

Bullying Hurts Everyone

Bullying hurts everyone involved. It hurts the kids who are teased. It hurts the bystanders who feel guilty if they don't do anything to help. And it even hurts the bullies.

Bullying has been around forever. Do adults bully? You bet they do. A lot of people, adults or children, don't think about the other person when they are being mean to someone. For the moment, they feel more important.

Most of us have been a bully, and most of us have been the victim of bullying. Someone is always smarter, faster, or cuter. If people want to use their status to get be more popular, get what they want, or just to feel more important, bullying others becomes a temptation.

Unless you are a saint, you have probably used some bullying tactics at one time or another. Maybe it was towards a little brother, the dog, or the old man on your street. Maybe you really have a problem with bullying. You may *act* like a clear cut jerk, but often you may just want to feel better in a competitive world.

Why Do Bullies Act the Way They Do?

Sometimes it's hard to believe, but most bullies actually don't feel very good about

themselves inside. Some are growing up in homes where someone is yelling at them, putting them down, hitting them, or ignoring them—exactly the things the bullies themselves are doing! When they're away from home, they can take it out on others and not feel so vulnerable.

Other reasons why people bully include that they want:

- popularity and to hang with the cool group.
- attention and to feel stronger, smarter or better than others.
- money, homework, and/or control.

Sometimes there's no reason at all—maybe it gives them a rush or it's just habit. It makes them feel on top for the moment.

Bullies have often been bullied themselves. They have a strong sense of who is powerful and important, and they know being on

the bottom isn't fun. Bullying might even keep them from being bullied themselves.

Who are the kids who are bullied?

Bullies often picks on kids they think are vulnerable in some way, which includes kids who:

- may be smaller, weaker, or not have abilities that the bully does.
- might be different. Sometimes bullies disrespect people they don't understand.



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- may be alone and become easier targets.
- may be smarter, taller, shorter, and for a million other reasons.

What Are the Effects of Bullying?

Kids who are bullied often avoid eye contact, may not speak up and might not ask for help or raise their hands in school. They're sometimes absent from school, because they get so scared that they skip school or get sick.

As most of us have experienced, being bullied makes for miserable days laced with fear, feeling of inferiority, and anger.

What Can You Do if You're Bullied?

If you feel you can be safe physically, **stand up to the bully**. It doesn't work to bully back—maybe in the movies, but not in real life. Tell him or her to cut it out. Keep it simple. Use a calm voice if you feel that you can talk it out. Prepare for this moment by thinking it out. But if you don't feel safe, don't stick around.

Tell an adult who you trust. If that person does not help or know what to do, go to another adult who could help you.

Stay in a group. That is not always easy. But walk with a neighbor or sibling. If you are in a new school or foster home, try to find other kids so that you are not an easy target. Join clubs or sports or volunteer for situations where you will meet others and find buddies who you like.

If you are bullied online, don't reply. Tell an adult and print out the nasty e-mail right

Speaking Up!

One of the keys to not being bullied is to speak up. But in order to be effective, you need to learn how to tell the facts.

- When did it happen? Write down the dates and times.
- How often? Specific times mean more than saying, "a lot."
- What happened? Think about the actions of the bully and your reactions and practice describing it and putting the facts into words.
- Where did it happen?
- Practice. It takes practice to tell factual stories well.

away. Don't give even your best friend your password, since friends sometimes have a way of turning against you when you least expect it. Don't accept messages from people you don't know.

Other important "Do"s and "Don't"s include:

- Don't keep it to yourself. It takes a lot of guts to tell the right person and ask for the respect you deserve.
- Don't fight back or bully others to get even.
- Don't hurt yourself because it has made you so sad and helpless that you feel like there's no hope. This bullying may seem to go on forever, but it will pass.

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- If the bullying occurs in your foster home, do tell your foster parents as well as your social workers and/or therapist.

What If You See Someone Else Getting Bullied?

Report the bullying to an adult. Ask a friend to go along with you if you are scared to report it alone.

If you see someone being bullied, try to choose to support them. It can make a huge difference.

Stand up to the bully if you feel safe doing so. Tell him or her that it's not funny.

Are YOU a Bully?

If you know you bully others and you are strong enough to admit it to yourself, you have come a big part of the way. Think about why you bully. It's pretty hard to take a good look at yourself, but knowing yourself is a big

step toward being happy with who you are.

If you really have a problem with it, talk to your school social worker or counselor or your therapist, if you have one. Sometimes the reason people bully is complicated and you may need some help figuring out why you bully.

You probably know the golden rule, "Treat others how you want to be treated." Sounds simple enough, but we all know how hard that can be sometimes. Unfortunately, there's a lot of cruelty in the world.

But if you look around, it's mostly people doing positive stuff. Most of the good stuff in your life and anyone's life comes from people who have learned how to treat others with respect. After all, a little respect goes a long way. How about letting it begin with you?



Resources

Got a Bully? McGruff Can Help

<http://www.mcgruff.org/ProblemSolver/bullies.php>

Shrink the cyber bully (game)

<http://www.mcgruff.org/Games/cyberbully.php>

Teen Tools Help for Teenage Victims of Crimes

http://www.ncvc.org/tvp/AGP.Net/Components/DocumentViewer/Download.aspxnz?DocumentID=45311&gclid=CIbC_c-Xp58CFQMNDQoduH_Rzw

What Is Bullying by Mike Hardcastle

<http://teenadvice.about.com/od/schoolviolence/a/cyberbullying1.htm>

Dealing with Female Bullies By Robin Clure

<http://childcare.about.com/cs/behaviors/a/meanness.htm>

Dealing with Bullies

http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/school_stuff/bullies.html

Stop Bullying Now Government Campaign with many resources such as books, interactive online webisodes for young people and a comprehensive resource page for parents and professionals

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/default.aspx>

Beating the Bullies by Miguel A.

<http://fosterclub.com/article/beating-bullies>

The Walking Flame: I'm Still Recovering From Being Bullied. March/April 2009

<http://www.youthcomm.org/FCYU-Features/MarchApril2009/FCYU-2009-03-11b.htm>