



The Difference Between Rude, Mean, and Bullying

Many parents are concerned about bullying, protecting their kids from it, and making sure their kids aren't engaging in it. But with so much talk about bullying, sometimes we call behavior "bullying" that is actually not. So how can you tell the difference? [Signe Whitson](#), a child and adolescent therapist, [shares this advice](#) on the differences between being rude, mean, and bullying.

Rude

Rude, she says, is inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else. In children this takes the form of social errors like "burping in someone's face, jumping ahead in line, bragging about achieving the highest grade or even throwing a crushed up pile of leaves in someone's face." The critical factor? "Incidents of rudeness are usually spontaneous, unplanned inconsideration, based on thoughtlessness, poor manners or narcissism, but not meant to actually hurt someone."

Mean

Being mean involves "purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (or maybe twice)." Unlike unthinking rudeness, "mean behavior very much aims to hurt or depreciate someone. Very often, mean behavior in kids is motivated by angry feelings and/or the misguided goal of propping themselves up in comparison to the person they are putting down." And while both rudeness and mean behavior require correction, they are "different from bullying in important ways that should be understood and differentiated when it comes to intervention."

Bullying

Bullying is "intentionally aggressive behavior, **repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power.** Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful to others and **they keep doing it**, with no sense of regret or remorse — **even when targets of bullying show or express their hurt or tell the aggressors to stop.**" Whitson gives examples of multiple kinds of bullying, including physical and verbal aggression, relational aggression (like social exclusion, hazing, or rumor spreading), and cyberbullying. The key aspect to all of them is the ongoing nature of the behavior, which leaves the victims feeling powerless and fearful.

By talking to your child about the differences, you can better identify the offending behavior and take appropriate action. There are many books on bullying, childhood resiliency, and coping skills that can be helpful in talking with your children.

<https://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/pediatrics/2018/01/the-difference-between-rude-mean-and-bullying/>



BULLYING INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date of Incident: _____ **Time of Incident:** _____ **Repeat infraction?** YES NO

Location of Incident (circle all that apply):

Hallway Restroom Classroom Gym Lunch Room Playground Locker Room Bus Stop On Bus Parking Lot

To/From School After School Program School Sponsored Event Text/Phone/Internet/Social Media Other: _____

Name of victim(s): _____ **Name of student(s) bullying:** _____ **Name(s) of witnesses/bystanders:** _____

Type of Bullying:

- Verbal
 Physical: Result in injury? YES NO Reported to School Nurse? YES NO Reported to Police? YES NO
 Relational

Bullying Behaviors (circle all that apply):

Shoved/Pushed Hit, Kicked, Punched Threatened Stole/Damaged Possessions
Excluded Taunting/ridiculing Writing/Graffiti Told Lies or False Rumors
Staring/Leering Intimidation/Extortion Demeaning Comments Inappropriate touching
Cyber-bullying using: Text messages Website Email Other: _____

Racial, Sexual, Religious or Disability Circle one and describe: _____

Reported to school by (circle all that apply):

Teacher Student Bystander Victim/Target Parent Bus Driver Anonymous Other: _____

Describe the incident:

Physical Evidence? Notes Email Graffiti Video/audio Website Other: _____

Actions Taken (see Protocol for Guidelines):

Consequences: _____

Remediation: _____

Referral for additional support services: _____

Parent Contact: Date _____ Time _____ Person making contact: _____

Result: _____

Today's Date: _____ **Reported by:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Bullying Incident Follow-Up

Follow-up Conference

Date: _____

Time: _____

Conducted by: _____

People present:

Administrator _____ Social Worker _____ Counselor _____ Teacher _____

Student _____ Parent _____ Parent _____ Witnesses _____

School Psychologist Other _____

According to student, situation is:

Better

Worse

No difference

Comments:

Parent Contact: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Person making contact: _____

Additional Actions / Notes:

Follow-up Conference

Date: _____

Time: _____

Conducted by: _____

People present:

Administrator _____ Social Worker _____ Counselor _____ Teacher _____

Student _____ Parent _____ Parent _____ Witnesses _____

School Psychologist Other _____

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Additional Actions / Notes:
