



## **At Home Discussion Guide**

**A Documentary about Resilience and the  
Power of Connection to End Bullying.**

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## The Film & Movement

The Upstanders explores all sides of cyber-bullying, from bully to victim, bystanders and family members. The rise in social media means that bullying is now a 24/7 phenomenon, where even changing schools and phone numbers, or deleting accounts cannot stop the cycle of negative, critical messages. Covid has exacerbated the problem, increasing the incidence of cyber-bullying by 70%. Changing human behavior and culture is the key, and this is what the film addresses.

Weaving together personal stories of teenagers and their families, as well as teachers and brain-scientists, The Upstanders shows the importance of empathy and resilience to shifting behavior, and highlights new laws and established programs that are already reducing bullying in schools and communities. Critically, it shows that everyone is needed to eradicate cyber-bullying, and gives bystanders the confidence to become 'Upstanders'.

The Upstanders screens in schools, communities and corporations around the world. We strongly believe in the power of post-screening conversations to create real change, and encourage a panel discussion and / or Q&A at your screening event. The Upstanders is suitable for ages 10 and up.

*"This movie helped show me that I'm not alone. It made me feel more comfortable to speak up."*

*Bobbie W., aged 13*

## What is an ‘Upstander’?

An Upstander is someone who takes action when they witness bullying. Even one person’s support can make a big difference for someone who is being bullied. When young people who are bullied are defended and supported by their peers, they are less anxious and depressed than those who are not.

### Here are some tips on how to be an Upstander:

- Question the bullying behavior. Simple things like changing the subject or questioning the behavior can shift the focus. Humor is a great tool to redirect or surprise the bully, as well as rallying others to your side
- It can be very intimidating to be an Upstander - think about who else you can call upon to back you up. There is always strength in numbers, and it’s helpful to plan ahead and agree on what you will do and say so you are collectively ready to act.
- Walk with the person who is the target of bullying to help diffuse potential bullying interactions. This is less intimidating than confronting a bully, but it lets them know that this person isn’t alone, and is therefore less of a target.
- Reach out privately to check in with the person who was bullied to let them know you do not agree with it and that you care. It makes a difference. ([stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov))

# After the Movie: Kicking Off The Conversation

## Questions To Explore At Home

What was your main takeaway from the film?

Was there anyone in the film that you particularly identified with? Why do you think that was?

How did it increase your understanding of bullies / victims / bystanders? Why do you think bullies do what they do? Do they understand the impact of their actions? How might this film help? If you have ever been a bully, can you remember what made you act the way you did? How would you like to go back and do things differently?

Have you ever been a bystander? What do you think stopped you from acting? How did you feel about it during and afterwards?

If you've ever been a victim of bullying, do you feel comfortable sharing anything about the experience? How do you feel about it now?

How do you think bullying has changed over the past few years? Is there anything to stop it? There's a statistic that cyber-bullying has gone up by 70% since the Covid pandemic started. Why do you think that is? What's driving it?

What helped the victims of bullying in the film? Get everyone to discuss, then prompt:

- anti-bullying school clubs? - actual laws to prevent it? - social-media controls?

What could you personally do to make things better? What might stop you? What would help you to become an upstander?

The filmmakers wanted the audience to be able to take away some tips or ideas on how to help. Did any tips in the film stand out to you?

## Broader Questions for parents - how can you help?

For the first time in history, 25 year-olds and under are the loneliest group of people. How is this possible when we are more connected than ever?

How do we help our kids make more meaningful connections at school?

- Our ability to connect with other people is based on our ability to connect with ourselves.
- Starts with connection with parents then teachers/coaches/ neighbors/friends
- Model feeling good - what does that look like for you?

What are some building blocks for social emotional wellbeing?

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Offline socialization
- Gratitude list (3 things you're grateful for each am/pm)
- Random Acts of Kindness (positive energy toward others) 1x per day
- Mindfulness

Model and talk about safe, respectful online behavior

Enforce strict guidelines around usage

- no screens at mealtimes, when in face-to-face conversation
- no screens in bedrooms at night
- total screen breaks to do other things (read, walk, play sport / instrument)

## Helping your kids with Cyber-bullying

A child may be involved in [cyberbullying](#) in several ways. A child can be [bullied, bully others, or witness bullying](#).

Parents, teachers, and other adults may not be aware of all the digital media and apps that a child is using. The more digital platforms that a child uses, the more opportunities there are for being exposed to potential cyberbullying.

The digital world is constantly evolving with new social media platforms, apps, and devices, and children and teens are often the first to use them. Some negative things that may occur include cyberbullying, sexting, posting hateful messages or content, and participating in negative group conversations. If your child posts harmful or negative content online, it may not only harm other children; it can affect their online reputation, which can have negative implications for their employment or college admission.

While you may not be able to monitor all of your child's activities, there are things you can do to prevent cyberbullying and protect your child from harmful digital behavior:

Monitor a teen's social media sites, apps, and browsing history, if you have concerns that cyberbullying may be occurring.

Review or re-set your child's phone location and privacy settings.

Follow or friend your teen on social media sites or have another trusted adult do so.

Stay up-to-date on the latest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang used by children and teens.

Know your child's user names and passwords for email and social media.

Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior, content, and apps.

### **Warning Signs a Child is Being Cyberbullied or is Cyberbullying Others**

Many of the warning signs that cyberbullying is occurring happen around a child's use of their device. Some of the warning signs that a child may be involved in cyberbullying are:

- Noticeable increases or decreases in device use, including texting.
- A child exhibits emotional responses (laughter, anger, upset) to what is happening on their device.
- A child hides their screen or device when others are near, and avoids discussion about what they are doing on their device.
- Social media accounts are shut down or new ones appear.
- A child starts to avoid social situations, even those that were enjoyed in the past.
- A child becomes withdrawn or depressed, or loses interest in people and activities.

### **What to Do When Cyberbullying Happens**

If you notice warning signs that a child may be involved in [cyberbullying](#), take steps to investigate that child's digital

behavior. Cyberbullying is a [form of bullying](#), and adults should take the same approach to address it: support the child being bullied, address the bullying behavior of a participant, and show children that cyberbullying is taken seriously. Because cyberbullying happens online, responding to it requires different approaches. If you think that a child is involved in cyberbullying, there are several things you can do:

- **Notice** – Recognize if there has been a change in mood or behavior and explore what the cause might be. Try to determine if these changes happen around a child’s use of their digital devices.
- **Talk** – Ask questions to learn what is happening, how it started, and who is involved.
- **Document** – Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.
- **Report** – Most social media platforms and schools have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact app or social media platforms to report offensive content and have it removed. If a child has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police.
- **Support** – Peers, mentors, and trusted adults can sometimes intervene publicly to positively influence a situation where negative or hurtful content posts about a child. Public Intervention can include posting positive comments about the person targeted with bullying to try to shift the conversation in a positive direction. It can also help to reach out to the child who is bullying and the target of the bullying to express your concern. If possible, try to determine if more professional support is needed for those involved, such as speaking with a guidance counselor or mental health professional.

Finding out that your kid has been cyberbullied is emotional for parents. You or your kid might want to retaliate, but it's best to help your kid defuse the situation, protect himself or herself, and make rational efforts to put a stop to the bullying. Here are the immediate steps we recommend for parents:

- Reassure your child that you love and support them
- Encourage them to take a total break from their device
- If you can identify the bully, consider talking with the parents
- Consider contacting your child’s school. If bullying is happening online, it might be happening offline also
- Talk to your child and empower them with specific steps he or she can take

Having conversations with children about cyberbullying and digital behavior is not a one-time event – it is an ongoing dialogue. Begin talking about these issues before children delve into the world of texting, [social media](#), [online gaming](#), and chat rooms. Help them reflect on real and potential cyberbullying situations, and provide ongoing opportunities to practice ways to respond. Doing so can support the transition from being passive bystanders to being allies who serve as powerful role models for others. SAMHSA’s free [Knowbullying app](#) for parents, teachers, and educators provides conversation starters, tips and other tools you can use to help prevent bullying.

If you think your child is witnessing cyberbullying, there are things that you can encourage them to do - and not do. Such as:

**Do not participate.** Encourage children not to “like,” share, or comment on information that has been posted about someone, and do not forward a hurtful text to others. Not participating may limit the potential damage of the messages – to others and to themselves.

**Do not retaliate or respond negatively.** If a child feels that they must respond, encourage a calm, clear, and constructive response. Angry and aggressive reactions can make a bad situation worse. Encourage children (and adults!) to step away from the device so they do not resort to blaming, shaming, or retaliation. This provides time to get calm and centered so they can create a response that makes it clear that others’ digital behaviors are hurtful and unacceptable.

**Respond privately to the person who created the hurtful message.** If they feel safe doing so, it may be helpful to follow up with the person who created or shared the hurtful message privately, either online, in a phone call, or in person. Doing so can make it clear they do not support the negative actions. It also provides an opportunity to authentically share concerns about the behavior and what might be behind it.

**Follow up with the person who was targeted.** By reaching out, a child can send a powerful message that they care about the person and they do not support the negative behaviors. If needed, this connection can also provide an opportunity to assist the person in finding help related to the cyberbullying situation.

## For Teens: Practice Good Online Behavior

- **Communicate appropriately.** Use the right language for your audience. You might write or speak to a teacher differently from a friend. And never use all caps!

**Keep private things private.** Don't share personal information, including passwords, your home address, inappropriate images, and gossip.

**Respect others.** Be courteous. Disagree politely.

**Don't lie, steal, or cheat.** Don't try to deceive others. Remember to give credit where credit is due. And, although it's easy to copy others' work, download things without permission, or use game cheat codes, don't do it.

**Be an "upstander."** If someone you know is being targeted by a bully, stand up for that person. You would want him or her to do the same for you.

**Report misbehavior.** The Internet is a giant community, and you can help it be a nice place.

**Follow your family's rules.** If your parent tells you to avoid certain websites or to stop texting after a certain time, listen. The more you act responsibly, the more privileges you'll get.

**Think before you post, text, or share.** Consider how you and others might feel after you've posted something. It's



not always easy to take back what you've said online, and your online behavior can create a lasting footprint.

### **Quick Tips for When You Encounter Online Bullying**

**Sign off of the computer.** Ignore the attacks and walk away from the cyberbully.

**Don't respond or retaliate.** If you're angry or hurt, you might say things you'll regret later. Cyberbullies often want to get a reaction out of you, so don't let them know their plans have worked.

**Block the bully.** If you get mean messages through a social networking site, take the person off your buddy or friends list. You also can delete messages from bullies without reading them.

**Save and print out bullying messages.** If the harassment continues, save the evidence. This could be important proof to show parents or teachers if the bullying doesn't stop.

**Talk to a friend.** When someone makes you feel bad, sometimes it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.

**Tell a trusted adult.** A trusted adult is someone you believe will listen and who has the skills, desire, and authority to help you. Telling an adult isn't tattling -- it's standing up for yourself. And, even if the bullying occurs online, your school probably has rules against it.

## **Resources**

Resources used in putting together this guide:

[StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov)

[Common Sense Media](http://CommonSenseMedia.org)

[BystanderRevolution.org](http://BystanderRevolution.org)

[StandForCourage.org](http://StandForCourage.org)

[ReThink](http://ReThink.org)

[The Big Quiet](http://TheBigQuiet.org)

For links to our other films, Angst (understanding and dealing with anxiety), LIKE (social media addiction) and Nevertheless (sexual harassment in the school or workplace) visit [indieflix.com/education](http://indieflix.com/education)