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying demands that the target steal a pen from a teacher’s desk</b></p>
<p><b>The person who is bullying tells other kids at school that the target wets the bed at night</b></p>	<p><b>The bullying person sneaks up to the target, pushes the target down, and laughs when the target begins to cry.</b></p>

<p><b>The person who is bullying says that the target has an ugly skin color</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying keeps yelling at a target, “You are a funny dummy; you are a funny dummy!”</b></p>
<p><b>The person who is bullying laughs and makes fun of a target for having red hair</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying puts a smelly rotten banana in the target’s desk then laughs when the target sees it</b></p>
<p><b>The person who is bullying yanks a handful of the targets hair while standing in line</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying stops a target on the way to school and demands lunch money</b></p>



<p><b>The person who is bullying points to a target who has only one arm and shouts “Go away you one-arm loser!”</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying grabs the target’s ice cream and throws it to the ground</b></p>
<p><b>The person who is bullying</b></p>	<p><b>The person who is bullying</b></p>
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