

# SAY “NO” TO BULLYING

on the basis of nationality



(A MEMO FOR TEACHERS ABOUT PERSECUTION ON A NATIONAL BASIS)

Bullying on the basis of nationality is not a new phenomenon. No nationality is safe from it. Bullying of children and teenagers is particularly distressing, as they are hardly able to protect themselves from it. It is important that we as adults remember that every child has a right to their identity and protection from violence.

**This memo offers simple answers to the following challenging questions:**

- What can a child say if they are being bullied on the basis of their nationality?
- How to handle a school class when a conflict arises on the basis of nationality?
- How to assess the consequences for the victim of bullying?
- What to say to the victim of bullying?
- How to express one's attitude to the crisis situation so as not to hurt anybody?
- How to support oneself and others?
- Why is getting united better than engaging in conflict?

And many others.



**PART I**  
**HOW AND WHAT TO TELL CHILDREN ABOUT NATIONALISM.**

## 1.1. What is nationalism?

There are many nationalities in the world, more than 2000. Almost every person considers themselves belonging to one of them (or even several at once, e.g. with an Italian grandmother and Spanish grandfather, and the other grandparents being Georgian and Estonian). This is called "national identity". National identity is a very important part of our Self (identity is who we think we are).

Sometimes circumstances develop in such a way, that some people of the same nationality unite in a group and begin to exalt themselves above all others. They say that only people of their nationality are "correct", intelligent, capable, worthy, while others are "lower-sort" people, to be treated with disdain, disgust and other negative feelings. This is called "nationalism", and we do not call such a phenomenon good.

## 1.2. Why is nationalism a bad thing?

### a) All people are different

We differ not only by nationality, but also by a huge number of other qualities. We have different preferences in clothes, food, music; different looks, character, abilities, hobbies; different friends, families, culture, religion, traditions. And we also demonstrate different actions, relationships, goals, desires. In each nationality, all people are different. There are brilliant scientists, talented composers, journalists, actors, successful politicians, great athletes, good doctors, teachers, coaches, etc. But also in every nationality there are scammers, bribe-takers, liars, murderers. Thus, the idea of the superiority of one nationality over another is false. But when one is "infected" with the idea of nationalism, one seems to forget about it, and is unable to think broadly and critically; one's decisions and actions can be rash and dangerous. For example, one may believe a person because he or she belongs to a "good" nationality - and the person would turn out to be a fraudster and steal one's money. Or one may humiliate a person of a "bad" nationality - and that person will turn out to be a doctor, on whose work the life and health of one's close people will depend one day.

### 6) Nationalism and human dignity are incompatible

When people accept the idea "I am better, and a person of another nationality is worse", bullying in its various forms becomes highly likely. There emerges a drive to ignore a person of another nationality, not to invite him or her to events, to humiliate and offend them, including in social media, threaten with violence or even beat them. However, that other person does not get worse because of these insults, they remain as were. But the one who causes pain definitely loses their human dignity; the modern society values soft-skills such as peaceful communication, ability to work in a team, introspection and self-reflection, ability to manage oneself, to solve problems peacefully, empathy, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking. Is bullying other people a manifestation of soft-skills? Definitely not.

### b) Nationalism is a "disease" that affects various nationalities

There have been many situations in history when people of one nationality bullied and even destroyed people of another nationality, or treated them as non-humans (for example, people of some European countries and the United States used to treat people of Africa this way). In the 17th and 19th centuries, people of African nationalities were considered underdeveloped, lazy, aggressive, and therefore had no rights and freedoms; they could be freely humiliated, insulted, beaten.

Another terrible example of nationalism is fascism of the 20th century. People who considered themselves to be the superior race of Aryans despised most other nations and ranked them as "second sort", while some nationalities (such as Jews or Gypsies) were considered not deserving to live, and were to be completely annihilated.

Nationalism is a negative phenomenon, regardless of how and where it occurs, and which nation is "designated" as bad. People are people; their nationality does not determine any of their human qualities in any way. We communicate, make friends, play, study together, and only the person in his or her entirety, with all their qualities, knowledge, emotions and skills, is valuable and important to us.

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NOTE: You can give examples that are more relevant in the country where these materials are used.

### 1.3. What is a military conflict?

Military conflicts are part of the history of the mankind. It is terrible, but unfortunately, there was no period of universal peace, without a war or armed confrontation on our planet. Over the past 100 years there have been only 26 days without wars on Earth. Through military conflicts, some states seek to resolve the contradictions that arise between them. Unfortunately, a lot of people suffer as a result. In the modern world, when people in different countries are very closely connected with each other, the consequences of a military conflict extend not only to those in the countries involved in the conflict itself (although their sufferings are especially terrible), but also to everyone around.

### 1.4. Who is responsible for the military conflict?

Responsibility for a military conflict always lies with adults who have the right to make decisions. Children and teenagers are never and will never be responsible for the decisions of adults, at least because children do not have voting rights.

### 1.5. Why are children and teenagers not responsible for this?

Each of us can and should be responsible only for OUR PERSONAL actions. A person can only be responsible for what happens to themselves. They can choose what to eat, what clothes to wear, what hairstyle to have, how to take care of themselves, what to say (or not say), how to act. They can choose with whom to spend time and communicate, what to watch on TV or online, what to do, what to spend money on. This all is their area of responsibility. But no one can control or be responsible for the weather, school timetable, or traffic jams. No one can control other people's clothes, their preferences in clothes and communication. And also no one can be held responsible for other people's words, thoughts, feelings or actions.

Our "area of responsibility" concerns only us, and never other people. It is very important to remember this in any situation.

### 1.6. How can people react to a military conflict?

A military conflict is an extremely difficult, critical life situation. The world is becoming dangerous and unstable, at any moment one can lose something or someone significant; the habitual rhythm of life is disrupted, a person loses control over their life. It is difficult for one's mind to quickly digest such a large amount of traumatic experience; it takes a lot of time to adapt to new living conditions, to regain a sense of control and stability. This adaptation usually occurs along certain patterns and is accompanied by a flurry of different emotions.

At first, a person seems to be in a daze - this is a state of shock, denial of what is happening. Therefore, we can often hear: "I can't believe it!", "I must be dreaming", "It's like I've lost all my senses" The very first days after traumatic events can be characterized by confusion and a feeling of helplessness. It is difficult for many to concentrate, thinking process slows down (while for some, on the contrary, it accelerates) and it is much more difficult to form words and phrases.

The first shock and confusion are often replaced by anxiety and fear. They can be accompanied by anger and rage. An important point: often people become more aggressive precisely because they are very scared inside. Anger is a very active

feeling. It is useful in many ways, as it helps to shake off the stupor, gives strength and makes one act. It's great if these actions are constructive (for example, collecting humanitarian aid for victims, organizing support chats). But sometimes anger makes one look for somebody to blame for what is happening, assign responsibility for these horrors (this is likely to turn into aggression towards those who seem guilty), or blame yourself (followed by a sense of shame). If anger is non-constructive, the risk of bullying in the team increases significantly. At this time it is very important to be attentive to oneself and others, analyze one's feelings and thoughts, notice the urge to attack only because one is scared inside. Please remember that instead of destructive actions, one can perform constructive ones that will bring an even greater "psychotherapeutic" effect. By the way, if you don't want to act, then just observe, and do routine things (communicate with family and friends, play sports, continue hobbies) - this is also normal.

Anger and anxiety in the future may give way to sadness, apathy, a feeling of emptiness. A person is trying to get used to a new reality, to integrate it into his or her picture of the world. After that, the traumatic situation gradually begins to take its place in a person's life.



## **PART II. IF THE SITUATION BECOMES HEATED**

### **2.1. Teacher's actions at the first signs of nationalism-based harassment in the classroom**

**2.1.1.** Immediately intervene and take responsibility for stopping the bullying.

School is a safe, maximally neutral place for every child.

**2.1.2.** Categorically suppress the slightest signs of bullying (ridicule, insults, slander) and show your unequivocal position of zero tolerance to harassment in any form (including if these signs are shown by children not from your class).

All children have equal rights, first of all - the right to safety.

Say, for example: "I see that there are difficulties in our team. Let's solve them together, and not look for whom to blame. Uniting against one is bullying. Bullying is a manifestation of violence, and it is strictly prohibited in our school".

**2.1.3.** Discuss bullying with children as a group problem. Keep a clear position that bullying is unacceptable. Say that everyone participates in bullying: not only those who act, but also those who observe.

**2.1.4.** If there are pupils in the class who are being bullied on the basis of a political conflict, talk to them one to one, support them, show that you will do everything in your power to protect them from bullying.

**2.1.5.** Teach children to express their emotions safely for others. For example, say, "I think you're feeling angry and annoyed today." If this is the case, ask a pupil in a state of aggression to tell others about his or her feelings. If not, the pupil will correct you.

**2.1.6.** Conduct regular reflection sessions with the class to discuss each pupil's feelings without evaluating them.

**2.1.7.** Children experience very similar emotions, regardless of their opinion, place of residence and position of their parents - they are all scared, hurt, many are angry and lost. Teach children to see emotions in each other first of all and react to them, support each other, calm down, empathize and be kind.

**2.1.8.** Create as many activities as possible for the physical manifestation of emotions and creativity: sports games, modeling, drawing, walking and so on.

**2.1.9.** If bullying in any form is not prohibited by the rules of the school, now is the time to initiate the adoption of the basic rules that ensure the safety of each pupil and adopt an anti-bullying charter. Formulate or revisit already existing classroom and school rules.

**2.1.10.** Keep in touch with parents, focusing their attention as much as possible on kind and supportive communication with each other and with children. Now is not the time for criticism.

## 2.2. How to talk to a victim of bullying?

The victim of bullying needs your support and protection like no one else. Talk to the child one-on-one. Say the following to him or her:

- I've noticed that there is something going on between you and other guys that can be very offensive and unpleasant for you
- What do you think is happening now?
- What did you feel then, what do you feel now?
- How long has this been happening?
- What is happening is violence. It's not your fault. This should not happen.
- I will do everything so that this does not happen to you anymore.

Teach pupils at risk defensive behavior.

Namely, to answer to the offenders as follows::

- Personally, I did not attack anyone
- I am the same kind of person as you are
- You're scared and hurt, I'm incredibly sorry, I'm also feeling bad right now
- I would really like to support you. Is there anything I can do for you right now?
- I am not responsible for other people
- I am not responsible for political decisions
- Not all people think the same way
- Not all people have the same access to information
- I am against violence, aggression and nationalism
- Don't judge me if you don't know me
- Don't touch me

If the situation does not change, we recommend the pupil to keep a bullying diary, writing down the date, time and offensive actions of others, so that the school can track all the facts of bullying and get involved.

Help must be sought from adults. Children are not responsible for decisions made by adults. They should be able to say this in a simple language. Our responsibility as adults is, first of all, to ensure the safety of children. We are all for non-violent

communication between children, constructive, reasoned dialogue, empathy, for hearing and respecting each other.

### **2.3. How to teach children and teenagers the skills of assertive behavior?**

Assertive behavior is a very important skill in any situation, and simply crucial in a bullying situation, because assertive behavior is, first of all, the ability to defend one's rights and boundaries and insist on one's own point of view.

Assertive behavior also implies:

- honest, open, direct and confident communication;
- ability to say "no" without causing aggression and not over-upsetting the interlocutor;
- expression of both positive and negative emotions (in an acceptable form);
- ability to accept criticism;
- confidence in one's actions and words;
- keeping calm in a difficult situation;
- self-respect and respect for other people;
- search for a compromise and a solution to the conflict situation.

### **How to teach children and teenagers the basics of assertive behavior?**

**2.3.1.** Explain its nonverbal signs, practice them:

- steady eye contact (not too close or unblinking, but not avoided all the time);
- optimal distance in communication, accepted in the society where a child or teenager lives (to avoid people coming up too close, invasion of the personal zone, and also- to avoid physical distancing and conversations at a longer distance);
- calm gestures in line of what is said (without agitated waving of hands, throwing of things, convulsive touching of objects, trembling, freezing);
- sufficient volume of voice, confident intonation, pauses in conversation, attention to the words of the interlocutor (without shouting, threats and insults, without interrupting, without confusion, muttered voice, incomprehensible phrases, apologies).

**2.3.2.** Teach and practice the "Me-messages" technique.

Me-messages are an expression of feelings from the first person with a reference to the external situation that caused them. For example: "It annoys me that you gossip behind my back."

**2.3.3.** Practice saying "No":

- do it directly without being rude;
- say "It's hard for me to refuse (say 'no'), but I'll do it anyway";
- speak slowly and friendly;
- don't apologize;
- to refuse something, say "I don't want to", instead of "I can't"

**2.3.4.** Remind that every person has the right to be himself (herself).

Namely:

- The right to judge one's own behavior, thoughts and emotions and be responsible for their consequences.

- The right not to apologize or explain one's behavior.
- The right to decide to what extent to be responsible for solving other people's problems, if at all
- The right to change your mind.
- The right to make mistakes and bear the responsibility for them.
- The right to be independent from bad attitude of other people (as well as from excessive and intrusive benevolence).
- The right to say "I do not know"
- The right to say "I do not want to take part in political disputes, I do not have enough experience for that."
- The right to make illogical decisions.
- The right to say "I don't understand you."
- The right to say "I'm not interested in this."

#### 2.4. How to assess how much a child or teenager has suffered from harassment on a national basis?

You can use the express test. It consists of 6 questions with multiple-choice answers. One answer is allowed for each question. At the end, the total number of points is calculated (within a range of 6 to 24 points). (Note: The number of points that the child scores for the answer option is indicated at the beginning of each answer. If the child is in doubt and cannot make a choice between two options, you can ask him leading questions; if this does not help, you can award a score in-between, for example 2.5.)

#### Evaluating the results

**6-12** points – A child or teenager copes with the situation quite well on their own; he or she probably does not attach much importance to what is happening, has stable self-esteem, has the skills of confident behavior, receives support from peers. Nevertheless, it is important to keep your eyes on them and conduct a preventive conversation.

**13-18** points – Bullying probably takes on a larger scale, or a child (or teenager) does not have enough of their own resources to resist non-regular attacks. An adult must immediately intervene and carry out serious work with the team. The victim of bullying may need the help of a psychologist.

**19-24** points – The situation is very serious! Long-term work with the whole team is necessary, and the victim of bullying needs individual work with a psychologist.

1. Have you heard offensive remarks from your peers about your nationality?

- 1 no
- 2 yes

2. How upset were you (on a scale from 1 to 5)?

- 1 not upset at all
- 2 a little upset
- 3 it upset and scared me
- 4 it really upset and scared me, and I'm afraid it may happen again
- 5 so much upset and scared that I can't think of anything else



**3. How often have you heard offensive remarks and/or insults on the ground of your nationality?**

- 1** once
- 2** several times
- 3** I hear them constantly

**4. Who of your peers has changed their attitude towards you because of your nationality?**

- 1** insignificant people with whom I usually do not communicate, whose opinion is not important
- 2** people who treated me badly before; they are not an authority in the group
- 3A** those who used to treat me well, but changed their opinion for the worse
- 3B** those who treated me badly before, and they have considerable authority and influence in the group
- 4** many close friends turned away from me

**5. Are there any peers in the environment who continue to be friends and support you?**

- 1** yes, most
- 2** yes, many
- 3** yes, several
- 4** yes, one or two people
- 5** no

**6. Have similar situations happened before?**

- 1** no, this is the first time I have encountered this
- 2** yes, but I quickly put the offender in his place
- 3** yes; if not for the help of adults, I would not have coped
- 4** yes, someone offends me all the time, I do not know what to do with it
- 5** yes, it happens all the time, I probably deserve it

**2.5. Practical advice that teachers / parents / other adults can give to children and teenagers in a conversation about discrimination on the basis of nationality, and harassment during a military conflict.****How NOT to express your attitude to the military conflict:****abandon the idea of calling people to some kind of action**

The desire to demand specific actions from others is your reaction to stress. Stop, listen to yourself, ask yourself "What do I feel now when I say these words?". Write down these feelings. Ask yourself the next question "What am I thinking about when all this is happening?" Write down these thoughts. And one more question: "What can I do?" There is a high probability that now you will not want to call people to any actions; instead, you will realize that completely different actions would be more suitable. In addition, you are not inside the situation, you do not know the circumstances of a particular person whom you are trying to make act in a certain way. You don't understand what this person is already doing or not doing. And most importantly, most likely, you do not have the necessary professional knowledge and information. That's why you can't decide on what is the right thing to do.

**DO NOT insult or speak aggressively to another person**

Insults and verbal aggression are violence. If there is a desire to speak sharply and unpleasantly to another person, try to stop and ask yourself "What is happening to me? What do I feel now?" - write down or remember these words. Ask yourself the next question: "Where did I get this anger?" (Hint: most often, a desire to say something offensive to another person

is a reaction to fatigue what is happening or a way to get rid of your strong anxiety, fear or helplessness.) Try to find another way to express your feelings, one that helps you personally:

- breathe deeply and intensely;
- shout in a place where you can't be heard;
- knock loudly on the table;
- write about your feelings in a diary or in notes on your phone;
- turn your attention to what is happening around you and try to notice all the details;
- call a person who is ready to listen to you, and tell him or her about how everything pisses you off and what feelings you have.

### **DO NOT divide into "we" and "they", "black" and "white"**

Because the responsibility for a military conflict lies with adults who make decisions. The division into friends and foes multiplies aggression and can lead to an even greater escalation of the conflict. Instead of splitting, you can try to unite: we are all together against everything bad, in favor of support and help.

## **2.6. How to express your attitude to a difficult situation safely?**

### **talk about your feelings**

For example, "It hurts me to see this", "I'm scared", "I feel helpless", "I'm confused", "I'm overwhelmed with anger and rage", "I can barely keep myself from crying / rushing into a fight", etc.

**Why is this important?** Because it helps to understand what is going on inside you. When you understand yourself, you manage your actions better and make fewer mistakes that you will regret later. And words are also a very mature, adult, truly civilized and humane way to cope with your experiences.

### **talk about your current experience, about what you see and hear yourself**

For example: "I see how humanitarian aid is being collected for the victims. I am very anxious about this, and unpleasant thoughts come into my head", or "I hear that my mother is calling my grandmother in another city and can't get through. Mom is crying, and I'm worried about her and angry at the military and what's going on."

### **if emotions overwhelm, first you need to stop, slow down, and only then speak or write**

How to do it?

- take 4 deep and smooth breaths;
- nlook around and find 5 blue / square / etc. objects;
- feel the position of your body (neck, shoulders, arms, hands, back, stomach, legs) and relieve tension from those areas where it is;
- drink some water;
- walk at a calm pace outside in nature;
- 7-10 times forcefully clench your hands into fists and then relax your fingers;
- count slowly from 1 to 10 or to 100;
- listen to soothing music.
- Perform any 3 actions of your choice from this list. Then express yourself (orally or in writing) in line with the rules listed above.

**Why is this important?** Because thanks to such a "break" you will stop transmitting your tension to other people (believe me, they have enough tension of their own), you will stop infecting them with your experiences. And other people are not psychologists; helping you cope with your emotions is their choice (and a great support for you), not their job.

## 2.7. How do I offer my support?

It is not easy to support another person in a difficult situation. It is not always possible to find the right words and actions. How can this be done?

- Let a person talk, cry (or get angry) - and just stay close.
- Express sympathy: "I am very sorry", "It hurts and makes me sad to know that this is so."
- Sit next to the person, take their hand or hug them (if it is acceptable in the respective culture).
- Gently and unobtrusively ask about the situation: "Tell me more if you want and can. I'm ready to listen."
- Tell about a similar situation in your life (if any), about your feelings then and about what helped.
- Thank the person for trusting you with their feelings.
- Offer specific everyday help. Say: "I want to help you, I can do this and this. Tell me, what else you need."
- Organize collection of money and give the collected amount to the person.

**Why is this important?** To observe violence and do nothing is to approve of it. Support helps a person to feel part of a group, gives a sense of security, gives strength and helps to survive in difficult times. Any support will be valuable and important if it comes from the heart and with a sincere desire to help!

**The main idea of our material is that it is better to unite and support than to divide and blame. We are with you in this difficult and terrible time! Please accept our support in the form of this memo.**

### **THE MEMO HAS BEEN PREPARED BY NOBULLYING PROJECT TEAM OF ZHURAVLOK NGO.**

- For four years we have been studying school bullying and steps to overcome it.
- We have developed guides on how to prevent and deal with bullying.
- We know that anything can become a ground for bullying, including nationality.
- We have been dealing with bullying around nationality throughout the four years of this program.

This memo has been translated in four languages (English, Spanish, German, French). We are going to have it translated

## USEFUL CONTACTS:

**8 800 500 44 14** – a hotline for psychological assistance to adolescents on issues of bullying in Russia (Mon-Fri 10:00-20:00 Moscow time) - free of charge, anonymously.

Note



If our position is close to you and you are ready to support our Bullying NET program,  
you can do this by clicking on the QR code.

THANKS!



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