

Carlisle Public Schools

Similarities and Differences between Teasing, An Act of Meanness, and Bullying

The table below shows how these three behaviors differ or are similar in characteristics such as the relationship between participants, the balance of power between them, and the intent of the action.

| Characteristic | Teasing | An Act of Meanness | Bullying |
|---|--|---|--|
| Relationship between Parties | Usually friends, or not | Either friends or not friends | Usually not friends |
| Number of Participants | May be two, but often more | Usually two | May be two, but often a group of two to three against one |
| Balance of Strength or Power | Usually equal (can be deliberately adjusted) | Can vary, but often is relatively equal | Unequal |
| Expression and Atmosphere | Smiling or neutral face, laughter, friendly | Angry, staring, serious face with furrowed eyebrows, tense, hostile | <i>The inferior party:</i> often sad, depressed, crying, angry, despairing <i>The superior party:</i> may vary, but often laughter and scornful smiles; serious, not friendly |
| Underlying Intention | Friendly, positive, sarcastic, making fun of | Negative, aggressive, desire to inflict injury or discomfort; in the moment | Negative, aggressive, desire to inflict injury or discomfort, to humiliate and insult; premeditated |
| Activity Repeated with Same Partner(s) | Often yes | Usually not | Yes |
| Role Switching | Yes (who has the superior/inferior position; who “wins” and “loses”) | No | No |
| Gathering of Curious Bystanders (Spectators) | Yes | Quick action, not necessarily noticed | Yes, if the bullying is relatively open and visible |
| Relations Immediately after Episode | The participants leave each other | The participants leave each other | The participants leave each other |