



Spokane, WA 99203  
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Empowering, Inc.  
"Play with a purpose"

# Skipping Stones

BULLYING

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## Bully Behavior

A young girl in pig tails is harassed as she leaves the playground, "Face it Nikki, nobody likes you." A teenage boy is shoved against a locker as he walks down the hall. A stressed parent teases a crying child, "You're such a baby!"

From the earliest of grade school years through high school and beyond we have all experienced bullying at one time or another as victim, perpetrator, or bystander. Bullying is defined as the intentional act of causing harm to others and can take on a number of forms including physical threats and violence, social isolation, cyber and text message attacks, coercion and manipulation, and taunting and teasing.<sup>1</sup> Although bullying more commonly occurs at school between peers, it can take place in any setting where people interact with each other: the workplace, home, neighborhoods, and social clubs to name just a few.

So, why do kids bully? Although there is no clear-cut answer there are a lot of explanations for bully behavior.<sup>2</sup> Some kids are themselves bullied by another kid, a brother or sister, or a parent and they mimic what is happening to them. Other bullies have watched their parents or older siblings get their way by being angry or pushing other people around. Bullies are often exposed to a lot of violence in movies, video games, and TV. Some kids engage in bully behavior as a way of being accepted by peers. Bullies are also attention seekers who feel superior or powerful when they put other people down.

Bullying is harmful and should not be dismissed as a phase or rite of passage. Its effects are often far-reaching and last a lifetime. Kids who are bullied often feel

## 5 Common Myths About Bullying

**It's just a phase. Kids will be kids.** It is widely believed bullying is a natural part of life that kids will eventually outgrow. But the effects of bullying can be felt for a lifetime.

**Bullies are big kids from dysfunctional families picking on nerdy kids.** Bullies and victims come in all shapes and sizes and some become victimized only by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**Toughen up, learn to stand up for yourself.** This suggests that victims are to blame for the bullying because they do not stand up for themselves.

**It's just a little teasing. No harm done.** The sting of a cruel word can be as hurtful as a slap, punch, or shove.

**They got what they deserved.** A common response, by people who bully, is that the victim did something to provoke the harassment. Bullying is not about justice, it is about victimization.

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Sullivan, K. (2000). *The anti-bullying handbook*. Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>2</sup>Fried, S. & Fried, P. (1996). *Bullies & victims: Helping your child through the school yard battlefield*. New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc.
- <sup>3</sup>Anonymous. (2007, April 27). Teasing can be serious issue. *Recorder*, p. B6.
- <sup>4</sup>Anonymous. (2006 Oct. 10). Protect your children from cyber-bullying. *Philadelphia Tribune.*, 11.
- <sup>5</sup>Goddard, C. (2008 March). H8@skul: Cyber world bullying. *The Education Digest*, 73, 4-10.
- <sup>6</sup>Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. (n. d.). *Cyber bullying warning signs: Red flags that your child is involved in cyber bullying*. Retrieved February 01, 2009, from <<http://www.cyberbullying.us/resources.php>>
- <sup>7</sup>Wilson Shryock, K. (2006, April). Bullies in cyberspace. *Leadership for Student Activities*, 34, 8, 8-11.
- <sup>8</sup>Sheras, P. (2002). *Your child: Bully or victim? Understanding and ending school yard tyranny*. New York: Fireside Press.
- <sup>9</sup>Garbarino, J. & deLara, E. (2002). *And words can hurt forever*. New York: The Free Press.

### Icebreaker Game

Title: *Look Up, Look Down*

Group size: 0-16  
Grade level: Any  
Space: Any  
Supplies: None

Description: Have the group stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder arms at sides. When the facilitator says "lookup" everyone looks directly into the eyes of someone else in the circle, If two people lock eyes they both try to say the other person's name. The first person to say the name correctly stays in. Have people settle their own ties.

The object is to be the last person standing.



Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life but define yourself. ~ Harvey S. Firestone

I had my bully, and it was excruciating. Not only the bully, but the intimidation I felt. ~ Robert Cormier



Draw or write what you will do to help change bully behavior.

Bullying

Bully Bulletin

Cyber bullying: What is it and what can you do?

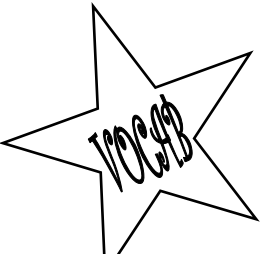
A nasty text message typed into a cell phone reads “every1 h8s her.” A My Space entry warns a teenage boy to watch his back or else.

While technological advances have enabled kids to experience a whole new world of communication, it has also given rise to a new type of attacker: computer savvy bullies. Cyber bullying involves the use of instant messaging, e-mails, chat rooms, blogs, websites, cell phones, and pagers to harass, threaten, or spread rumors.<sup>4</sup>

Cyber bullying is especially prominent during the middle school years, a time when dominance is being renegotiated. Although both girls and boys use cyberspace to bully, girls appear to be especially prone to electronic meanness.<sup>5</sup>

The warning signs of cyber bullying apply to the perpetrators as well as the victims and include long hours on the computer, secrecy about online activities, and changes in mood or behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Parents can play an active role in preventing cyber bullying.<sup>7</sup> Teach your child to tell an adult if they are being cyber bullied. Save all the evidence and printouts of cyber bullying. Notify your ISP, cell phone company, school, or police. Become familiar with online blocking and monitoring programs. Teach your child to never share passwords, PIN numbers, or account IDs with anyone. Finally, keep computers in common areas of the home.



**Bully**-(bŭl'ē) n. a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people.

**Tease**-(tēz) v. to irritate or provoke with persistent petty distractions, trifling or raillery, or other annoyance.

**Retaliate**-(rĭ-tāl'ē-āt') v. to return like for like, especially evil for evil.

**Intimidate**-(ĭn-tĭm'ĭ-dāt') v. to make timid; fill with fear.

**Empower**-(ĕm-pou'ər) v. to give power or authority to; to enable or permit.

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afraid, alienated, ashamed, disempowered, and angry.<sup>3</sup> Their social and emotional development can be compromised leading to depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and the inability to build healthy relationships with others. Their grades may also suffer, as many kids who experience bullying avoid going to school.

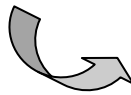
Bullies do not go unharmed either. Kids who bully are more likely to be involved in other forms of antisocial behavior including truancy, shoplifting, graffiti, and getting into trouble with the police.

Responding to bully behavior: Empowering your child

It can be painful for parents when their child comes home with evidence that they have been bullied. Your gut reaction may be to respond to the attacker, but from your child’s point of view this may be the worst thing you can do. Bullying poses a serious threat to a developing sense of self. Children will recover more fully if you help them respond successfully on their own. To do so, they will need your attentive listening, guidance, and support.<sup>8</sup>

- Listen empathetically and see the problem from their point of view.
- Emphasize strengths. Together with your child, discuss the strengths they possess that will help them cope with the bullying.
- Decide on an appropriate response and role-play all of the scenarios between your child and the bully. Being prepared builds confidence.
- Ask follow-up questions. If their response was a success, congratulate them. If not, remind them they did their best and there are other responses to try.
- Know when to step in. If the bullying continues despite your child’s best effort, it may be time to contact the bully’s parents or a school professional.

Cut out and keep game on back



Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me

This popular rhyme is often first taught by a parent or teacher as a way for young kids to deflect taunting and teasing. But such advice provides no real help or comfort and it may convince youngsters that adults just don’t understand how difficult it is to be teased. Kids who are teased are more likely to end up suffering from sleep problems, depression, anxiety, school truancy, and in severe cases it may be a factor for suicide.<sup>9</sup> As an adult, listen empathetically and with obvious interest to what happened. Be supportive, showing why you understand the teasing is so upsetting. Let them know it’s perfectly normal to feel upset. Share stories of your own experiences with being teased. In doing so, your child will likely feel less isolated and willing to open up about their experiences.