



BULLYING: A BIG PROBLEM WITH BIG CONSEQUENCES

Bullying Experiences: An In-Class Discussion Guide

By Kathleen A. Olson, University of Minnesota Extension Educator and Professor (retired), and Jennifer L. Doty, Ph.D., University of Minnesota, Department of Family Social Science

DIRECTIONS

The following stories depict teens' experiences with bullying. The stories are designed to help parents guide their teens in dealing with bullying — whether a child is a bully, a victim, or a bystander.

The facilitator should set up the activity per instructions in the Facilitator's Guide — leading the entire class in a discussion or forming small groups as needed. Key questions for discussion include:



- How might parents of the child described in the story help him or her deal with the situation? Make a list of ideas for parents.
- How might parents, teachers, and other teens help in the situation and prevent the bullying from happening again. Make a list of action steps.

After discussing the questions (and reporting back from small groups if needed), the entire class should discuss the pros and cons of the actions and ideas presented.

SCENARIO #1: "I TRY NOT TO LOOK TOO SMART"

It is not good if kids think you are too smart. The other day I was raising my hand in class a lot because I was really interested in genetics and want to go into biology research in college. Sometimes when you raise your hand a lot in class to answer the questions and stuff and, like, you're always helping the teacher, you get called a teacher's pet. One kid said to me after class, "Did you suck up to the teacher again today so you could get an 'A' on your paper?"

SCENARIO #2: "IT WAS JUST PINS"

I was goofing off in class today because I don't like the teacher and sewing class is so boring. It's required and I don't want to be in it anyway. We had these stick pins we were using on some pattern and the kid in front of me was bugging me in the hall on the way to class, so I poked the pin into his back. Dude, did he jump! It was just a pin, but the teacher freaked and sent me to the office for a weapons violation. What is the big deal? A pin isn't a weapon! It's not like he got hurt



or anything. Well, I got suspended from school for three days as the principal insisted it was a weapons violation. For a stick pin! My parents sided with me and even let me rent some movies. They said the policy of zero tolerance is stupid. I enjoyed my three days at home. I even got to miss that unit on sewing that I didn't like.

SCENARIO #3: "GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS"

Sara is one of my best friends. I can't believe she spread that rumor about me, but that is what Tina said. Tina said that Sara said I was a slut and that I "did it" with my friend Tom when we had that party at my friend's cabin. Honestly, we didn't do a thing. She is just jealous because I told her that I thought Tom liked me a lot more than just a friend, and she doesn't even have a boy for a friend yet. She has always been like my best friend and now I don't even want to talk to her. All the girls think I am a skank now and some of the boys do, too. What can I say about her that will make the group realize she is just a liar and a traitor? I think she likes Tom herself. Now I have seen some writing on the bathroom wall about me and Tom. I think Sara wrote it. I'm so done with her!

SCENARIO #4: "CYBER NIGHTMARE"

When I was 11, I filmed myself acting out a "Star Wars" scene and posted it on YouTube. The video went viral, and people online wrote the meanest comments on there and called me "Star Wars boy" and stuff. So even though we took down the video, other people had downloaded it and made a whole website to make fun of it. Lots of kids at school saw it, too, and made fun of me all the time. This is like a nightmare—I just wish I could wake up.

SCENARIO #5: "YOUNG TORMENTORS"

I was just walking down the street, and Bill and Eric came up to me and asked for money. I told them I didn't have any, but they didn't believe me. Then they yell, "Hey ADHD boy, give me your hat." They kicked me and knocked me to the ground and took my baseball cap that I just got with my money from mowing lawns. The next day they came after me again, and I told them I had no money again. This time they knocked me down, kicked me in the nuts and broke my glasses. I don't want to tell my mom, because if they find out I told, they will just hurt me worse. I need my glasses for school. I don't want to go to school.

SCENARIO #6: "BULLY ON THE BUS — THEY MAKE FUN OF HIM BECAUSE HE IS DIFFERENT"

There's a boy on my bus and he acts like a girl, sort of. He has long curly hair and has earrings in both ears. He wears a lot of rings and paints his fingernails. He likes poetry and his voice is soft. People make fun of him and say things like, "I thought you were a man; you're nothing but a girl — you even cry like one." I'm not sure what to do. I feel like I should help him, as he has been nice to me, but I'm afraid I'll get teased too, or the other kids will think I'm gay if I stand up for him.