TOGETHER AGAINST BULLYING

Created during the Erasmus+ youth exchange **"Harmony Hub"**

(2024-1-LV02-KA152-YOU-000204477)

Together against bullying: a youth guide for inclusive communities

▼ Introduction: Why we created this guide

Welcome to the "Together against bullying" guide, created during the Erasmus Plus youth exchange project **"Harmony Hub: Building Inclusive Communities, Preventing Bullying" (Project Number: 2024-1-LV02-KA152-YOU-000204477)**. This project took place from **May 13th to 21st, 2025**, in the peaceful seaside town of **Saulkrasti, Latvia**.

Funded by the Erasmus Plus program of the European Union, this guide reflects the voices, stories, and efforts of the young people who came together to tackle the serious issue of bullying. Through a week of workshops, role plays, discussions, and creative sessions, participants explored the root causes of bullying and the power of empathy, inclusion, and solidarity to build more welcoming communities.

This guide is designed for young people, youth workers, teachers, and anyone who wants to make a difference. Inside, you'll find facts about bullying, real-life stories, reflections, non-formal education activities, and inspiring examples of inclusive youth actions.

Participating countries and partner organizations:

- **Youth Line** – Latvia

- **Youth Line Sweden** – Sweden

- **Asociația MULTIKULTI** – Romania

- **YARATICI GENÇLİK AKADEMİSİ** – Türkiye

Together, we believe that **kindness is courage**, and this guide is one step toward making our schools, communities, and online spaces safer for all.

▼ Chapter 1: Understanding bullying in all its forms

▼ What is bullying?

Bullying is intentional, repeated aggressive behavior that involves a clear **power imbalance** between the person doing the bullying and the person being targeted. It can happen to anyone and in many places—at school, online, at work, in public, or even at home.

Key characteristics of bullying:

- **Intentional** – the behavior is meant to hurt, harm, or intimidate someone on purpose.

- **Repeated** – it happens more than once or has the potential to happen again.

- **Power imbalance** – the bully uses power (like physical strength, popularity, or access to private information) to control or harm others.

Bullying is not just a one-time argument or a disagreement between equals. It's a pattern of behavior that causes real emotional, mental, or even physical harm. And it doesn't just affect the person being bullied—**bystanders** also have the power to make it worse or help stop it.

▼ Types of bullying: physical, verbal, social, and online

Physical bullying:

This type involves the use of bodily force to intimidate, control, or harm another person. Examples include **hitting, kicking, tripping, slapping, pushing**, or **spitting**. It may also involve **stealing or damaging belongings**. While visible injuries are common, the **emotional impact**—such as fear, anxiety, and depression—can be just as severe.

Verbal bullying:

Verbal bullying uses language to hurt someone. It includes **name-calling, teasing, insults, threats**, and hurtful comments based on **appearance, race, gender, religion, or disability**. Though there are no visible injuries, the psychological impact can lead to **isolation, low self-esteem**, and **mental health challenges**.

Social (relational) bullying:

Also called emotional or relational bullying, this includes actions that **damage someone's reputation or relationships**. Examples are

spreading rumors, excluding someone from a group, or **manipulating friendships**. It is often subtle and hard to detect, but its effects— **loneliness, rejection, and humiliation**—can be deeply painful and long-lasting.

Online (cyber) bullying:

Cyberbullying occurs through digital platforms like social media, messaging apps, games, and emails. It includes **sending hurtful messages, spreading lies or rumors, posting embarrassing content**, or **impersonating someone**. Cyberbullying can happen **24/7**, making it feel **inescapable** and potentially causing **severe emotional distress**, including anxiety, depression, and in some cases, self-harm.

▼ Roles involved: bully, victim, bystander

(Story by Aymen)

At Nordås Middle School, Sara, a new student, becomes the target of bullying by Erik, a popular boy who mocks her in front of his friends. Liam, their classmate, witnesses this but feels too scared to intervene.

Eventually, Liam feels guilty for staying silent. He reaches out to Sara and builds a friendship. With this new connection, Liam gains the confidence to speak up, and together, they decide to take a stand.

This story reminds us:

- Friendship can inspire courage.

- Even small acts of kindness can lead to big change.

- Bystanders have the power to help.

▼ Why bullying happens: root causes

Bullying can occur for many reasons:

- The bully may have **experienced bullying themselves** and want to feel in control.

- They may suffer from **low self-esteem**, seeking power by putting others down.

- **Peer pressure** often pushes individuals to join in to gain approval.

- Environments with **weak supervision** or where bullying is tolerated make it worse.

- **Stress at home, lack of empathy, and cultural misunderstandings** may also be factors.

Understanding these root causes helps us **respond with empathy and action**, not just punishment.

▼ The impact: short- and long-term consequences

Bullying can take many forms, each harmful in its own way. Verbal bullying—like name-calling or teasing—can damage someone's self-worth. Physical bullying, such as hitting or pushing, causes both pain and emotional stress. Social bullying, which includes exclusion or spreading rumors, can leave people feeling isolated and rejected. And in today's digital world, cyberbullying is increasingly common, with mean messages or hurtful posts spreading quickly online. No matter the form, bullying has real and serious effects on those who go through it.

Short-term consequences:

In the short term, bullying can affect both the body and the mind. Victims may feel sadness, anger, or fear, and they might have trouble sleeping or lose interest in school and hobbies. Physical symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, and low energy are also common. Academically, they might struggle to concentrate, miss classes, or arrive late because of stress. These effects can seriously disrupt a young person's daily life and personal growth.

Long-term consequences:

Sadly, the effects of bullying often last even after the bullying stops. Victims might experience long-term mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and—in some cases—self-harm or suicidal thoughts. Their self-esteem may be deeply affected, making it hard to trust others, try new things, or build healthy relationships. Some may develop behavioral issues like aggression or turn to risky habits, such as substance use, to cope.

How to help:

Stopping bullying takes support from everyone. Victims should talk to a trusted adult—like a parent, teacher, or counselor—and keep track of what's happening. Being with supportive friends or safe groups can also help a lot. Bystanders matter too. Instead of staying silent or going along with the bullying, they can speak up safely and tell someone who can

take action. Schools and communities also play a big part—by teaching kindness and respect, making clear rules, and offering support like counseling or workshops.

Bullying can leave deep scars, but with support, awareness, and action, we can change the story. Whether you're a victim, a bystander, or an adult, you have the power to help build a world where respect, care, and inclusion are for everyone.

▼ Stories and reflections from young people

Being young is often a time of growth, self-discovery, and learning—but for some, it's also marked by painful experiences of bullying, exclusion, and insecurity. In this text, young people share their personal stories and reflections on these challenges. Their voices are anonymous, but their words are honest and real. Through their stories, we gain insight into what it can feel like to be mistreated, manipulated, or isolated—and how, even in darkness, strength and hope can emerge. These testimonies remind us of the importance of listening, understanding, and never ignoring the struggles others face.

Story 1:

I remember back in high school I used to be bullied. At the time, I wasn't even fully aware of it. Kids were always rough where I grew up, so I told myself it was normal—but it shouldn't have been.

I think I was pressured into some bad situations. I did things just to avoid being left out. Even when I was the punchline of the joke, I went along with it. In a way, I was being manipulated.

Being treated badly hurts, but being lonely also hurts—and I think people stay in toxic friendships out of fear of being alone.

Story 2:

For me, bullying felt like something I couldn't escape. Even when I went to the teachers, it didn't help. Some teachers who didn't like me assumed I was the one starting fights, just because I didn't have good grades.

Eventually, I started avoiding people completely. I withdrew from others because of the insecurities I developed.

But you can't live like a monk forever. It went on for years, and the helplessness and frustration I felt was terrible.

I'll end this on a hopeful note—things do eventually get better. Hang in there.

Story 3:

People often bully others because of their own insecurities, and a lot of us are left with deep emotional scars.

Most bullies don't fully understand the consequences of their words or actions.

In my experience, people aren't evil—they do it for different reasons. Some think it's funny, some want to seem cool, and some are afraid they'll be bullied if they don't act tough.

A few people who bullied me later said they thought joking about my insecurities would help me take them less seriously. Maybe they meant well—but it didn't help.

Later in life, many bullies grow up and regret what they did.

I truly believe we need to take bullying seriously and work together to stop it.

▼ Survey: the reality of bullying

The reality of bullying: what young people are telling us

To develop effective anti-bullying strategies, it's essential to listen to the voices of those directly affected. This section presents an analysis of responses from a small-scale survey conducted during an Erasmus+ project focused on bullying prevention. Participants anonymously shared their experiences with bullying.

Although the sample size is limited, the insights provide a valuable look into the most common forms of bullying, the emotional and social impacts on victims, and the protective factors that can help reduce long-term harm.

This analysis can help NGOs:

- Tailor programs to the most prevalent types of bullying
- Better understand the psychological and social toll bullying takes on young people
- Create safer spaces for youth to speak openly about their experiences

- Develop support systems that foster resilience and healing

The following data, personal reflections, and practical suggestions come directly from those who have lived through bullying. Their voices highlight why your work as an NGO is not just important—but potentially life-changing.

Types of bullying experienced
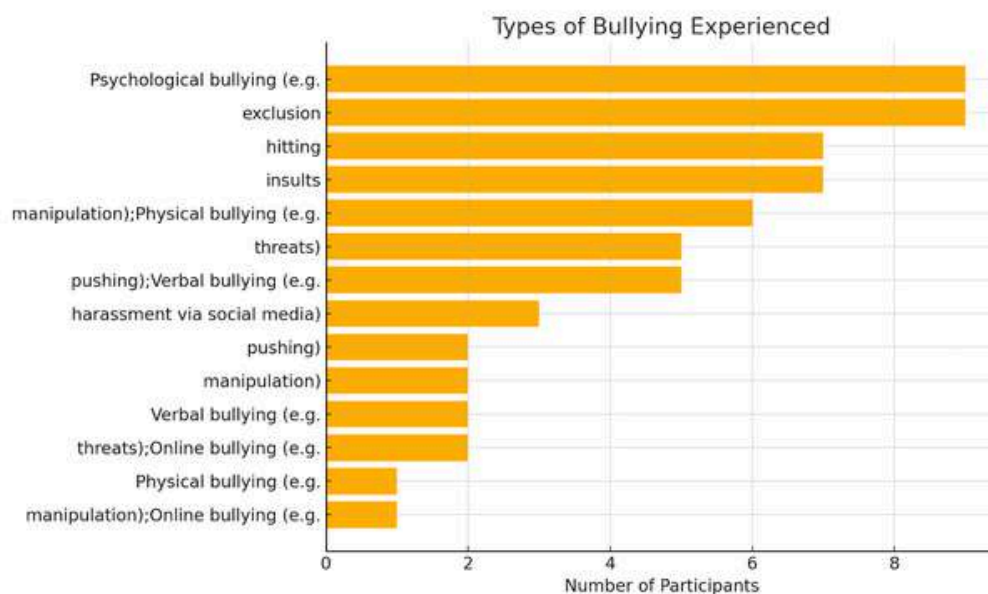
Question 1: "Have you ever experienced any of the following types of bullying?"
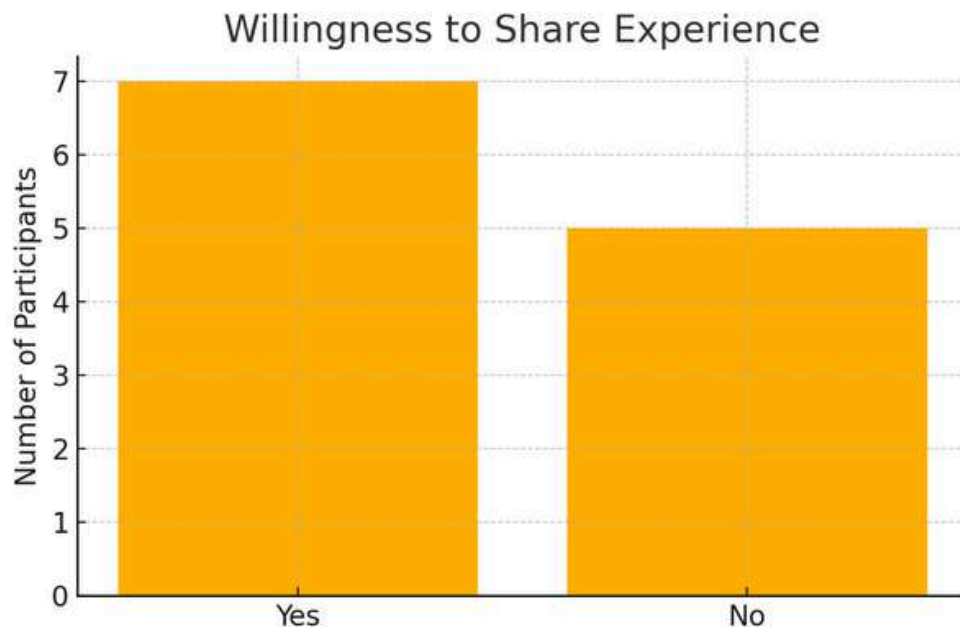
Findings:

Participants were allowed to select multiple types of bullying. The most commonly reported forms were:

- **Psychological bullying** (e.g., exclusion, manipulation)

- **Verbal bullying** (e.g., insults, threats)

- **Physical bullying** (e.g., hitting, pushing)

The chart above illustrates how frequently each form of bullying was experienced. **Psychological bullying** was the most commonly reported type.

Question 2: "Would you be willing to share your experience?"

This question measured participants' willingness to talk about their bullying experiences. The responses help us understand how many people feel safe or ready to share their stories.
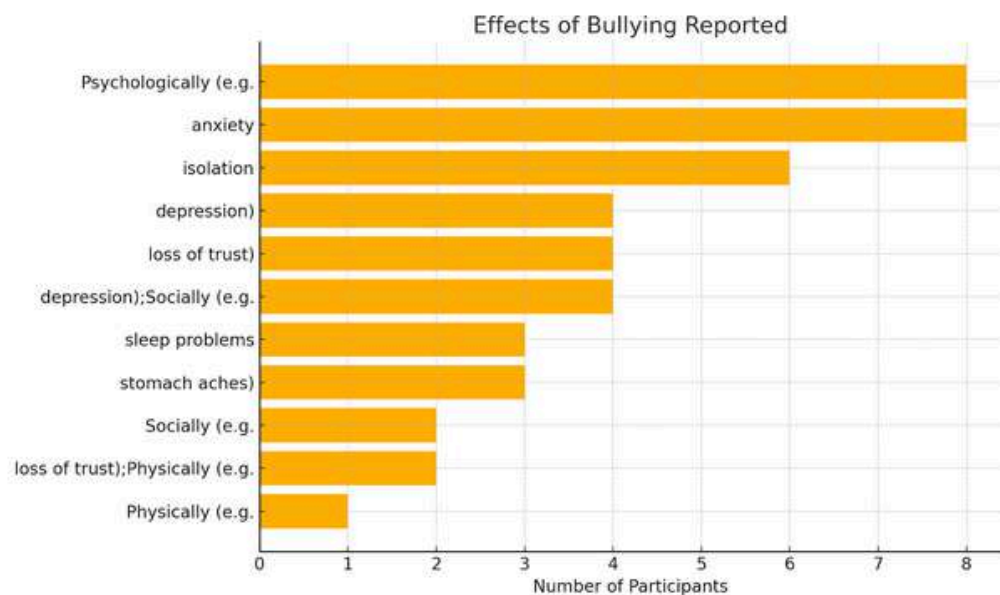

Findings:

- 7 out of 12 participants provided a response indicating a willingness to share their experiences.

- 5 participants did not respond to this question.

This suggests a **moderate level of openness** among participants to discuss their experiences. However, the fact that nearly half chose not to respond may reflect emotional difficulty, discomfort, or a lack of trust in sharing personal stories.

Question 3: "Did the experience affect you in any of the following ways?"

We will analyze the reported impacts of bullying across various areas, such as psychological, social, academic, and emotional well-being.

Effects of Bullying Reported

Findings:

Participants selected one or more effects, with the most common being:

- **Psychological** (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- **Social** (e.g., isolation, loss of trust)

These results show that bullying often has a significant psychological impact and can lead to social withdrawal. This highlights the importance of integrating mental health support and peer-based interventions into anti-bullying strategies.

Question 4: "Could you tell us more about how it affected you, both in the short and long term?"

This is a qualitative question. Below is a summary of the main themes that emerged from participants' responses.

Key themes from responses:

Theme	Example Quotes
Low self-esteem	"My self-esteem decreased." "...had a hard time getting my self-esteem back up."
Social withdrawal	"I became unable to look people in the eyes..." "...constant discomfort in social situations..."
Psychological distress	"I started having frequent thoughts of gouging one of my eyes out..." "...felt like crying when I looked in the mirror."

Coping through action	"I was so actively involved in NGOs... as a way to demonstrate I AM WORTH..."
Support as a buffer	"I've always been very mature for my age... big siblings that support me..."
Mixed impact	"It did not have long-term effects but... might have affected me unconsciously."

These narratives highlight deep psychological impacts, including internalized shame, identity struggles, and self-harming thoughts. At the same time, they show resilience and the protective role of support systems such as family and youth organizations.

▼ Chapter 2: Inclusion and empathy as a response

▼ What inclusion really means

Inclusion is a term with many meanings depending on the context. The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* (2025) defines it as "the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc." and also "the idea that everyone should be able to use the facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage."

Similarly, the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2025) defines inclusion as "the act of making a person or thing part of a group or collection," and "the policy or practice of making sure that everyone in society has access to resources and opportunities."

The meaning of inclusion has also changed over time. According to a paper titled *The Evolution of the Term: Inclusion (Allyn & Bacon, 2025)*, the concept has gone through multiple phases from the 1900s to the present:

- **1900s–1960s** – Normalization

- **1950s–1960s** – Deinstitutionalization and community integration

- **1970s** – Least restrictive environment

- **1980s** – Mainstreaming

- **Early 1990s** – Inclusion

- **Mid-1990s** – Full inclusion

- **2000s and beyond** – Full participation and meaningful benefit

For many people, especially youth, inclusion also means something more personal—like being welcomed into a friend group, having a voice in decisions, or feeling accepted for who they are. It can be about respecting differences, embracing new perspectives, and making sure everyone has the chance to participate.

More than just access, inclusion means belonging. It's not only being allowed into the room—but feeling like your presence matters.

Combining dictionary meanings with historical context, we define inclusion in this guide as:

"The practice of ensuring that every individual—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—is not only given access, but also welcomed, valued, and supported to fully participate in all areas of society."

▼ The power of empathy in ending bullying

Bullying is a significant social challenge, but empathy can be a transformative tool to combat it. By fostering shared understanding and integrating empathy-building practices in schools and communities, we can promote respect, support emotional growth, and design systems that blend compassionate education with accountability. This approach helps build a society where bullying is actively countered through both cultural and structural change.

A powerful example of empathy's potential is the **Christmas Truce of 1914**. On Christmas Day during World War I, soldiers from opposing sides—mainly British and German troops—emerged from their trenches, met in no-man's land, shared food and drinks, sang carols, and even played football. For a brief moment, they no longer saw each other as enemies, but as fellow human beings (Ray, 2025).

Another striking example is the story of **Irena Sendler**, a Polish social worker who risked her life to help Jewish families during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw. Her deep empathy was the driving force that enabled hundreds—possibly thousands—of children and adults to survive. Irena not only smuggled food into the ghettos but also smuggled children out, hiding them in schools, orphanages, hospitals, and private homes (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2025; World Jewish Congress, 2025).

These historical examples reveal a universal truth: empathy has the power to change the course of events. While most of us won't face such extreme situations in daily life, empathy still plays a crucial role in preventing and responding to bullying. It allows us to look beyond our differences, recognize shared humanity, and build respectful communities where harm is not only addressed but actively prevented.

▼ Rethinking safe spaces: challenges and opportunities

The concept of **"safe spaces"** has become a central feature of modern conversations about inclusivity, especially in schools, workplaces, and activist movements. Originally, these spaces were designed to offer psychological safety and mutual respect for marginalized groups. However, over time, some critics have questioned whether these spaces unintentionally discourage open dialogue and suppress diverse viewpoints. This has led to a growing tension: how can we create spaces that are both safe and intellectually open?

Origins and evolution

The term **"safe space"** first emerged in the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Back then, safe spaces served as refuges from social hostility—a place where individuals could freely express themselves, organize for rights, and begin healing from trauma. As noted by Sara Ahmed in *On Being Included* (2012), these early spaces were essential in forming collective identities and building movements for change.

In the 1980s and 1990s, universities began institutionalizing the idea of safe spaces through inclusion policies. Cultural centers, identity-based dormitories, and student support services were introduced to help historically marginalized students feel more welcomed. Over time, practices like **trigger warnings**, **speech codes**, and **free speech zones** were added, making the concept even more complex.

Safe spaces vs. welcoming environments

More recently, a shift has occurred in how these spaces are framed. Instead of focusing purely on **safety**, many institutions are now promoting the idea of **"welcoming environments".** These aim not to shield individuals from disagreement but to foster **mutual respect** where differences can be expressed and explored.

According to the **Council of Europe's Reference Framework for Democratic Culture**, true inclusion must also embrace openness, ambiguity, and the ability to engage in tough conversations. Welcoming environments seek to strike a balance—acknowledging past injustices while preparing people to navigate discomfort constructively. They are not about controlling conversations, but **facilitating respectful, informed dialogue**.

The role of safe spaces today

Rather than reject safe spaces entirely, the goal should be to **redefine** them. They are still crucial for:

- Healing from trauma

- Identity formation

- Building solidarity

However, when safety is interpreted as **comfort** and discomfort is seen as **harm**, the purpose of safe spaces is undermined. This can lead to environments that, while well-intentioned, suppress honest conversations and reinforce ideological uniformity.

Moving forward: a balanced approach

Institutions must evolve beyond the binary of "safe" versus "unsafe." Instead, they should aim to create spaces that are:

- **Safe enough to be brave**

- **Welcoming enough to challenge ideas**

This involves:

- Differentiating between **safety from harm** and **safety from discomfort**

- Embedding **trauma-informed practices** that don't limit free expression

- Training facilitators to **manage conflict** rather than avoid it

- Supporting marginalized voices without creating **ideological echo chambers**

By rethinking the role and design of safe spaces, we can move toward environments that are truly inclusive, emotionally supportive, and

intellectually engaging.

▼ Building safe and welcoming spaces: practical foundations

Creating inclusive, respectful, and psychologically secure environments is essential for fostering meaningful dialogue and preventing bullying. While the idea of a "safe space" has gained wide recognition, its practical implementation requires intentional design, clear boundaries, and a shared commitment to empathy and mutual respect.

Definitions and evolving understandings

The **Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus (2025)** defines a *safe space* as "a place or situation in which you are protected from harm or danger." Similarly, the **Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2025)** describe it as "a place in which a person or a particular group of people can know that they will be free from harm or criticism."

These definitions point to both physical and emotional protection. However, creating a genuinely inclusive space requires more than simply offering physical safety. It also involves nurturing emotional security, psychological trust, and an atmosphere that encourages openness without fear.

Characteristics of a safe space

According to the article *"How to Create Safe Spaces for Honest Conversations"* by the **HogoNext Editorial Team (2025)**, effective safe spaces share the following five characteristics:

- **Respect** – All participants are treated with dignity, and differing viewpoints are acknowledged.

- **Confidentiality** – What is shared within the space remains private, which fosters trust and openness.

- **Openness** – Individuals feel free to express themselves honestly, without fear of censorship or judgment.

- **Empathy** – Participants make an effort to understand others' perspectives, even when they disagree.

- **Clear boundaries** – Ground rules are established to ensure respectful communication and prevent personal attacks or harmful behavior.

These principles are not just ideals—they are *practical tools* that can be embedded into any group setting, from classrooms and youth groups to online forums and community initiatives.

Practical implementation: from concept to reality

To build a **welcoming environment**, it is important to start by laying a foundation of shared values. This means:

- **Establishing mutual respect** – Every person's voice should be heard and every participant treated with dignity.

- **Ensuring confidentiality** – When individuals trust that their stories and vulnerabilities will be respected, they are more willing to engage deeply.

- **Encouraging emotional openness** – People need to feel they can express their views, ask questions, and even disagree without fear of rejection or punishment.

Welcoming environments do not require elaborate infrastructure—they can be both physical (like a support group meeting room or school classroom) and metaphorical (like an online chat, a team discussion, or a private conversation). The essential ingredient is *clear agreements* that promote empathy and inclusion.

Examples of safe spaces include:

- Peer support groups

- Therapy sessions

- Identity-based student or youth groups

- Employee resource groups

- Moderated online forums

- Inclusive classroom discussions

In all of these, what matters most is not the location, but the **quality of interaction and the presence of trust**.

▼ Real examples of inclusive youth actions

Youth-led initiatives across the world are transforming concepts like inclusion, empathy, and safe spaces into practical action. This chapter highlights real-life examples that demonstrate how young people are

creating communities rooted in respect, diversity, and mutual support. These case studies reflect the principles explored in earlier chapters and serve as inspiration for future initiatives.

1. The "Brave Space" Framework – Columbia University, USA

At Columbia University's Office of Multicultural Affairs, student dialogue programs like **ROOTEd** (Respecting Ourselves and Others Through Education) embrace a **brave space** model. Unlike traditional safe spaces, this approach:

- Encourages participants to embrace discomfort as part of learning
- Uses trained student facilitators to guide complex discussions on race, gender, and identity
- Establishes clear community agreements (e.g., "Speak from the 'I'," "Accept and expect non-closure")

This model fosters spaces where students feel intellectually and emotionally challenged in a respectful environment. Long-term, it has led to sustained peer training and increased student engagement.

2. No Hate Speech Movement – Council of Europe

Launched in 2013, the **No Hate Speech Movement (NHSM)** is a youth campaign coordinated by the Council of Europe, with national efforts in over 40 countries. Its core objectives include:

- Counteracting online hate speech targeting minorities, migrants, and LGBTQ+ communities
- Promoting digital literacy and critical thinking
- Facilitating human rights education in schools and youth centers

Through youth-created videos, memes, and educational content, NHSM strengthens inclusive online spaces and amplifies marginalized voices.

3. Youth for Inclusion – Western Balkans

In the post-conflict regions of the **Western Balkans**, youth initiatives promote inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. One notable example is the **Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)**, which supports:

- Youth exchanges among Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Macedonian communities

- Joint workshops on peacebuilding, identity, and collective memory

- Honest engagement with national histories and past traumas

These programs challenge ethnic stereotypes and promote inclusive patriotism — a love for one's country that does not come at the expense of others.

4. Queer-Straight Alliances – South Africa

In urban areas such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, student-led **Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs)** offer inclusive support networks in secondary schools. These alliances:

- Create safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students to find peer support

- Organize awareness events like Pride Days and film screenings

- Advocate for inclusive policies and anti-bullying measures

South African QSAs often intersect with broader racial justice work, reflecting the layered nature of discrimination in post-apartheid society.

5. Feminist Internet Youth Lab – United Kingdom

Hosted by institutions like the **University of the Arts London** and supported by Mozilla, the **Feminist Internet Youth Lab** empowers young people to shape the future of inclusive technology. Participants:

- Redesign digital platforms to reduce bias and online abuse

- Advocate for gender-inclusive and intersectional tech education

- Lead public workshops on digital rights and representation

This project blends activism and innovation, helping young people — especially women, nonbinary, and racialized youth — become digital change-makers.

6. Roma Youth Empowerment Programs – Eastern Europe

Across Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, Roma-led organizations such as **Phiren Amenca** and **Roma Active Albania** work to strengthen youth leadership. Their strategies include:

- Addressing systemic racism and challenging negative stereotypes

- Providing mentorship and scholarships to increase educational access

- Hosting forums to celebrate and reclaim Roma identity and culture

These initiatives move beyond symbolic inclusion by ensuring that Roma youth speak for themselves and shape their futures as active civic participants.

▼ Chapter 3: From conflict to connection – prevention and intervention

▼ Spotting the signs of bullying and exclusion

1. Emotional and behavioral changes

- Isolation from social interactions or favorite activities;
- Mood changes, irritability, or sudden sadness;
- Anxiety or fear about going to school or certain places;
- Low self-esteem or self-critical remarks.

2. Physical signs

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, or injuries;
- Loss or damage of personal items (books, phones, clothes);
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns.

3. Academic issues

- Decline in grades or lack of interest in schoolwork;
- Frequent absences or requests to stay home;
- Loss of concentration or attention in class.

4. Social indicators

- Few or no friends; always alone during breaks;
- Being left out of group activities or school projects;
- Sudden changes in peer groups.

5. Digital behavior (cyberbullying)

- Nervousness when receiving messages or using devices;
- Sudden isolation from social media;
- Blocking/unfriending people without explanation.

<u>What to do if you notice these signs?</u>

- Talk openly and supportively with the person;
- Report concerns to a teacher, school counselor, or trusted adult;
- Encourage inclusion and build supportive peer relationships;
- In cases of cyberbullying, save evidence and report it to the platform or authorities.

▼ Peer support and bystander intervention

Peer support is a group or a person that can help you and be there for you, when you need it the most. They provide help that you need at that moment.

Peer support can be for any age or gender, your peer support doesn't need to be professionals, it can be family, friends or even colleagues.

A support person has experienced similar problems as you have. They have been in such similar situations and can understand how you feel.

How peer support can help the bullied person:

- They break the silence.
- They show kindness and courage.
- They help create a culture where bullying is not accepted.

Where can you find peer support:

If you are bullied, you should not deal with it alone. Support can come from **friends**, **adults**, or **groups**. Here are some real places you can go for help:

School:

Go to an adult in school and say what is happening. You can talk to:

- A teacher you trust
- A school counselor or psychologist
- A headteacher or principal

Many schools also have:

- Peer mentors (older students trained to support others)
- Anti-bullying clubs — ask if your school has one

Friends or classmates:

Choose a friend who is kind and mature. Tell them what's happening. Ask if they can:

- Stay with you during breaks or lunch

- Go with you to talk to a teacher

- Help you avoid the bully

Parents or family:

You can tell:

- A parent or caregiver

- An older brother or sister

- An aunt, uncle, or another trusted adult

Ask them to:

- Help you talk to the school

- Make a plan to stay safe

- Support you if the bullying happens online or outside school

Community or youth groups:

In many places, you can find:

- Youth centers

- Sports clubs

- Faith groups

- LGBTQ+ safe spaces

These places often have adults or older teens who can give advice or help you feel included.

Online help:

There are websites and apps where you can talk to someone safely:

- **UNICEF Türkiye**: Provides information on cyberbullying and strategies to stop it - unicef.org/turkiye

- **Neklusē (Latvia):** Developed a mobile app for reporting bullying and educates teachers, parents, and children - **nekluse.lv**

- **Telefonul Copilului 116111 (Moldova)**: Free hotline offering psychological counseling and information on children's rights - telefonulcopilului.md

- **BRIS (Sweden)**: Offers free, anonymous support for children and young adults up to 18 years old - bris.se

International resources:

- **StopBullying.gov**: Provides information on bullying prevention and response - stopbullying.gov

- **Crisis Text Line**: Offers free, 24/7 support via text. Text CONNECT to 741741 - crisistextline.org

If you're looking for support in your country, try searching online: **"Help for bullied in [your country]"**

What you can say when asking for help:

Sometimes it's hard to start talking. Here are simple ways to begin:

1. "I need to talk to you about something serious."

2. "I think I'm being bullied. I don't know what to do."

3. "Can you help me feel safe at school?"

Bystander:

A **Bystander** is someone who sees or knows that bullying is happening — but isn't directly involved.

There are two types of bystanders:

1. *Passive bystander*

– Watches the bullying but does nothing.

– Might feel scared or unsure what to do.

2. *Active bystander (upstander)*

– Stands up against bullying in a safe way.

– Might speak out, ask an adult for help, or support the person being bullied.

Why it matters:

Bystanders have the power to stop bullying. When just one person speaks up, it can make a huge difference.

Example:

Jamal sees someone being teased during break. He walks over and says, "Hey, that's not cool. Let's play something else." That's being an active bystander.

How you can help the bullied person and not to be a bystander

- You can help someone who is being bullied by standing up for them in a kind and safe way.

- Don't just watch—say something if you feel safe, or tell a teacher or adult.

- Support the bullied person by being their friend, listening to them, and spending time with them so they don't feel alone.

▼ Conflict resolution tools for young people

Conflict is normal — but how we deal with it makes the difference. These tools help young people face conflicts in a respectful, fair and non-violent way.

1. Peer mediation

Young people are trained to help other students solve disputes. They don't take sides — they guide the conversation so both people can be heard.

Used in: Schools across the UK, France, Germany, and Nordic countries.

Why it works: It empowers youth to take responsibility and builds trust within the community.

2. Restorative circles / restorative justice

Everyone involved (including those harmed and those who caused harm) sits in a circle and talks. The goal is to understand the impact, take responsibility, and agree on how to repair the situation.

Used in: Netherlands, Finland, UK, and increasingly in Southern Europe.

Why it works: Focuses on healing, not punishment. It builds empathy and a sense of community.

3. Nonviolent communication (NVC)

A method of speaking and listening that helps people express their feelings and needs without blame or judgment.

Steps:

- Say what happened (without blaming)
- Express how it made you feel
- Share what you need
- Make a request

Used in: Workshops in Austria, Germany, Spain, and Erasmus+ training sessions.

Why it works: It teaches emotional intelligence and helps avoid misunderstandings.

4. Conflict mapping (visual tool)

A simple drawing where you list the people, the issues, and the emotions involved in a conflict. Helps see the whole picture.

Used in: Youth dialogues, intercultural programs, and group work.

Why it works: Makes complex conflicts easier to understand and solve.

5. Feelings & needs cards

Cards with common emotions and needs (like "respect", "safety", "belonging") that young people can use when they don't know how to express what they feel.

Used in: Youth camps, inclusive classrooms, Erasmus+ projects.

Why it works: Builds emotional vocabulary, especially helpful for younger teens or people from different languages/cultures.

6. "I" statements

Instead of blaming ("You always ignore me!"), you say: *"I feel ___ when ___ because ___. I would like ___."*

Used in: Anti-bullying programs, group contracts, leadership training.

Why it works: Encourages honesty and reduces defensiveness.

7. Time-out / cool-down zones

A calm space where a young person can take a break when emotions are too strong.

Used in: Conflict-sensitive schools and trauma-informed youth centers across Europe.

Why it works: Helps avoid saying or doing something hurtful in the heat of the moment.

Erasmus+ approach

Many Erasmus+ youth exchanges and training course programs use:

- Intercultural dialogue games

- Role-plays

- Simulations (like "world cafés" or "forum theatre") to explore conflict and practice resolution tools in real-life settings.

Conflict doesn't mean someone is bad — it means there's something to understand.

The goal is not to win, but to connect.

▼ Responding to cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying someone online. The contact between them is through a screen. It usually takes place in social media like Instagram, X, TikTok, Facebook etc.

Cyberbullying is posting or commenting lies about a person or harassing them by sending hurtful messages. Impersonating you or someone else to make fake accounts to send hurtful stuff to other people or even you.

Signs you are being cyberbullied:

- When you feel deeply offended by the other person's words.

- They are laughing at you and not with you.

- When they continue to say mean things after you asked to stop.

- You don't feel good about yourself after some comments someone made.

What to not do:

- Interact with the bully.

- Try to defend yourself. It will just make it worse because they are getting a reaction out of you and that's all they want.

- Delete the conversation.

- Insult them back. It could result in even bigger arguments.

What to do:

- Stay calm and don't take it to heart.

- Take screenshots of the conversations and report them to media services.

- Ignore the messages and ask for help from others.

Effects of cyberbullying:

Mentally – Weakens your self esteem and image about yourself.

Physically – Insomnia (loss of sleep), stomach and headaches.

Emotionally – Becomes shy and distant with others. Becomes harder to ask for help.

Where to turn to for help:

Turn to adults like parents, teachers or any other grown adult that can help you. In worse case scenarios turn to police or emergency services in your country.

▼ What you can do – as a friend, ally, or youth worker

Here are ways to support someone being bullied:

If you're a friend:

- **Stay close**

  Sit with them. Walk with them. Be around. It helps them feel safe.

- **Say something kind**

  A simple "Are you okay?" or "I've got your back" means a lot.

- **Don't laugh or join in**

  Even if others think it's a joke — if it hurts someone, it's not funny.

- **Go with them to ask for help**

  Offer to go with them to talk to a teacher or counselor. Say: *"You don't have to do it alone. I'll come with you."*

- **Keep checking in**

  Even after the bullying stops, ask how they're doing. Your friendship helps them heal.

If you're an ally:

- **Don't stay silent**

  If it's safe, say: *"That's not okay."* or *"Leave them alone."*

  Even just walking over and standing by the person can stop the bullying.

- **Show support**

  Sit with them at lunch. Invite them to a group. A small act of kindness can change their whole day.

- **Report it**

  If you see bullying, tell a trusted adult. Even if you don't know the person being bullied, they need your voice.

- **Be a positive example**

  Show others that kindness matters. Speak up. Include people. Be someone others look up to.

If you're a youth worker:

- **Create safe spaces**

  Make it clear: bullying is never okay in your group, team, or program. Set the tone early.

- **Listen without judgment**

  If someone comes to you, take it seriously. Say: *"Thank you for telling me. I'm here for you."*

- **Check in privately**

  If you notice someone being left out or picked on, ask how they're doing. Trust builds in quiet moments.

- **Know what to do**

  Be ready to report bullying if needed. Know your school or organization's rules and steps.

- **Teach empathy**

Talk with your group about kindness, respect, and how to stand up for others.

- **Model respect**

  How you talk, joke, and respond teaches others what's okay. Be the example.

▼ Building a culture of respect and accountability

A healthy group — whether it's a class, team, or workplace — needs two big things: respect and accountability.

Respect means treating people kindly, listening to them, and not judging them unfairly.

Accountability means taking responsibility for what you do and being honest if you make a mistake.

Why it matters

When people feel respected and know others are responsible, everyone feels safer, more motivated, and more connected.

How to build it

- *Be kind and listen*

Example: Maria always lets others talk during group discussions. She makes sure even the quiet students are heard. This makes everyone feel included.

- *Admit mistakes*

Example: Liam accidentally deleted a shared file. Instead of blaming others, he told the truth and fixed the problem. His group appreciated his honesty.

- *Help each other grow*

Example: Zoe noticed her friend Anna was late often. Instead of judging her, she asked if everything was okay and helped her organize a schedule. Anna started improving.

- *Stand up for others*

Example: When Jason saw his classmate being laughed at, he said, "That's not cool." His support helped stop the teasing.

- *Be fair and supportive*

Example: Ms. Kim, a teacher, treats every student with the same respect, no matter their grades. Her students feel safe to ask questions and share ideas.

Respect and accountability don't come from rules alone — they come from how we treat each other, every day.

▼ Chapter 4: Creative expression and healing

▼ Why creativity helps us heal

Creativity allows us to express what words often cannot—especially emotional pain. When we create, we begin to face and process difficult experiences in a new way. The act of creation changes how we relate to our inner world. Psychologically, it helps reframe trauma; neurologically, it forms new neural pathways that support resilience and emotional growth.
Turning pain into a poem, a painting, or a performance transforms that pain into something tangible and meaningful. This is the essence of healing through creativity—it gives our suffering a purpose and helps us make sense of our experiences. In approaches like narrative therapy, reshaping one's story through art is a powerful therapeutic tool.

In summary: Creativity helps us heal on biological, psychological, and even spiritual levels. It empowers us to transform our pain into something beautiful or meaningful, lightening the emotional load and fostering a sense of inner strength.

▼ Drawing, poetry, and symbols of strength

Art forms like drawing and poetry give shape to inner experiences. A single symbol, line, or verse can represent something deeply personal—strength, hope, survival. These creative acts are not just artistic; they are acts of reclaiming power over our stories. Through visual and written expressions, we create symbols that help us feel seen, safe, and strong.

▼ Storytelling as a way to be heard
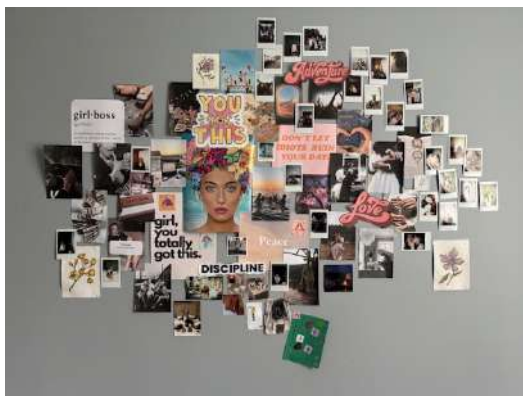
Everyone has a story worth telling. When we share our stories—whether through spoken word, journaling, or narrative writing—we affirm our experiences and invite others to witness them. Storytelling becomes a form of validation and connection. It breaks silence, builds understanding, and helps us process what we've lived through.

▼ Theatre, role play, and empathy-building

Theatre and role play allow us to step into someone else's shoes—or revisit our own experiences from a safe distance. This practice can reveal emotional truths and foster empathy, both for ourselves and others. Acting out scenarios or roles helps us explore feelings, communicate openly, and build mutual understanding in a group setting.

▼ Sharing our work: art from this project

Creative expression helps people connect and understand each other. Art, poems, music, and performances all show different ways of seeing the world. When we share creative work, we can inspire others, start conversations, and build stronger communities. Every piece of art has meaning, and every idea is important.

▼ Creating emotional safety in groups

For creativity to flourish, emotional safety is essential. This means creating spaces where everyone feels respected, heard, and free to express without judgment. Setting clear boundaries, listening actively, and encouraging openness all contribute to a safe environment. In such spaces, healing can truly begin—through connection, empathy, and the courage to create.

▼ Chapter 5: Take action! Spreading awareness in your community

▼ Planning an anti-bullying campaign or event

You've come a long way, you now understand what bullying looks like, how it affects people, and how to support both yourself and others. But awareness is only the first step. The next step is action. Real, lasting change happens when people like you choose to stand up, speak out, and become leaders for kindness, safety, and inclusion.

This chapter is all about turning your knowledge into impact. Whether you're planning a school-wide event, creating art that speaks out against bullying, starting a club, or simply having important conversations with your peers, you have the power to make a difference. You don't need to wait for someone else to fix things, you can be the spark that inspires others and helps shift your school culture toward empathy and respect.

Here, you'll learn how to raise awareness in creative and meaningful ways, how to organize powerful activities that get others involved, and how to build partnerships with friends, teachers, and community leaders.

You'll also find ideas, tools, and real-life examples that will help you make your message louder and stronger.

Because when students lead with heart, courage, and purpose, the results can be transformational. You are not just part of the solution. You are the movement. Let's get started.

,,Kindness starts here"

Campaign duration: 1 week (can be repeated each semester)

Campaign goals:

1. Raise awareness about bullying and its impact

2. Empower students to stand up against bullying

3. Create a culture of kindness and inclusion

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH – AWARENESS & VISIBILITY

Activities:

1. Morning assembly launch:

- Speech from a student leader, teacher, or counselor

- Short video: "What is bullying?" + real student testimonials

- Present the slogan and goal of the campaign: "Kindness starts here"

- Everyone receives a blue ribbon to wear all week

- Every student writes a kind message or a pledge on a sticky note

2. Posters around school:

- Designs include facts about bullying, hotline numbers, and slogans

- Examples:

  - "Silence supports the bully. Speak up!"

3. Teacher involvement:

- 15-minute class discussions on bullying

- Teachers play a video and lead a talk using provided question sheets

Campaign evaluation:

At the end, ask:

- Did bullying incidents decrease?

- Did students feel more confident to speak up?

- What should be improved next time?

▼ Organizing school workshops or youth talks

Workshop title: "Walk in my shoes"

Duration: 1 hour

Target group: Students aged 10–18 (can be adapted by age)

Goal: Build empathy, teach how to stand up to bullying, and encourage kindness.

Workshop outline

1. Welcome & warm-up (10 minutes)

Activity: "Stand up if..."

- Students sit in a circle or rows.

- The facilitator says statements and students stand if it applies to them:

  - "Stand up if you've ever felt left out."

  - "Stand up if you've helped someone who was upset."

  - "Stand up if you've seen bullying at school."

  - "Stand up if you want to be part of a kind community."

- Quick debrief: "We all have shared feelings. Let's talk about how we treat each other."

2. The shoes of others (20 minutes)

Activity: "Walk in my shoes" skit game

- Students form small groups (4–5 people). Each group gets a scenario card:

  Example cards:

  - "You're a new student who doesn't speak the local language well."

  - "You were laughed at for your clothes."

  - "You're the only one not picked for a team."

- Each group prepares a 1-minute skit to act out the situation.
- After each skit, classmates guess how the person felt and what they would do as an upstander.

▼ **Creating impactful messages: posters, reels, and zines**

Poster idea:
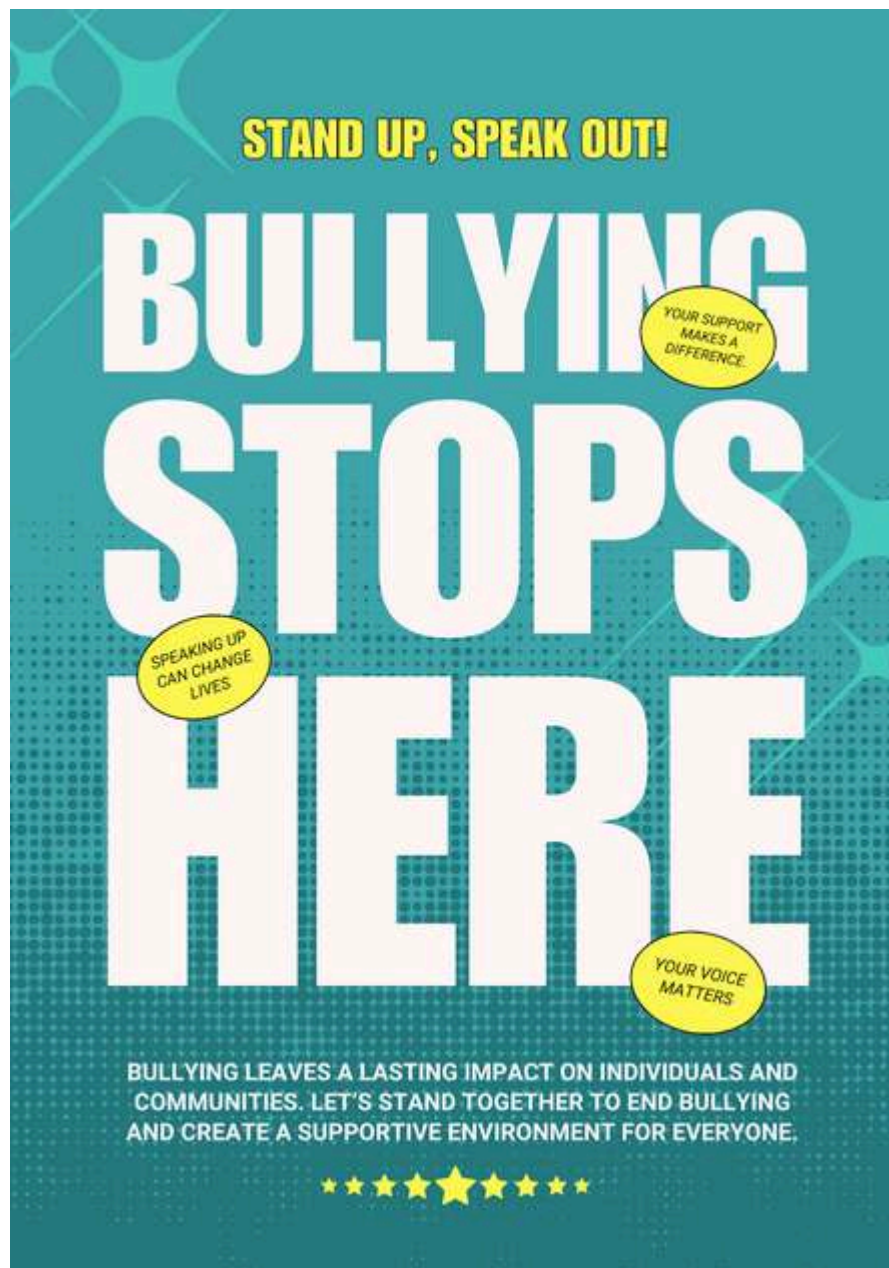
Reel idea – "Switch the perspective"

Format: 15-sec Instagram/TikTok reel

Scene 1: A student is laughed at for wearing old shoes.

Scene 2: Text overlay – "You don't know their story."

Scene 3: Cut to the student working after school to help their family.

End text:

"Choose empathy over judgment."

Zine idea – "Voices you don't hear"

Format: 6 short pages

Page 1: What is bullying today (verbal, online, exclusion)?

Page 2–5: Real student quotes/stories (anonymous)

Page 6: "How you can help" – support, speak up, don't laugh along.

▼ Working with peers, teachers, and local organizations

You're not alone in this fight. Tackling bullying is a big challenge, but it's one you don't have to take on by yourself. Collaboration is key. When you work together with classmates, school staff, and community groups, your efforts become stronger, more organized, and more impactful.

Start by connecting with your peers. Look around your school or neighborhood for students who care about making a difference. These might be friends, classmates, members of clubs, or even students you haven't spoken to much before. Forming an anti-bullying committee, student task force, or social justice club can give your movement structure and visibility. Working as a team allows you to share ideas, divide responsibilities, and keep each other motivated.

Your group could meet weekly or monthly to plan events, create awareness materials, and check in on goals. You might take on different roles, like communications, design, event coordination, or outreach, so that everyone can use their strengths. Most importantly, your team should be a safe, supportive space where members listen to and uplift one another.

Bring teachers and school staff into the conversation. Adults in your school can be powerful allies. Approach a teacher, guidance counselor, or school social worker whom you trust and explain your goals. They can offer advice, help navigate school policies, and advocate for your group with administration. Some might even sponsor your club, help you apply

for funding, or give you access to resources like poster paper, a classroom projector, or a space to hold events.

Teachers can also help integrate anti-bullying discussions into their lessons. For example, English teachers might assign books that explore bullying or empathy, while health or social studies classes could dedicate a unit to emotional safety or digital citizenship. Working with educators gives your message a place in the broader school culture.

Reach out to local organizations and leaders. Many community groups already work on issues like bullying prevention, mental health, inclusion, or youth empowerment. Nonprofits, youth centers, local libraries, religious groups, and municipal youth services may be able to support your campaign with guest speakers, workshop facilitators, free materials, or even small grants.

You can start by researching organizations in your area or asking a teacher or counselor if they know of any partnerships the school already has. Write a clear message explaining what your project is about and how they might be able to help. Even small contributions, like printing flyers or sharing your campaign on their social media, can go a long way.

Include parents and families. Parents, guardians, and caregivers play a vital role in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. Make sure your campaign reaches them too. You could create a flyer to send home, ask to speak briefly at a PTA meeting, or write a short article for the school newsletter. Families who understand what bullying looks like and how it can be prevented are more likely to talk about it at home and support positive behaviors.

Create a web of support. Think of your anti-bullying movement like a web, with each person or group you involve adding another thread of strength. When peers feel supported by each other, when teachers back student-led change, and when community organizations offer resources and encouragement, you build a network that's hard to break. And that's exactly what it takes to create a lasting culture of kindness, inclusion, and respect.

Remember, change doesn't happen overnight. But by working together, you're laying the foundation for a better, safer, and more connected community, one step, one voice, and one collaboration at a time.

▼ Spreading the word – sharing this guide

Raising awareness about bullying starts with sharing knowledge and empowering others to take action. By sharing this guide with friends, classmates, teachers, and community members, you help create a ripple effect of understanding and support. Whether through social media, school newsletters, or conversations, spreading the message encourages more people to recognize the signs of bullying, stand up for those affected, and foster safer, more inclusive environments for everyone.

▼ Conclusion: You are part of the solution

In this guide, we've explored the many faces of bullying and the power of inclusion, empathy, and solidarity. We've shared facts, personal stories, practical tools, and inspiring examples—all rooted in the real experiences and ideas of young people who came together during the **Harmony Hub** youth exchange.

One of the most important lessons we've learned is that **change doesn't always come from big, dramatic actions**. Sometimes it starts with listening. With standing up for a friend. With asking someone how they're feeling. With refusing to laugh at a cruel joke. With daring to be kind.

You don't need to have all the answers to make a difference. You already have the power to help others feel safe, seen, and supported. Whether through your words, your art, your activism, or your daily choices—you can be a force for inclusion.

This guide is just the beginning. We invite you to keep learning, sharing, and growing. Talk about bullying in your school or community. Start a support group. Create a project that makes people feel welcome. Use your creativity to stand up for what's right.

And remember this: **you are not alone**. There are many others who care as you do, who are also working to build better, kinder, and braver spaces. And when we come together, our voices are stronger.

Together, we are the solution.

☮☮☮

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