

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