

# Introduction

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*I found one day in school a boy of medium size ill-treating a smaller boy. I expostulated, but he replied: "The bigs hit me, so I hit the babies; that's fair." In these words he epitomized the history of the human race.*

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

*School used to be great. I loved it. Now I hate it. The kids are mean, everyone picks on me, and no one does anything about them.*

—DANNY H., 5TH GRADE, 2005

**A**ccepting bullying as an inevitable part of childhood is no longer tolerated. The customary responses, "Boys will be boys," and, "That's the way girls are," are outdated and ignore research that has shown the long-term negative impact bullying has on not only the bullied child, but also on the bully and those who witness bullying. Ongoing bullying leads to low self-esteem, criminal activity, domestic violence, suicide, and other self-destructive behaviors as well as distrust in the ability of authority to create and maintain a safe educational environment (Nansel, et al., 2001). It is for these reasons that most states in America have passed laws that require schools to address bullying.

While scientific evidence clearly backs up the need to address bullying, we do not need research to tell us that children are hurt by bullying. As educators, we have seen how bullying hurts children, robs them of relationships, and damages self-esteem.

We believe the issue of bullying should be addressed in a proactive fashion. To that end, we have designed fun and interactive activities that proactively teach behaviors that are expected in and out of school, including how to stand up to a bully, how to stop another student from bullying, and how to stop being a bully.

In most bullying situations, there are three groups represented: the bully, the targeted student, and the bystanders. While bullies set the

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bullying dynamic in motion, it is often the actions of the targeted student and the bystanders that determine whether the bullying is going to continue.

From the bully's perspective, bullying serves a function. Bullying either gets them something, helps them to avoid something, or is the only way the bully knows to get a need met. Students who bully others to get their needs met must learn new behaviors—replacement behaviors—which get their needs met without hurting others. If children who bully do not learn replacement behaviors, they will continue their abusive style as they grow into adulthood (Sarazen, 2002). When bullying students begin to date, bullying behavior often morphs into dating violence (Kendall-Tackett & Giacomoni, 2005). Further on, as the child becomes an adult, bullying behaviors and relationship violence are defined as domestic abuse. This behavior can also show up on the job as workplace harassment (Lutgen-Sandvick, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007).

Targets of bullying can go through a similar evolution. If a person who is chronically victimized doesn't learn to change how they respond to bullying behavior, they will continue to be targeted by bullies well into adulthood. For targets, replacement behaviors include learning how to limit their vulnerability to bullies by standing up to bullies in a nonviolent, yet assertive manner and by increasing their friendship network.

In spite of Bertrand Russell's quote, most students are not regular bullies or chronically targeted. Most students are bystanders—people who see, hear, or know about bullying. In one study, 95 percent of students reported witnessing verbal bullying, 68 percent witnessed physical bullying, and 48 percent of the secondary school students reported having witnessed physical sexual coercion (Rigby & Johnson, n.d.). Research has also shown that although bystanders sometimes speak out to discourage bullying, the most common response is to ignore what is going on—and the bullying simply continues (Bender, 2007). Students have to know how their school expects them to respond when they see bullying. It is the responsibility of school staff to teach all of our students how to fulfill those expectations in a manner that is responsible, yet acceptable to student culture.

Behaviors that perpetuate bullying need to be replaced with behaviors that are respectful, cooperative, compassionate, and empowering. The lessons and activities in this book will help accomplish this goal in a fun, interactive manner that also meets state curriculum guidelines.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Throughout the lessons in this book you will note the use of common words and examples. However, in your community these same concepts may be expressed differently. Suggested script ideas, written in italics, are provided as examples of how the concepts we want to teach can be shared. If the words we chose are different from those used in

your school, change the language but keep the concepts. Use words that complement your style of teaching and are relatable to your students. Make each lesson your own and unique to the students with whom you work. This book has been designed with large margins for your own notes and ideas about what works with your students.

Throughout the school year, it is important to have ongoing reminders of the values of empathy, friendship, and respect. Making time to practice role-playing throughout the year is much more effective than teaching a lesson once and moving on, never to revisit the concept again. Age-appropriate and individualized reinforcements on a randomized schedule will also increase pro-social behaviors.

In addition, role modeling is one of the most powerful teaching tools adults have. School staff are role models, and students will not only key in on what we say, but how we act. Educators and school staff must role model the same behaviors that are taught to students. When students do misbehave, it is an opportunity to role model and assertively enforce rules of behavior. Controlling emotions and acting respectfully when enforcing rules or imparting consequences is the most important type of role modeling and a very effective teaching style.

To reduce bullying, multiple strategies must be employed. The collective efforts of staff, students, and parents are needed to protect all children and to teach students the pro-social behaviors they will need throughout their lives. Current research finds the most effective schools curtail bullying by having:

- a comprehensive policy that details the definition of bullying and related behaviors that will incur consequences,
- a consistent staff response to all students who display such behavior,
- role modeling by educators of the behaviors they expect from students,
- discipline procedures designed to decrease bullying and increase desired behaviors, and
- reporting mechanisms that allow for all constituents to report bullying and maintain personal safety (Nelson, n.d.).

With policy and procedures that reflect the values of the school community, academic time will increase and behavioral skills will improve.

Keep in mind, the concepts taught in this book are not obvious to all or simply common sense. Pro-social skills need to be practiced by all students on a regular basis with extra practice time for those students who need additional help in perfecting these skills. The effectiveness of these lessons is contingent on keeping the lessons relatable to your students and the culture in which they live. Making the lessons fun, entertaining, and interactive will create an educational experience where all students—the bully, the bullied, and the bystander—pay attention and learn to use new behaviors both inside and outside the classroom setting.

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*. . . I talk to my elementary school students about the ways they handle stress and conflict. These students often say to me, "My daddy (or my mama) tells me that when someone hits me, I should hit back." When I ask my students to imagine other ways of responding to anger and bullying, they are silent.*

*If . . . children learn only to "hit back," we will see no end to extra police officers on the street, no end to rising murder rates. I ask today's citizen marchers, after you leave City Hall, please march to a school or a youth group and volunteer your strength, your wisdom, and your energy to our children. Show them a world beyond "hitting back."*

—WHITNEY STEWART, CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR,  
THE TIMES-PICAYUNE, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA,  
LETTER TO THE EDITOR