

Sticks and Stones

DEFEATING
THE CULTURE OF
BULLYING AND
REDISCOVERING
THE POWER
OF CHARACTER
AND EMPATHY

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A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS


BROUGHT TO YOU BY **EMILY BAZELON**, AUTHOR OF

STICKS AND STONES: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy

I put together this resource list as I did the reporting for my book, taking notes as I went on the many promising programs, books, films, and organizations I learned about along the way. The list isn't comprehensive so much as a work in progress: I add to it as I learn about new ventures. It's a series of entry points to the field of bullying prevention—which continues to grow—but I hope this list will serve as a valuable jumping off point for your needs.
—Emily

MOVIES/VIDEOS


- ***Bullied: Teen Stories from Generation PRX*** Produced by two Hartford, Conn., teenagers for other teenagers, this audio show explores the stories of bullied students from Alaska to Connecticut. <http://generation.prx.org/bullied>
- ***Bully Dance*** A 10-minute animated film with ideas for kids about dealing with bullies creatively. <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/bully.html>
- ***Disconnected*** An MTV original movie for teenagers, in which four young people get to know each other through a live-streaming website. One of them uses the anonymity of the Internet to criticize others and avoid harassment himself. <http://www.mtv.com/shows/disconnected/series.jhtml>
- ***It Gets Better*** is Dan Savage's YouTube project of encouragement for LGBT youth, with clips posted by more than 40,000 people, including many celebrities. An hour-long *It Gets Better* documentary, narrated by Savage, tells the stories of three LGBT kids as they struggle to find acceptance.
- ***The Karate Kid*** The 1984 movie in which a master of martial arts teaches a bullied boy to stand up for himself, and not just by fighting. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087538/>
- ***Lady Gaga: Inside on the Outside*** An MTV documentary in which Lady Gaga speaks of her experience as a bullied high school student. http://www.mtv.com/shows/lady_gaga_inside_the_outside/series.jhtml
- ***Mean Girls*** Tina Fey's classic and hilarious 2004 satire on the terrors of high school. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0377092/>
- ***My Bodyguard*** A sweet and earnest 1980 movie about being harassed as the new kid, and recruiting the scariest-seeming in school to help. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0081207/>
- ***Stand Up: Don't Stand for Homophobic Bullying*** An excellent four-minute Irish Public Service Announcement about two young men who are harassed



after a group of boys discovers them holding hands. In the end, straight couples stand up and join hands with the bullied pair in solidarity. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxM>

BOOKS

- ***Blubber*** by Judy Blume. When Linda, an overweight girl, gives a presentation about whales, the class begins to ostracize her. The instigator is Wendy, the class president. And when Jill disobeys her, she becomes the object of torment herself. This classic is perfect for 8 to 12 year olds.
- ***Hate List*** by Jennifer Brown. After Valerie's boyfriend Nick opens fire on their school cafeteria, she is implicated because she helped him create a "hate list," which he used to identify his targets. Valerie has to deal with her guilt about the shooting. A good book for teenagers.
- ***Bully*** by Judith Caseley. In this picture book, Mickey struggles to overcome a bully named Jack. Though his parents try to help, it is Mickey's own problem-solving strategy that enables him to befriend his oppressor. For young kids.
- ***The Chocolate War*** by Robert Cormier. At a private high school, a secret society, The Vigils, controls the students. When Jerry, the main character, defies the Vigils, he is seen as a hero—but also mercilessly bullied. Often taught in middle school.
- ***Before I Die*** by Jenny Downham. This book isn't about bullying: It's about a girl who is dying from cancer. But it's so heart-stoppingly good—beautifully written, brimming with empathy, and full of insight into the main characters' relationships with her parents, and her friendships—that I have to recommend it. For teenagers.
- ***Stinky Stern Forever*** by Michelle Edwards. No one in the second grade likes Stinky because he is mean to all of the other kids. So when he dies in a car accident, his classmates have to figure out how to mourn someone who bullied them. Great for ages 6 to 8.
- ***Hooway for Wodney Wat*** by Helen Lester, illustrated by Lynn Munsinger. Rodney Rat is teased because he can't say his "r"s properly. But when a bully joins the class, it's Rodney who becomes a hero, by standing up to her. For young kids.
- ***Vintage Veronica*** by Erica S. Perl. At 15, Veronica is "fashion-minded, fat, and friendless," as the author puts it. When two older girls she works with at a vintage clothing store convince her to spy on a socially awkward stock boy, Veronica finds herself in the middle of much more than a prank—and has to navigate the surprising dynamics that result. For teenagers.
- ***Blue Boy*** by Rakesh Satyal. The story of Kiran Sharma, a 12-year-old Indian boy growing up in 1990s Cincinnati who is mocked for playing with dolls and choosing ballet over basketball—and then has a divine revelation. Frequently taught in high school, much food for thought for teenagers.

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- **Loser** by Jerry Spinelli. The kid hero of this short novel, Donald Zinkoff, is not a cool kid. At field day, his slow running makes his team lose a big race. And then Zinkoff overcomes his limitations and comes through for a friend—even if it doesn't turn out as he planned. A funny, empathetic, and accessible read for 7 to 13 year olds
 - **Story of a Girl** by Sara Zarr. When 16-year-old Deanna Lambert is found in the backseat of a car with her brother's best friend, she becomes known as the "school slut." She struggles to overcome the damage to her reputation. For teenagers.


ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

- **The Anti-Defamation League** founded in 1913, works to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry, and helps form clubs in schools to prevent bullying and harassment. <http://www.adl.org/>
- **Cometfire** offers LGBT students in New York a space to talk about issues of sexuality, youth sexual confusion, and self-esteem. The group is a collaboration of PFLAG NYC, and Manhattan's Jewish Community Center and LGBT Community Center. It's an example of the kind of youth group that can help if you're struggling with these issues. <http://www.pflagnyc.org/support/cometfire>
- **Sources of Strength** founded in North Dakota, is a school and community-based program that seeks to prevent suicide, violence, and substance abuse. Adult advisors work with peer leaders. <http://www.sourcesof-strength.org/>
- **Stop Bullying: Speak Up** is Facebook's campaign against bullying. <http://www.facebook.com/stopbullyingspeakup>
- **A Thin Line** is MTV's campaign to stop the spread of digital abuse. <http://www.athinline.org/>
- **The Trevor Project** provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. Services include 24/7 phone counseling and online support as well as work in schools. <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

A Q&A WITH EMILY

Dan Olweus, a Scandinavian psychologist who launched the field of studying bullying, came up with a good definition in 1969. He limits bullying to verbal or physical aggression that occurs repeatedly and involves a power differential—one or more children lording their status over another. That definition is still standard among academics.

Bullying isn't really on the rise, according to the studies that have tracked it over the past 25 years. But recent stories about bullying have gotten a ton of national attention and raised our antennae. So have laws that increasingly require schools to address bullying. Also, bullying does feel more pervasive for a lot of kids when it happens, because it often extends to the Web, which they can access 24/7.



Going home from school used to be a respite for kids who were being targeted. That's often no longer true. And now that bullying happens on social networking sites and in text messages, it is more lasting, more visible, more viral. That's how the problem has morphed over the last decade.

Yes, there is a subset of bullies who are also victims. These kids often have fairly serious problems: They tend to see themselves and others negatively, perform poorly in school, and feel isolated and rejected. They're more likely to report physical or sexual abuse and conflict with their parents at home. Sometimes they have a disability, such as attention deficit disorder, that makes them a classroom irritant, alienating the kids around them and often the adults, too. Often the bullying they do is a red flag—a sign that they need intensive support.

So what's the answer—what can young people do to deal with bullying when they see it happen?

If you see other kids being cruel, think about the steps you could realistically, and safely, take to stop it. You don't have to jump into the middle of a fight (though if you're up for that, don't let me stop you!), and you don't have to commit to befriending the person you're helping, either. Sometimes just sending a sympathetic text or asking someone in the hallway if they're okay is enough. If you can show empathy to someone who is vulnerable, in the moment or afterward, that can mean a lot. Most people who are having trouble socially appreciate just knowing that someone cares—even if it's someone they don't know very well.