

STAND



CHAPTER FIVE

Beating the bullies

“Your value doesn’t decrease based on someone’s inability to see your worth.”

—Unknown

Idiot. Ugly. Fat. Loser. For most of us, nothing is more painful than rejection. We may say it doesn’t bother us, but rejection plays with our mind and fights to make us believe its lies.

People who are hurt often hurt others. Bullies fall into this category. A lot of times we think of bullies as people who say mean words, but bullies can be as equally hurtful when they say nothing and ignore us.

Bullies hurt others because they have a need for control. Something in their life is out of control, so they find others they PERCEIVE as weaker to belittle and control. When a bully finds a person who is different from them in some way, they automatically treat that difference as a weakness. Then, they attack.

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these ways, the bullying often gets worse until they get the reaction they want. Somehow, they feel better about themselves when they hurt someone. You may be thinking, "Why would anyone feel better about themselves after knowingly hurting someone?" The bully's sole purpose is to get a reaction out of the one they are bullying. When they do, they believe they have gained control and that they "win." This makes them feel better about themselves for a while, but then they bully again.

So how would you respond to a bully? Read the following scenarios, then decide what YOU believe would be the best way to deal with the bully in each situation.

Situation 1:

Carrie and Amy have been best friends since elementary school, but when they got into high school, things changed. Amy began hanging out with some "mean" girls. Carrie really values Amy's friendship and it is hurting her to watch Amy get caught up in the wrong crowd. The "mean" girls begin picking on Carrie. Amy really doesn't like it, but she doesn't stand up for Carrie and as a result, Carrie is very hurt. When Carrie talks with Amy, she apologizes and even cries, saying it won't

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happen again. Unfortunately, it does happen again and Amy is silent to Carrie's feelings one more time.

Carrie should:

- a. End her friendship with Amy.
- b. Ask Amy to make a choice between her and the "mean" girls.
- c. Talk to the "mean" girls and tell them to stop picking on her.
- d. Stay friends with Amy and say nothing.

Many times, we can't see how badly we're being treated until we back away from a situation. It is very hard to do when emotions are involved, so in the situation above, being alone for a few days to reflect may be best. In this situation, it might be helpful to grab a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. List the advantages of the friendship on one side, and the negatives on another. You may find that in the beginning of the friendship, there were a lot of positives, but now, it brings more hurt feelings than good ones. If you choose to put distance between you and your friend by not speaking to her for a while, she may eventually realize what she has lost and decide to leave the "mean" girls behind. If she does not, your friend is probably in for a lot of trouble. If the girls were mean to you, they will eventually be mean to your friend. Even worse, she may become like them. Either way, it will not be a good situation.

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Situation 2:

You're dating a boy who is always putting you down. He says that he's joking, and he even makes you laugh about it sometimes. After all, they're only words. At first it doesn't bother you, but slowly, you begin to feel like you ARE the things he's telling you. You really care about this guy, and he's not mean to anyone else but you. You begin to believe you *must* be the problem. Eventually, he doesn't just talk in a mean way; he begins telling you that you can't be with your friends unless he's around. You used to spend time laughing and talking with your friends, but lately it seems like they don't come around much anymore. You don't want to lose him, but you don't want to lose your friends either.

Do you:

- a. Break up with him and tell him to "hit the road?"
- b. Stay with him and watch all your friendships disappear?
- c. Tell him what's bothering you and let him know you are done with the relationship if he doesn't stop?
- d. Ask for guidance from an adult you trust?

When we are "in love" or even like a guy, sometimes our thinking can get weird. We let them talk us into doing things we know are wrong, talk to us in ways that are degrading and hurtful, or even give up boundaries we have because they say they are doing everything in

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the name of “love.” Bullies often hide their behavior from others until they feel they have control. They may treat you great in the beginning of your relationship then suddenly, and without warning, throw words at you that hurt. They tell you, “You’re too sensitive,” and you should, “Get over it.” They tell you something is wrong with *you*. In reality, there is something very wrong with **THEM**. Guys who like to control girls do so because they have the “ideal” girl in their head. If you don’t match their “fantasy girl,” they will belittle and control you until you become what they want. The problem? They are never satisfied. They will always want more and you can never please them.

If you find yourself dating a guy who is a bully, you will need to confront him-and waste no time doing it. Let him know that his behavior is hurtful and you will not allow him to treat you in a way that is less than what you deserve. Set limits when he bullies you by saying, “Stop it,” disagreeing with him, or walking away. Let him know that there are consequences if his behavior does not change, and one of those

may be the loss of the relationship. Explain that he needs to consider your feelings and thoughts on things. Take the scenario above, for example. If you were in this situation, let him

know that he is important, but so are your friends. Guys often come and go, but friendships last when they are

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nurtured. If a guy bullies you and tells you that you have to dump your trusted friends to keep him around, kick him to the curb and keep your friends! They will be there to care about you as you move on to the next guy who treats you the way you should be treated. If you are unsure about how to handle a bully that you are dating, talk with a trusted adult who can help.

God did not design us to be mistreated or bullied. In both of the scenarios above, ask God to show you what to do and for the courage to do it. He will.

While handling bullies face to face is tough, cyberbullying offers a whole new set of challenges. Cyberbullying takes place when someone bullies you through technology. Boys tend to cyberbully differently from girls. Guys usually cyberbully by “sexting” or threatening physical harm, while girls spread rumors and lies to make others think badly about you. They may also leave you out of groups or messages online to intentionally exclude you. Cyberbullies can torment us 24 hours a day if they have a mobile device or computer and this often makes us feel unsafe wherever we go, even in our own home!

If you are a victim of cyberbullying, it is most important to know that you are NOT alone. Over half (52 percent) of young people report being cyber bullied. (“Cyber Bullying Statistics 2014”) The good news is, you don’t have to tolerate it. There are ways to stop cyberbullying.

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First of all, NEVER respond to a cyberbully. A reaction is what they want, so no matter how tempted you are, DO NOT RESPOND. If you do, the bullying will get worse. By not responding, you have the power to show the bully that you will not allow yourself to be intimidated. If they continue to bully you, take the next step.

Collect all evidence of cyberbullying on a flash drive and report it to your internet service provider immediately! Allow your parents to help you do this. By storing the evidence, you are taking control of the situation in a mature and healthy way. Too many times, teens retaliate and become cyberbullies themselves. Don't stoop to a bully's level by responding. Store it, and put your focus on things that make you feel good and bring you happiness.

If you are being cyberbullied, be sure to tell an adult you trust who will listen and take action. Too many times, teens are afraid to ask for help because the bully threatens that they will bully more if someone tells on them. NEVER allow a cyberbully to "brainwash" you into protecting them or believing their lies. Expose them for what they are and stand up for what is right.

Be sure you also block the cyberbully from being able to talk with you online. If you don't know how to block a bully, ask a trusted adult to help you. If you find yourself being "chased" online by the bully each time they are blocked, you need to decide where you want to hang out online. For example, if you are bullied on

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Instagram, it would be wise to stay off Instagram for a while. WHERE you “live” online is important.

If a bully taunts you, try ignoring them. They are trying to get a reaction from you so that they can gain control. Some bullies will stop bullying when you ignore them, but some will see it as a challenge and will bully even more. If so, you may need to confront the bully. While this can be scary, it is often what shuts them down.

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other people how
to treat us.**

When confronting a bully, be sure you do so with confidence, assurance, and in a calm way. If you lose your composure and begin to cry or get angry, they will see you as weak. Let the bully know that

you will not allow them to treat you in any way other than what you deserve. We teach other people how to treat us.

Let's take the following scenario. If “Sarah” is your bully, you may say something like, “Sarah, you made fun of the dress I was wearing when we were in homeroom last week. I like that dress and get a lot of compliments from others when I wear it. Maybe you don't like dresses, but I do. If you don't have something nice to say to me, you don't have to talk to me, but I would like for you to stop making fun of my clothes.” Now, this can do one of two things. “Sarah” will feel embarrassed because you called her out, or she will see it as a challenge and will keep bullying. If she sees it as a

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challenge, stay away from “Sarah” or keep friends around who are supportive. If you have to be around her when friends are not around, let an adult know who will support you. You have the right to be safe at all costs.

You can also laugh at a bully. They really hate this, but it gets the point across in an awesome way! For example, a bully says, “You’re so fat.” Say something back like, “Hey, you’re pretty observant. I have gained a few pounds lately, thanks for noticing.” It will shut them down because it catches them off guard.

There are three roles to every bullying situation: the bully, the bullied, and the bystander. What if you’re not the victim of bullying, but you are a bystander who is watching someone be bullied? If your friend or someone you know is being bullied, you play a powerful role in helping to bring bullying to an end. Unfortunately, bystanders sometimes choose not to get involved.

Why do we dread getting involved as a bystander to a bullying situation? Several reasons come to mind. First, we often fear retaliation. If we stand up against a bully, they may come after us! We may also fear what others will think of us if we stand up against the bully, especially when they’re popular. If the bully is someone others like, we may even feel pressured to become a bully, hoping we can be popular too.

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Recently, I read about a girl who was in high school and decided to stand up against a bully. Katy was smart and

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was scheduled to be valedictorian of her class. When Katy saw a new student at her school being bullied, she confronted the bully. Unfortunately, the bully turned on Katy. He spread rumors about her at school and she was severely cyberbullied at home each night. Eventually, the bullying

became so bad that Katy had to leave her school and lost the opportunity to graduate as valedictorian of her class. When asked how she felt about not getting to graduate as valedictorian because she stood up to the bully, she said, "I would do the same thing all over again if I had the chance." Now THAT'S a girl I would want to be friends with, wouldn't you? It takes a lot of courage and a lot of character to do the right thing.

Why should we get involved? Because most bullies fly under the radar of adults. As a school counselor, I was often shocked at how long some bullying situations in our school had been going on before I was told about them. Some adults even brush bullying off as no big deal or a normal part of teen behavior. Unfortunately, bullying is often ignored until it's too late. That is what happened to my precious friend, Tara.

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Tara was a student I had the privilege of counseling. She was vivacious, full of life, and a beautiful girl. She was also very sensitive to others and had a lot of friends. When we visited, we talked about her family, but mostly, we talked about kids who made fun of her. Tara became a victim of bullying in Kindergarten. Kindergarten! The bullying followed Tara through elementary school, and eventually into high school.

Tara was a member of the drill team in high school and was pretty, popular and friendly. She had a lot of friends, and was caring to all she knew. Unfortunately, several girls on the drill team saw Tara's sensitivity as weakness. Tara could never understand what she had done to "make" these girls dislike her. She tried to be friends with them, but they pursued her more. They made false accusations that broke Tara's spirit. She reported the bullying to her drill team teacher, but the bullying didn't stop. The school counselor was notified, but the bullying continued. The principal was even aware, but the bullying never stopped. Tara's mom did all she could to save her daughter, but the devastating effects of bullying took their toll. Tara abruptly ended her life at the age of 17.

I had the privilege and overwhelmingly difficult task of speaking at Tara's funeral. I will never forget what I saw when I stepped onto the stage of that church. Both the upper and lower levels were filled with teenagers who loved Tara. I believe if Tara could have seen all the love and support that day, she may not have taken her life. Unfortunately, that's the breakdown. We mourn the

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death of those who take their life because of bullying, but why don't we get involved BEFORE they do such a permanent thing? Some of the girls who knew that Tara was being bullied were so sorry they didn't help her, and they will live with their decision for a long time. I will always wonder how things may have been different if someone would have been courageous enough to stand up for her.

WE can be the difference when someone is being bullied. Let's fill the balcony of a victim's life by being their supporter so that we don't have to fill a balcony at their funeral. Let's drop the lame excuses that we make for not getting involved and be brave enough, and loving enough, to take a stand. After all, that's what Jesus did.

In John 8, there was a woman who was going to be stoned by a group of people because she had committed the sin of adultery. In those days, it was a popular form of punishment to kill someone by throwing stones at them until they died. Jesus came onto the scene and He made a very powerful statement to all those who were ready to kill her. He said, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." One by one, they all dropped their rocks and walked away. Why? Because they knew in their hearts that they were as guilty as she was of doing wrong.

Bullies like to "throw stones" because it keeps the focus off of their flaws and weaknesses. The good news? We all have flaws and weaknesses, so that makes us equal.

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God made us the way that we are on purpose, and for others to hurt us with bullying behavior is for them to say that God did a bad job with us. If God was smart enough to make the entire universe, He certainly knew what He was doing when He created you. HE didn't mess up! You are "fearfully and wonderfully made" according to Psalm 139:14, and God hates it when others are hurtful to you because He loves you and is proud of who you are. If a bully's words or actions can't be backed up by what the Bible says about you, then they are a lie! Bullies do not get to define us, GOD does.

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to define us,
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If you ever find yourself tempted to bully, or wonder if you exhibit bullying behavior, ask yourself the following questions:

- * Do you enjoy hurting others or making fun of them on purpose?
- * Do you enjoy the fact that others are afraid of you?
- * Do you blame others for your problems or believe that someone deserves your bullying?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, I encourage you to talk with your parents or another trusted adult. Chances are good that you have been hurt and you are longing to lash out because of the hurt you

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are carrying. Lashing out at others will only bring you more pain, so find someone you can talk with and avoid becoming a bully.

If we all join together and form an alliance against bullying we can stop it. Are you in?

This is Tara
and her mom.



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Reflection:

- Have you ever been a victim of bullying? If so, what happened and how did you handle it?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? What did you do?
- What can adults do to help when bullying takes place?
- Have you ever bullied someone? What made you want to bully?
- If you did bully someone, what made you want to stop? Have you stopped? If not, why not?
- Why do YOU believe bullying is wrong?
- What will you do the next time you see someone being bullied?