

Bullying and Suicide

In recent years, a series of bullying-related suicides in the US and across the globe have drawn attention to the connection between bullying and suicide.

Though too many adults still see bullying as “just part of being a kid,” it is a serious problem that leads to many negative effects for victims, including suicide.

The statistics on bullying and suicide are alarming:

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year, according to the CDC. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts. Over 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost 7 percent have attempted it.
- Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims, according to studies by Yale University
- Half of suicides among young people are related to bullying
- 10 to 14 year old girls may be at even higher risk for suicide
- According to statistics reported by ABC News, nearly 30 percent of students are either bullies or victims of bullying, and 160,000 kids stay home from school every day because of fear of bullying

Bully-related suicide can be connected to any type of bullying, including physical bullying, emotional bullying, cyberbullying, and sexting, or circulating suggestive or nude photos or messages about a person.

Some schools or regions have more serious problems with bullying and suicide related to bullying. This may be due to an excessive problem with bullying at the school. It could also be related to the tendency of students who are exposed to suicide to consider suicide themselves.

Some of the warning signs of suicide can include:

- Signs of depression, like ongoing sadness, withdrawal from others, losing interest in favorite activities, or trouble sleeping or eating
- Talking about/showing an interest in death or dying
- Engaging in dangerous or harmful activities, including reckless behavior, substance abuse, or self-injury
- Giving away favorite possessions and saying goodbye to people
- Saying that they “can’t handle things” anymore
- Making comments that things would be better without them

If a person is displaying these symptoms, talk to them about your concerns and get them help right away, such as from a counselor, doctor, or at the emergency room.

In some cases, it may not be obvious that a teen is thinking about suicide, such as when the suicide seems to be triggered by a particularly bad episode of bullying. In several cases where bullying victims killed themselves, bullies had told the teen that he or she *should kill him or herself* or that the *world would be better without them*.

How to help those who may be considering suicide:

- Take all talk or threats of suicide seriously. Don't tell the person they are wrong or that they have a lot to live for. Instead, get them *immediate medical help*.
- Keep weapons and medications away from anyone who is at risk for suicide. Get these items out of the house or at least securely locked up.
- Adults should encourage teens to talk about bullying that takes place. It may be embarrassing for kids to admit they are the victims of bullying, and most kids don't want to admit they have been involved in bullying. Tell victims that it's not their fault that they are being bullied and show them love and support. Therapy helps if the bullying is serious or chronic.
- Parents need to insist on monitoring devices and knowing passwords for social media site. Text messages may be more difficult to know about, so parents should try to keep open communications with their children about bullying.
- In cases of school bullying, adults must talk to school authorities about it (as they have anti-bullying programs), and arrange a meeting with the bully's parents. Most states have laws against bullying and cyber-bullying. If school authorities don't help with an ongoing bullying problem, local police or attorneys will.

People who are thinking about suicide should talk to someone right away or go to an emergency room. They can also call a free suicide hotline, such as 1-800-273-TALK (8255). **Washington County Crisis Hotline is: 262-365-6565.**



Sources:

WebMD, Depression Guide, "Recognizing the Warning Signs of Suicide" [online]
Nemours, KidsHealth, "Helping Kids Deal with Bullies" [online]
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Suicide Prevention, "Youth Suicide" [online]
Yale University, Office of Public Affairs, "Bullying-Suicide Link Explored in New Study by Researchers at Yale" [online]

Who's Carrying?

Percentage of high school students who had a weapon at school in the past 30 days

STUDENTS WHO WERE...

PERCENTAGE CARRYING A WEAPON



Not bullied

5%

Bullied

9%

Bullied and
in a fight at school

23%

Bullied and
threatened or injured with a weapon

28%

Bullied,
in a fight at school, and
threatened or injured with a weapon

46%

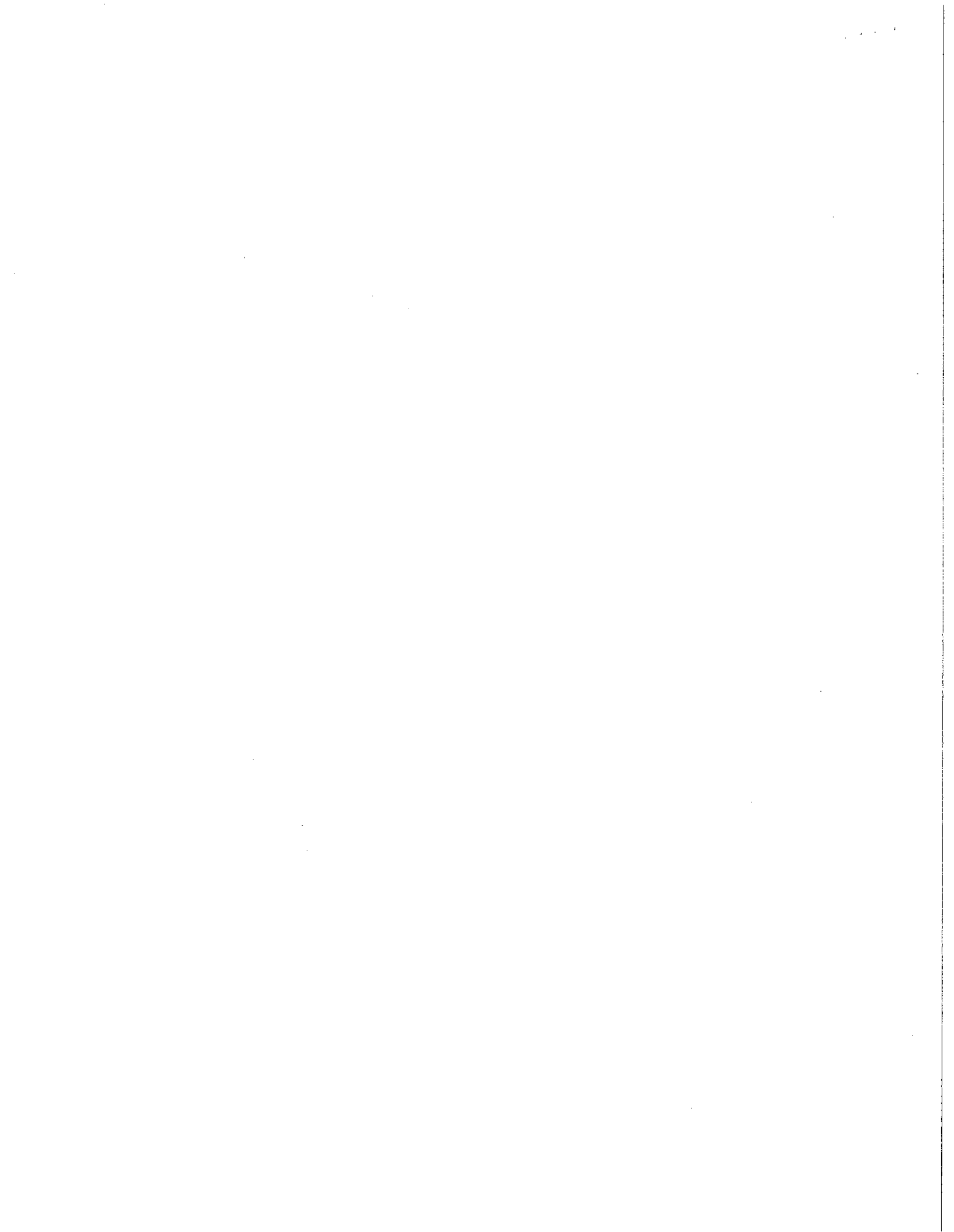
Bullied,
in a fight at school,
threatened or injured with a weapon, and
missing school because they felt unsafe

61%

Bullied,
in a fight at school,
threatened or injured with a weapon,
missing school because they felt unsafe, and
had something stolen from them

72%

Note: Risk factors in the left hand column (fought at school, threatened or injured with a weapon, missing school because they felt unsafe, and had something stolen from them) are cumulative.



10 WAYS TO BE AN UPSTANDER

-Adapted from BullyBust

1. Help others who are being bullied. Be a friend, even if this person is not yet your friend. Go over to him. Let him know how you think he is feeling. Walk with him. Help him to talk to an adult about what just happened. (Just think for a moment about how great this would be if someone did this for you when you were being picked on or hurt!)

2. Stop untrue or harmful messages from spreading. If someone tells you a rumor that you know is untrue or sends you a message that is hurtful to someone else, stand up and let the person know this is wrong. Think about how you would feel if someone spread an untrue rumor about you. Don't laugh, send the message on to friends, or add to the story. Make it clear that you do not think that kind of behavior is cool or funny.

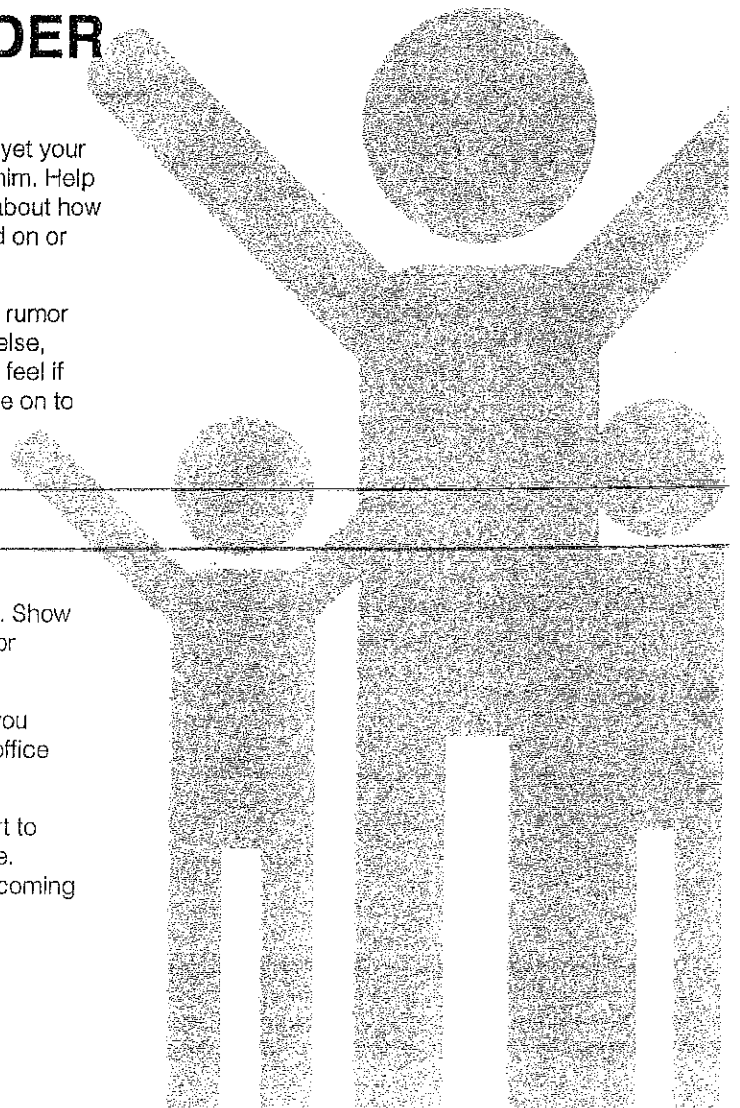
3. Get friends involved. Let people know that you are an upstander and encourage them to be one too. Sign the Stand Up Pledge, and make it an everyday commitment for you and your friends.

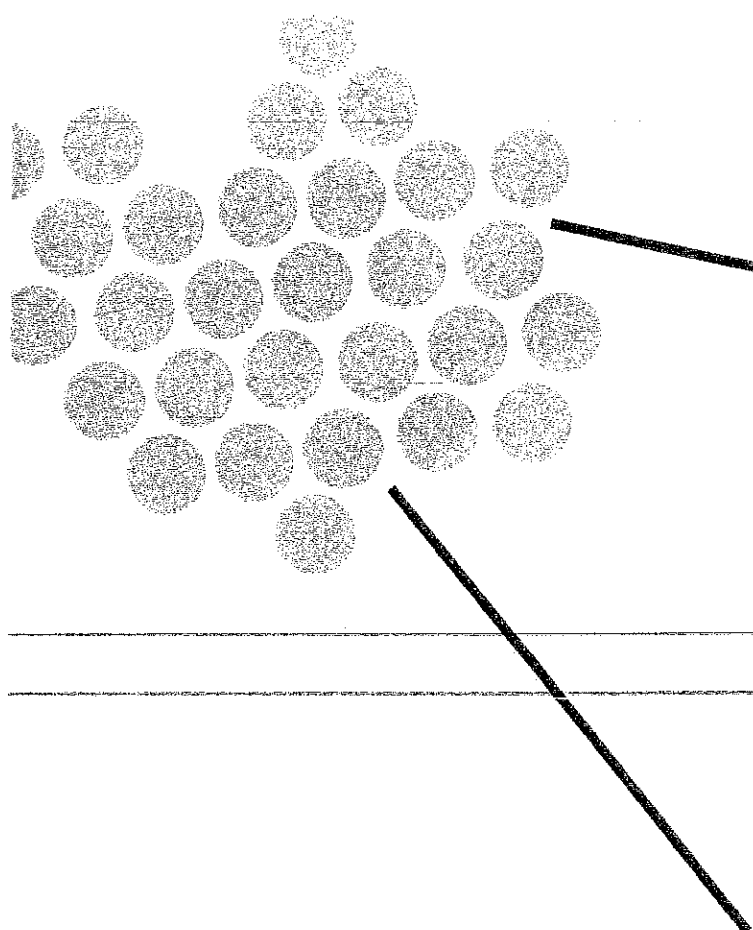
4. Make friends outside of your circle. Eat lunch with someone who is alone. Show support for a person who is upset at school, by asking them what is wrong or bringing them to an adult who can help.

5. Be aware of the bullying policy at your school and keep it in mind when you witness bullying. If there isn't a policy, get involved or ask teachers or front office staff to speak about how you can reduce bullying.

6. Reach out to new people at your school. Make an effort to introduce them around and help them feel comfortable. Imagine how you would feel leaving your friends and coming to a new school.

The
BULLY
Project





7. Refuse to be a “bystander”. If you see friends or classmates laughing along with the bully, tell them that they are contributing to the problem. Let them know that by laughing they are also bullying the victim.

8. Respect others' differences and help others to respect differences. It's cool for people to be different – that's what makes all of us unique. Join a diversity club at school to help promote tolerance in your school.

9. Develop a bullying program or project with a teacher or principal's support that will help reduce bullying in school. Bring together a team of students, parents and teachers to meet and talk about bullying on a regular basis and share stories and support. Discuss the “hot spots” where bullying most likely occurs (ex. the bus, bathroom, an unmonitored hallway) and what can be done on a school level to make sure students and teachers are safe and supported. Learn more about how to start an Upstander Alliance at www.bullybust.org/upstander and access free support to sustain your team.

10. Educate yourself and your community about bullying. For example: Why do kids bully? Where does bullying take place most often in your school? What are the effects of bullying? Why are people afraid to get involved? Understanding this information will help you if you are bullied and will help you to stand up to bullies if a

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