



UPSTANDERS >>> IN ACTION

A Toolkit for Student Leaders
to Create an *Upstander Alliance*



The *Upstander Alliance* Toolkit



BullyBust by The National School Climate Center



“Never under-estimate what a simple gesture can do. It is the little things that you do that make a big difference in other people’s lives.”

—Catherine Pulsifer

“All of us have been hurt at one time or another and we all know how it feels—awful!”

—Student involved in BullyBust program

“Our lives begin to end on the day we become silent about the things that matter.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



INTRODUCTION: Youth & Adults CAN Be Partners

Bullying has become a national problem that affects young people everywhere—victims, those who witness bullying (bystanders or Upstanders), and the bullies themselves. To prevent mean, cruel, and/or bullying behavior, adults and young people must work together as partners. We can’t just punish or exclude people who have been bullies. We can’t just be bystanders. We need to be Upstanders: people who work together to prevent, stop, and heal the harm that bullying does to everyone.

Creating an *Upstander Alliance* is something you can do to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive school where everyone is welcome and everyone can succeed. An *Upstander Alliance* is organized by students and adults to “stand up” to bullying behavior—because it is hard to stand up when you feel alone. By standing up to bullying, members of the Alliance improve their school, so it becomes a place where everyone is free to be themselves and become their best. Within an *Upstander Alliance*, students and teachers work together to improve how people treat each other—from bus drivers, teachers, and principals to parents, business owners, and students.

Adults and young people both engage in mean, cruel, and/or bully behavior and both are part of the solution. Young people are too often seen as problems instead of leaders. One goal of an *Upstander Alliance* is to change the way adults think about young people by watching you work successfully on an important partnership.

This *Upstander Alliance Toolkit* is for **student leaders** and provides details about the causes and consequences of bullying, and ideas on how to start a successful *Upstander Alliance*. It also includes ways that you can connect with students and adults in other schools and communities, so you can share your experiences and help shape the Alliance going forward. You will find many more resources for your alliance on the *Upstander Alliance* site: www.bullybust.org/upstander. We created a second kit for **Adult Moderators** who are supporting students in this effort, which aligns with the resources provided here.

When you create an *Upstander Alliance* at your school, you are joining a national movement to create safe, supportive environments for students and adults. Remember, you are not alone.

TOGETHER, we can put an end to bullying—FOR GOOD!



ROOTS OF BULLY BEHAVIOR: A Bully is a Person, Too

We can't stop mean, cruel, or bullying behavior if we only focus on the bully as a single person, because the roots of bully-victim-bystander behavior are often hidden or hard to see. Prevention is the best way to stop a problem—whether it is smoking, dating violence, drug use, pregnancy, or bullying. Preventing a problem means understanding the roots or causes of the problem.

Some roots of bullying are personal. A bully can be angry, could want to impress others, or could have been hurt by others and wants to get revenge.

Family or personal history also play a role. A person may think that bullying is a way to stay safe, and is acceptable behavior, and tell themselves “Lots of people do it, so why not me?”.

A third set of roots comes from society itself. For example, society gives a message that some people are worth more than others. Individuals or groups who are “different” from the norm can be seen as less important, which makes some people think it is ok to make fun of them. Think about how some people make fun of students who learn in different ways, or are overweight or don't play sports, or come from other neighborhoods. Bullying can be fostered by racism, classism, homophobia and anti-immigrant feelings, and it is important for us to be aware of times when others are not being treated equally.

A fourth set of roots comes from popular culture. Many times, people gain fame or success because they can defeat, dominate, or intimidate others. Violence is often wrongly seen as the best kind of strength. Some television reality shows, computer games (such as *Grand Theft Auto*), sports, and even popular music can reinforce this idea. A person who bullies might just be imitating others who they think are “successful”. Often, a bully just wants what everyone else wants: to feel accepted, safe, and valued.

“Bullying won't stop until someone takes action. Every human being is as valuable and has the right to be him/herself. Don't join the one or the ones who are bullying.”
—Mia, *BullyBust Upstander*, Finland

ROOTS OF UPSTANDER BEHAVIOR: Anyone Can STAND UP!

It's important to remember that most people are not bullies. Most people try to get along and help others. You have everything you need in you NOW to be an upstander and help change your school for the better. Upstanders are not just class presidents, honor roll students, or captains of their sport teams—they are everyday people who are brave enough to stand up and say, “We know what kind of school we deserve and we will work together to make sure everyone feels welcome, supported, and safe here.”

But the roots of Upstander behavior also need to be fed and supported. An *Upstander Alliance* can help in many ways:

- It reminds Upstanders that you are not alone: you have allies and other supporters among your peers and adults.
- The alliance can work to change the climate of the school. It can work on discipline policies, peer mediation and restorative justice programs that include bullies back into the community. It can create safe places for students to talk about bullying or other forms of harassment.
- It can show others that being an Upstander is fun as well as important. An *Upstander Alliance* helps the school leaders, and everyone else, go beyond punishment as a way to deal with bullying.

"I love the differences between everyone, and I am going to help the world accept those differences instead of teasing or harassing them."

—Sonia, BullyBust Upstander, PA



Why An Upstander Alliance Is Important

As young people living the reality of school life every day, you deserve a voice and a leadership role in preventing bullying. You understand the power of a single person acting on her or his beliefs. But you also understand that you can accomplish much more—and feel safer—when you work as a group or team.

You are not just preparing to be leaders. You are leaders right now. You see things that adults miss. You have successful ways to support each other, because you understand what it is like to be a young person. It is important to work with the support of adults when addressing a troubling issue like bullying. Adults can bring new ideas, lots of experience, guidance on how to connect with community members, school leaders, and others who can help you reach your goals, and ways to change the school's policies or rules.

An *Upstander Alliance* includes BOTH youth and adults as partners who respect each other, because they each bring important ideas and skills. Adults and young people are powerful in different ways, and they work together as respectful partners. Later in this toolkit we describe responsibilities for adults.



"Everyone that is a victim of bullying deserves that chance to break all the walls that surround them and understand that they are special, even in a world of billions." —Nusrat, NY

Knowledge Is Power

The *Upstander Alliance* is all about putting the power for positive change in the hands of the people who are most affected by bullying: *youth!* Every single day, each student is actively creating his/her school's environment and defining what is okay behavior and what is not. By creating your own *Upstander Alliance*, you can help change the conversation and build a safe, supportive, positive place where bullying is no longer acceptable.

"I can't tolerate anyone teasing my friend and it is only because of the clothes she wears. The only thing that matters to me is how she is in on the inside."
—Afrida, 8th grade student, NY

>>> WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN?

bully: a person or group who uses power to hurt, threaten or intimidate others. Here we use the words “bullying” and “bullying behavior” to include any behavior that is mean and cruel.

victim: a person or group who is a target of the bullying behavior—often because of their race, social class, gender, or other things like religion, weight, special needs, being an immigrant, or speaking a different language.

witness: a person who observes or hears about cruel, mean and/or bullying behavior. Students and adults who witness cruel, mean and/or bullying behavior make a choice to be a bystander or an Upstander.

bystander: a person or group who observes or hears about bully behavior. An active bystander supports or encourages the bully with words, gestures or actions. A passive bystander supports the bully by ignoring or doing nothing in response to the bullying.

upstander: a person or group who acts to interrupt or ‘prevent bully behavior and/or supports the target of bullying. Upstanders are heroes, and are socially responsible examples to others.

bully behavior: can take many forms. It can be physical (poke, push, hit, kick), verbal (yell, tease, insult, threaten), or indirect (ignore, exclude, tease, spread rumors).

cyber-bullying: involves sending or posting hurtful, embarrassing or threatening texts or images electronically. Unlike other forms, cyber-bullying is more difficult to see, so it can be especially dangerous and difficult to stop.

ally: is a person or group who supports others working to prevent harm and promote positive change. Allies often work across barriers of race, age, gender, role or levels of power. Allies are upstanders.

empathy: involves more than simply understanding another person’s point of view; empathy involves entering into the feelings and experience of other(s), especially when your perspective is different.

courage: often involves standing up for a value, person or group in the face of threat fear or actual harm. The word “courage” is from the French word, “coeur” –to speak and act from the heart. Courage has many roots, but it is often supported by the people around us.

*“The only way to stop bullying is if we all acknowledge that it is hurtful, wrong, and vow to stand up for what is right.”
—Gabriela, BullyBust Upstander, NY*

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”
—President Barack Obama, building on the words of Sweet Honey and the Rock*

CORE QUALITIES

of an Effective Upstander

"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."
—Eleanor Roosevelt

Read through this list with members of your Alliance.

- > I am clear about who I am and what I believe.
- > I talk about who I am and what I believe with others.
- > I talk about what I expect from others.
- > I talk about what I can and can't do, what I'm willing to do and what I'm not willing to do.
- > I believe that students working together can change the climate of the school.
- > I have a vision of where I want to go, and where I'd like the team/school to go.
- > I listen to and learn from others.
- > I consider what's best for others in deciding my actions.
- > I know what I need to learn and I find ways to learn it.
- > I find out what others need and help them meet their goals.
- > I know that there are students who are excluded, lonely and bullied.
- > I follow through on my commitments.
- > I face problems and conflicts honestly, and use many resources to solve them.
- > I have a personal support system.
- > I have some responsibility to support and protect my peers.
- > I look to others for examples of their leadership.
- > I openly appreciate those who help, guide & support me.

How do I get started?

1. Partner with a teacher in your school:

All *Upstander Alliance* teams must have an adult moderator who is an educator in their school. Make sure you have a teacher who can support this effort and help guide your work.

2. Build your team: The first step to building your alliance is finding others who are interested in stopping the harmful harassment, teasing, and cruel behavior at school. This is a problem that affects everyone, so it is important to encourage any person who cares about fixing it to join. Put up flyers throughout the school, ask your friends to help spread the word, share the opportunity through other clubs, sports, and after-school activities. Think about ways to engage people who might not be part of your circle.

3. Register your team at www.bullybust.org.

By joining the *Upstander Alliance*, you have access to great resources, bully prevention experts, artists and other guest speakers, and the ability to connect with *Upstander Alliance* teams across the country!

4. Choose an *Upstander Alliance* project

that will help motivate your entire community to take a stand against bullying. See page 8 for some examples and visit [BullyBust](http://BullyBust.org) for more ideas.

5. Put your plan into action! BullyBust will be providing tips, expert support, and tools throughout the year to help your team succeed.

6. Share your experience with other Alliances nationwide and get key tips and resources from celebrity ambassadors and other guests on bullybust.org/upstander.

THE UPSTANDER PLEDGE

The qualities of an Upstander can form the basis for an Upstander Pledge—which can then be used to strengthen the group’s identity. You can use the pledge as part of the celebration to mark the start of your alliance, and/or to start your meetings or at your events to help center members of the Alliance on your core values and behaviors. Below is one example of an Upstander Pledge, which you can sign on BullyBust.org.

An Upstander Pledge

I WILL ALWAYS:

- **SUPPORT** those around me who are being bullied or victimized.
- **TELL A FRIEND**, teacher or parent when I see someone being bullied
- **ASK MYSELF**, “How would I want to be treated?”
- **NOTE** where and when bullying occurs.
- **DO SOMETHING** when I see someone being bullied—be an Upstander.
- **UNDERSTAND** why bullies bully.
- **PRACTICE** being a positive role model for my fellow students and share “Stand Up to Bullying” strategies with others



Create & Sustain a Successful *Upstander Alliance*

Start with yourself.

Be clear about your reasons for starting an *Upstander Alliance*. Think about where you need help. Are you interested because you have been bullied or been a bystander? Are you concerned about fairness and stereotypes? Note the skills and resources you bring to the Alliance: Can you lead a meeting, make posters, talk with others, present at an assembly, or write a newsletter? Can you bring in others who might join the Alliance? Think about how you can improve personally: Do you get frustrated when others don't come through? Are you shy in front of groups? Do you get angry easily? All of us have strengths and challenges. Together, the Alliance can bring out your best!

Find groups that are already doing similar work.

Most schools have groups that support youth leadership, diversity, community service, or social change. Is there a student council, principal's cabinet, service club, or peer mediation program? Do similar groups exist for adults? Is there a Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) or a group of teachers who want to include these activities in their classrooms? The BullyBust website and the Bully-Victim-Bystander Toolkit (BVBT) include some forms and resources that can help you get started.

Look beyond the school.

Once you have gathered information and ideas about your school, look at your community. Are there groups or individuals who might support your work? Some examples include: boys & girls clubs, scouts, 4H groups, adult civic organizations (Lions Club), churches, municipal officials, mental health agencies, child-service agencies, or local businesses. What are some challenges you know you will face? Parents or other community members may prefer to ignore these issues. Your peers may not want to be Upstanders with you. Some city/town or police policies do not model upstander values.

Some might claim there's no time or money to support this kind of campaign. But others in the community WILL be eager to help. Challenges can become resources. It's important to be aware of both!

Start with your friends and allies, and then move out.

Although your Alliance should include many different kinds of people and groups, it is important to start your work where you can have some visible, concrete success. This usually means starting at school, with a small group of friends and allies. Once you have started, move out to the whole school, and even to elementary schools. You can also connect with other Alliances around the nation.

Pay attention to the big AND small picture.

A winning sports season, a personal career plan, or a successful year-long academic project means that you need to keep one eye on the FUTURE and one on NOW. Always be clear about and remind yourselves of the long-term goal: why did we start our Alliance and what do we want to leave behind when we graduate? But keep another eye on your short-term goals. What do we need to do next week? How will we organize our meetings? Who will write the newsletter or lead the assembly? How can we respond to new problems that we never anticipated?

Make sure EVERYONE in the Alliance has a voice and participates.

Democracy is usually a successful way to run a club, school, or nation—but it can be messy. It can be hard to listen and include people with different ideas. One way to make a successful democracy is to have a structure that's inclusive, but also helps you get things done. Practice shared leadership at meetings, and provide the right to vote. Create a meeting agenda beforehand to organize everyone's ideas and discussion topics.

**Celebrate, evaluate, improve,
and spread the word.**

Although the work of bully prevention can be serious and challenging, it also can and should be fun! Make time to celebrate within the group and also with the larger school community. Let others know about your work, and include them in your celebra-

tions. Like bad news, good news can be spread—and people are hungry for it! Use your *Upstander Alliance* as a foundation for other school climate and civic engagement projects—especially if you share the fun and spread the word.

Actions You Can Take as An *Upstander Alliance*

Below are some key ideas. Visit www.bullybust.org/upstander for a full list of project resources and to contribute your own ideas to the page! We want to know what you learn, what works, and what additional activities you suggest.

Use Public Service Announcements (PSA's) + other outreach activities.

As you begin to create your *Upstander Alliance*, reach out to the broader school community. Public Service Announcements (PSA's) are one powerful way to do this. Gather some student volunteers to create posters, ask the principal for time during morning announcements, post some information in faculty rooms, write a letter for the school newspaper or district staff newsletter. Invite interested people to an organizing lunch or after-school coffee (food always helps) and be sure to have information available at that time. You can see examples of student PSA's on BullyBust's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/schoolclimate.

Launch your *Upstander Alliance*.

With a bit of fanfare, launch the *Upstander Alliance*. Here are some ideas: after-school coffee or snacks for faculty and interested students; table in the entrances to the school in the morning and afternoon with simple free give-aways (BullyBust stickers, bookmarks, etc.). How do you publicize school events? Build on those rituals and skills!

Use poetry slams, concerts, and other student arts/performances.

School-time or after school student presentations

can be a great way to build interest and involvement, and to connect themes of bully prevention and school climate to other school-wide and faculty interests.

Develop a cross-age tutoring or teaching project.

Create or strengthen cross-age work where members of your *Upstander Alliance* work with elementary school students. These kinds of community service learning projects can include cooperative games, leadership activities, peer tutoring (especially using books on Upstander themes), playground peacemaking or other activities.

Create community outreach and service projects.

A second community-service idea is to work outside school—with faith-based centers, scouts or civic organizations. These projects can also focus on upstander-related themes—or on skills related to civic engagement, peacemaking or community change. Here are some examples: oral histories of community upstanders, service for elders or other populations that have needs as well as stories to tell, cross-age work with younger children through scouts or 4H programs, public speaking at churches or civic organizations. Additional ideas can be found on the Bullybust website.

Create many ways for students to share their ideas.

An *Upstander Alliance* box (in the school office, or the room that houses your Alliance) can be used to gather this kind of feedback. Be sure to announce it weekly on the morning announcements, and to get the word out in as many ways as you can; be sure to report back on what you are learning as well. One ally has initiated “Kelo Boxes” (named in honor of a student who committed suicide as a result of bullying) to gather student information and opinions; see the Bullybust website for more information.

Include local media work.

Most communities have a local newspaper and many have a local cable TV station that is obligated to provide community access. Along with radio and billboards, these are important local partners—and they are often very interested in promoting positive projects like the *Upstander Alliance*. Creating the materials for media work is also a great opportunity to engage students and faculty in communications, media or fine arts classes.

Engage parents/guardians in Upstander efforts:

Here are some questions that you can raise with parents/guardians as well as in the local student newspaper and other public forums:

- Have you ever seen a friend or co-workers being bullied? What are possible ways you can respond to the situation? How would each way affect other people involved?
- How would you like others to react if you were being bullied, targeted or excluded?
- What music, TV shows and movies promote kindness or upstander behavior?
- How is upstander behavior similar and/or different from being a hero?
- When you think about our country’s past, who

would you consider upstanders? Who are our country’s current upstanders?

- What is the difference between an Upstander and a ‘snitch’?
- When have you been an upstander? What is difficult or scary about being an upstander?

Check out the links on www.BullyBust.org.

Assign members of your *Upstander Alliance* to learn about a few of the resources and groups on the website; report back and decide on your top priorities for networking. The Bullybust website can help you learn about actions that *Upstander Alliance* have taken across the country—and it can also help you get in touch with other Alliances.

Contact national organizations that have resources and sponsor events.

These might include the national student council groups, Special Olympics, GLSEN—or even agencies within the state or federal government. Check out the Bullybust website for more ideas.

Visit youth organizing sites.

Young people around the nation are doing important work related to your *Upstander Alliance*. They will be interested in your work, and you can learn from them. The Resource section and the BullyBust website both include a few examples.

Connect with the Youth Voice Project.

Students are teaching adults about what works in bullying prevention. We have created a partnership with the Youth Voice Project, and you can connect to their survey on the BullyBust site. You can begin this conversation without the survey by asking your fellow students: “what do you think will help to prevent mean, cruel and/or bullying behavior?” And, “when someone is the target of mean, cruel and/or bullying behavior, what do you think will be most helpful and supportive?”



Safety

It is important for every member of an *Upstander Alliance* to think about their safety and the safety of those around them. This is especially true when it comes to cyber-bullying, but safety is important in every bullying situation. As upstanders, it is important to have other allies—especially trusted adults—who can support you, and help to resolve any conflicts without harm. Know your school's discipline code and which adults are responsible for safety within your school. Here are helpful questions to consider:

- What are your goals and expectations? Do you expect Alliance members to *educate* others or to *get directly involved* with bullying behavior?
- What supports are available for members of the Alliance? With whom can they talk if they are worried or upset, or need help in dealing with bullying behavior? Are there protections for them against cyber-bullying?
- How have you connected with the police or the school safety officers?
- Are you familiar and comfortable with your school or community's legal policies about bullying and harassment? If not, how can your *Upstander Alliance* help create more effective rules and guidelines?
- What procedures are in place to deal with an immediate crisis? Do you know who to call or what to do?
- Find more ideas and supports at: www.bullybust.org.

Resources to Support Your Work

www.BullyBust.org. BullyBust contains many more resources, guidelines, sample projects, links to other student teams and provides access to celebrity guest Ambassadors who will help keep your Alliance on track.

www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov. This site includes two rich sets of resources: The Youth Leaders' Toolkit and the Youth Have the Power! (YHTP!) website. Here you can find tools to organize alliances at your school and in your community.

www.inthemix.org/bullying. This website includes a 30 minute documentary for teens about bullying. In The Mix is an award-winning PBS teen series.

[MTV's A Thin Line](#). Join other teens across the country who are learning about cyber-safety and internet use.

[PACER's National Bully Prevention Center](#). (www.pacer.org/bullying/) This site provides concrete ways to get involved in your community and two key resources created for youth: Teens Against Bullying (TeensAgainstBullying.org) and Kids Against Bullying (KidsAgainstBullying.org).

THANK YOU for starting an *Upstander Alliance*!

Keep in touch with us at www.bullybust.org.

Please let us know what you are **learning, doing and changing!**