

From bystanders to upstanders

Bullying often happens in the presence of witnesses (or bystanders) who can play a key role in influencing bullying behaviour. Four distinct bystander roles have been identified:

- reinforcer - encourages the bullying by laughing and cheering
- assistant - actively supports the bullying by doing things such as blocking exits
- outsider - silent observation that could be interpreted as approval
- defender - active support for the person being bullied, also called upstander.

Bystanders contribute to the problem - upstanders can stop the problem.

Research shows that others speaking out or taking action can stop bullying behaviour. Becoming an upstander is about moving from silence to action - doing something that prevents or reduces the observed bullying or coming to the aid of another child who is being bullied.

If it is safe to do so, students can become upstanders by:

- speaking out and telling the bully to stop
- distracting the bully by refocusing attention away from the person being bullied
- telling a teacher who can help.

The anti-bullying resource [Bystander to upstander](#) (PDF 436.9 KB) contains evidence-based activities for Years 5-8. Each activity is designed to be co-delivered by students and teachers to raise awareness, build skills and reduce bullying behaviour.

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More resources

The [Friendly Schools Student CyberLeader](#) resource is designed to help build the self-efficacy of students to show leadership in their school and with their peers by encouraging and enabling other young people to use technology in positive ways.

The Bullying. No Way! website [has](#) the following ideas to support student voice.

Our special superpower [is](#) a short animated video designed to help primary aged students discuss and learn how to be a safe and supportive bystander.

Roles that kids play [explores](#) some safe and supportive actions that bystanders can take to stop or reduce bullying.

Active bystander lesson plans [explores](#) the importance of active bystanders (upstanders). Materials are available for early primary, lower primary, lower secondary and senior secondary students.