

THE WORD WE USE TOO EASILY

by:

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Many children play and joke together during break time. A light tease or funny nickname makes everyone laugh. But when one child feels hurt, he or she might say right away, "Stop bullying me!" This happens often in schools today. Kids, parents, and teachers sometimes call every mean word or small fight "bullying." Recent school reports and expert talks show that using the word too much can make it hard to spot and stop real bullying (EDCOM 2, 2025; Respectme, 2025). We need to learn the true meaning so we handle small hurts kindly and stop serious ones fast.

People worry that the word bullying is used too easily now. Many say any unkind joke or one-time angry word is bullying. Children quickly label friends as bullies when play goes wrong or someone feels left out. Normal teasing between close friends, like sharing a silly name both enjoy, helps build bonds. A single argument or rough play does not always mean harm. Over-using the strong word makes it lose meaning, and adults may not take real complaints seriously (Playworks, 2025; American Psychological Association, 2024).

This loose use causes problems. It hides the true pain of real bullying. Experts define bullying with three clear parts: it hurts on purpose, it happens again and again, and power is not equal, one side feels unable to stop it because the other is stronger, older, or in a group (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025; StopBullying.gov, 2025). Friendly teasing ends when someone says "stop," and both feel fine after. Real bullying keeps going, making the child feel scared, alone, or helpless. Research shows true bullying brings deep sadness, fear of school, poor sleep, headaches, and lower grades (Nemours KidsHealth, 2025; World Health Organization, 2025).

In our country, DepEd follows Republic Act 10627 to define bullying clearly. Schools teach the difference with talks, posters, and rules. In 2025, leaders call for updates to these rules so

teachers guide small conflicts with kind talks and act strong on repeat harm (EDCOM, 2025; DepEd, 2025). Online bullying grows too, mean posts or messages spread quick and last long, making power very unequal.

Think of friendly teasing as a gentle breeze that plays with leaves, both sides enjoy the fun. But bullying is a strong wind that breaks branches, one tree suffers alone. This picture helps us know when to laugh and when to help.

We can teach the right way with easy steps. Hold class meetings to show examples of play and harm. Teach children to say "I don't like that, please stop" and to listen right away. Parents can ask questions like "Did it stop when you asked?" or "Has it happened many times?" Teachers watch for patterns over days, not just one moment. Praise quick sorry, kind fixes, and fair play.

When we use the word bullying only for true cases and fix small hurts with understanding, we build schools full of trust, respect, and happy friendships for every child.

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