

Name: _____

FACT SHEET 5

IF YOU ARE A BULLY

Have you ever hurt or humiliated someone on purpose? Have you ever used your superior strength or social position to make someone else feel bad? If so, you have acted like a bully.

There are many reasons why young people bully others. Some people don't know a healthier way to deal with strong emotions, like anger and sadness. Others feel the need to dominate their peers. Some people have been bullied by family or peers themselves. And sometimes, people bully because their friends pressure them to join in.

No matter what the reason is, it's very important to recognize that what you're doing is bullying and it needs to stop. Not only are you hurting others with your behavior, but you're setting yourself on a dangerous path. Bullies often have trouble with friendships and relationships later in life. Plus, studies show that young people who act like bullies have a much greater chance of getting into serious trouble down the road—including substance abuse, stealing, vandalism and other crimes.

If you are a bully, the first thing to know is that it's never too late to change your behavior. Follow these tips to stop bullying other students and get yourself back on track:

- Think about how your behavior affects others. How would you feel if you changed places with the person you're bullying?
- Think about why you're bullying others. What are you trying to accomplish? What are some healthy ways to do this without hurting someone else? For example, if you think you're bullying because you need to express your anger, you could work out, take a walk or talk to a friend instead. These are all healthy ways of releasing your tension and anger.
- Talk to a trusted adult right away. Often, bullies need professional guidance to change their behaviors. An adult can help you understand why you feel the need to bully others and help you learn better social skills. A counselor can help you develop healthy responses to strong emotions.
- Improve your self-esteem by getting involved in activities that interest you. Developing a new talent or hobby, like sports or art, can make you feel better about yourself and less likely to want to bring others down.