

WHY IS EVERYBODY ALWAYS PICKING ON ME?



**A Mini-Curriculum for Instructors
To Talk About Bullies & Victims**

Ages 8 – 12

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LESSON 1

What Is A Bully?

1. Ask students:

- ☐ What is a bully?
- ☐ Has anyone ever bullied you? How did the bully look? How did the bully talk? How did you feel being bullied?
- ☐ Have you ever bullied another person? When? Why did you do it? How did it make you feel?
- ☐ If you could figure out a way to prevent a bully from bothering you, would you want to know how? If you've been a bully yourself, do you want to understand why you do it?

2. Tell students:

- There are two kinds of bullies:

Extrovert Bullies are aggressive, active, outgoing and expressive. They want to be in control. They're rebels – they can be rough and tough, mean on the surface. But inside they feel inferior, insecure and unsure of themselves. That's why they act the way they do, to feel superior, which makes them feel secure.

Introvert Bullies don't want to be recognized. They hide as much as possible. They don't rebel. They tend to conform to rules and regulations. But they, too, want to be in control, which they get by smooth-talking, saying the "right" thing. They will sometimes lie, cheat, do anything to get what they want. They may make you think they mean well, when they don't – just to get their way.

3. Ask students:

- ☐ Do you know an Extrovert Bully? Have you been one? Do you know an Introvert Bully? Have you been one?
- ☐ What kind of bully are you? If you've been a bully, how have you spoken? How have you acted? Are you extrovert or introvert?

4. Tell students:

- It's important to know the danger that can come from bullying someone.
- When we are bullied, the fear can stay with us for a long time – for some people, all their lives.
- Kid bullies often grow up to become adult bullies, because they haven't learned how to get over feeling hurt and angry.
- Adult bullies are still unhappy and sometimes feel the need to hurt other people to make them unhappy, too.
- Adult bullies have grown up without learning to understand why they were kid bullies.

It's time to think, remember, observe and talk!
Let's take a look!

- ☐ **Think:** A good thing to keep in mind is that a bully is someone who's hurt and angry.
- ☐ **Remember:** Most people who are hurt and angry have problems. We all have problems.
- ☐ **Observe:** We've all been bullied at one time or another. And we've all been bullies, too.
- ☐ **Talk:** Have a conversation about things that make students feel like bullying and how it feels to not only be bullied, but also to be a bully.

4. Activities and Talks

On the next page is a list of feelings we can get when someone bullies us. Talk about all of these. Ask students which ones they have felt when they have been bullied.

ACTIVITY 1:
What Happens Inside Me!

Ask students:

Here are some feelings we can get when somebody bullies us. Which of these have you felt when you've been bullied?

- ☐ I get a queasy feeling inside.
- ☐ I get scared.
- ☐ I get angry and want to bully back.
- ☐ I want to run home and be with my family.
- ☐ I want to run away from everyone – forever.
- ☐ What happens to me is (fill in the blank).
- ☐ I wish it had never happened because (fill in the blank).
- ☐ Anyone who looks like the bully reminds me of what happened.
- ☐ Being bullied made me feel that I am weak.
- ☐ Being bullied made me feel that I'm not important.
- ☐ Being bullied made me believe there's something wrong with me.
- ☐ Since I was bullied, I've been feeling depressed.
- ☐ Since being bullied, I prefer to spend time alone.
- ☐ On the inside, I sometimes feel I want revenge.
- ☐ On the inside I feel myself not liking people.
- ☐ On the outside, I tend to distrust people and don't make friends.
- ☐ On the outside, I start fights, create conflict between others and me.

LESSON 2

Why Do We Bully?

1. Ask students:

- ☐ If you've ever been a bully, why did you feel a need to do so?
- ☐ If you've been a bully, why do you think the bully needed to bully you?
- ☐ What are some things that you think might make someone want to bully another person?

2. Tell students:

- Some reasons that we may have for bullying another person could be:
 - Someone has harshly physically or verbally punished us.
 - We've been allowed to get away with aggressive behavior.
 - We are left alone a lot with no one to talk to.
 - We never get praise or encouragement.
 - People we hang out with persuade us to do violent things.
 - Kids in school ridicule us and laugh at us.
 - People we know don't allow us to be who we are.
 - We have to live with rules that don't seem to fit us.

3. Ask students:

- ☐ Do you think the visual (TV, movies, radio, news) and social media (Internet, Facebook and other sites) can inspire us to bully?
- ☐ If so, in what ways? *Talk about programs showing guns, knives, murdered people, shows demonstrating people being cruel to one another, even violent cartoons.*

4. Tell students:

- Businesses in our community can create a competitive environment that could cause a desire to bully – for example, when businesses compete for customers. Have you noticed competing businesses?
- Some competition is healthy, but other competition can create violent behavior. In sports, we see both positive and negative competition, the latter of which can cause violent behavior.
- Some politicians work hard to create positive changes; some simply enjoy being powerful. When they run for office, they get very competitive.

It's time to think, remember, observe and talk!

Let's take a look!

- ☐ **Think:** When we see someone being dominating and controlling, we can take a “Stop! Think!” moment to understand why this person is acting this way.
- ☐ **Remember:** Bullies and their victims all are afraid of something or someone, and their first instinct is to do what they must to survive.
- ☐ **Observe:** In our “Stop! Think!” moment, we can look at whether we believe we need to fight in order to survive. Taking that moment puts us in a non-fighting, non-judgmental place!
- ☐ **Talk:** Have a conversation about how fighting always seems to encourage more fighting – and that it's the reason generation after generation have been involved in personal conflicts and major wars.

5. Activities and Talks

Activity 1: On the next page is a list of possible ways to stop bullying from happening. Talk about them with your students. Explore ideas with them – they might come up with some new ways of thinking -- and winning -- that could be applied to school behavior.

ACTIVITY 2A

New Ways to Win!



Tell students:

Here are some ways to win the fight to stop bullying from ever happening again! They may be difficult to achieve, but it's always good to try!

- ☐ I will take a personal interest in stopping bullying by focusing on ways we can stop it – and talking with others about it.
- ☐ I will develop my awareness of how bullies act.
- ☐ It would be great to put public service announcements (PSAs) on television about how to prevent bullying.
- ☐ I will do my best to understand why people bully.
- ☐ I'd like to suggest to our school that we have classes to help us understand and cope with conflict and bullying.
- ☐ I would like to develop nonviolent skills on how to deal with bullies. Talking things out with a bully could be one of them.

Add some ideas of your own:

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

ACTIVITY 2B

The School of "No Sword"

Read to students the story "The School of No Sword" which appears in the Atrium Society companion book *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me?*

Ask students:

1. Did you recognize the bully in this story? Who is it?
2. How did Bokuden first respond to the bully's boasting?
3. When Bokuden said his way is different, what did he mean?
4. Why did Bokuden say he carries a sword, if he doesn't use it?
5. Why do you think the warrior got angry?
6. How did Bokuden handle the warrior's anger?
7. What do you think of the way Bokuden took charge of the situation?
8. Do you see a new way you might take charge of a situation in which you are bullied by someone angry?
9. Do you see the difference between defeating others and NOT BEING defeated?
10. Do you see the importance of not focusing on winning, but instead on learning how NOT to lose?

LESSON 3

How Can We Stop Bullying?

■ Tell students:

There are 12 ways to peacefully avoid fighting that have worked well for other kids. The way to do these alternatives successfully is to practice them often.

1. **Make friends.** Be friendly and kind to the bully. Since most bullies feel hurt or angry, being friendly may help them feel better. But be careful! Not used to being treated kindly, they may not respond well at first.
2. **Use humor.** Be funny. Tell a joke. But be careful! You don't want the bully to think you're making fun of him or her. Make sure the bully knows that the joke or story is not meant to be at her or his expense.
3. **Be clever.** Use your creative imagination to resolve your conflict. Remember Bokuden of "The School of No Sword"? He was clever. You could pretend to be sick or have poison oak or ivy.
4. **Walk away.** While you may feel you have the right to stand up for yourself and fight back when you've been bullied – Stop! Think! Does fighting back solve anything? Why not just turn around and walk away?
5. **Agree with the bully.** Many fights begin when a person feels insulted. If someone calls you a name, instead of reacting with anger or fighting, just Stop! Watch what happens inside you when you Stop!
6. **Refuse to fight.** A fight takes at least two people. You may feel angry or afraid, you may want to run away or cry. You may think you have to fight the bully because friends are watching, but you don't. Refuse to fight!
7. **Stand up to the bully.** This can surprise the bully, who expects you to be afraid. When you're not, a bully sometimes backs down. You can show a bully, with words, with your body, that you do not want to be bullied.
8. **Scream or yell.** The human voice is very powerful! You can scream, "I won't let you hurt me!" Or "Help!" or "Fire!" Any of these screams will cause people to come to see what's happening.
9. **Ignore the bully.** You can act as if the bully is not there. Just ignore him or her. This works well with some bullies and not so well with others. You just have to try it to find out.

10. **Use authority.** You can show the bully you're not afraid, using your own authority. Powerful can mean showing that you have physical strength. Or, powerful doesn't always mean having physical strength. You can call on someone else to help you who is more powerful than the bully – such as a police officer, or teacher.
11. **Reason with the bully.** Some people have the gift of gab and can talk anyone into doing anything! Practice learning how to reason with others, so you don't hurt them, and they don't hurt you.
12. **Take a powerful stance.** Hopefully you will try everything you can to stop a fight before you take a physical stance – but this is a final method. Stand tall, to show that you're strong and ready to protect yourself.

It's time to think, remember, observe and talk!
Let's take a look!

- ☐ **Think:** Confidence comes from practicing your alternatives and from understanding why the bully acts as he or she does.
- ☐ **Remember:** When you appear confident, a bully is not likely to challenge you to a fight. Understanding a bully usually surprises the bully and takes her/him off their guard.
- ☐ **Observe:** Every situation is different. An intelligent alternative that works in one situation may not work in another.
- ☐ **Talk:** If you have bullied someone, it's important to experience what it feels like to be a kid who's been picked on. This is how you learn to understand another person's point of view. And if you're a kid who's been picked on, it's important to understand how it feels to be a bully.

■ **Activities and Talks**

- ☐ In many ways, bullies and victims are the same!
- ☐ In the exercise that follows, let's look at some feelings you've had when you've either been picked on by a bully, or you've been a bully and picked on someone else!

ACTIVITY 3

Bullies Are People Who've Been Victims!

Ask students:

- ☐ Have you ever felt:

Anxious?	Hopeless?	Ridiculed?
Scared?	Humiliated?	Pressured?
Rejected?	Ashamed?	Helpless?
Worthless?	Out of control?	Harassed?
Greedy?	Frustrated?	Unfairly punished?
Enraged?	Violent?	Hurt?
Angry?	Insecure?	Unloved?
Powerless?	Vengeful?	Lonely?

**Add some other feelings
you know your students may experience!**

- ☐ Have you ever felt that everyone is picking on you?
That you're not doing what other people expect?

Tell students:

**If you've had these feelings, then – guess what –
you have felt like a victim AND like a bully!**

**A bully picks on a victim
because that bully has been picked on
and felt like a victim.
The victim is upset and becomes a bully
who then picks on his or her own victim.**

**It's a vicious circle that never stops!
How do we stop it?**

**Stop! Think!
When you feel angry or upset, talk to someone!
Tell someone how you feel!
It's okay to feel!**

LESSON 4

Awareness Is Everything

1. Ask students:

- ☐ Have you seen people get into arguments – at school, at home, in your community?
- ☐ Do you ever think about why they get into disagreements?
- ☐ Do you think people often compete to get attention, win something, or achieve some kind of success?

2. Tell students:

- In order to achieve “success,” people sometimes compete with others in conflicting ways.
- People may say one thing, and then do another, or they may forget to respect one another.
- It’s important to understand that there are two kinds of thinking that we human beings do. One of them is that, in school, we learn subject matter information, such as math, history or geography.
- The other kind is that our brain also remembers “thought and feeling” information – such as painful memories and happy memories. We might be punished for doing something we’re told is “wrong” or for being “bad” or “naughty,” according to an adult.
- Painful memories can give us unhappy attitudes. Pleasurable memories can create happy attitudes.
- Our attitudes become part of who we are. We are what we remember! We are who we think we are!
- Our attitudes tend to “condition” us to think, feel and act in certain ways (explain “conditioning” here).

3. Ask students:

- ☐ Do you think it's possible to change your thinking so that you don't act based on your "conditioning"?
- ☐ If your thinking causes conflict with another person, would you want to change the way you think – in order to resolve the conflict?

4. Tell students:

- No matter how much we think in the course of a day, we humans use only a small part of our brain!
- Observing our own behavior – without judging it – can help us be aware of our behavior.

**When we can teach ourselves to be aware –
to observe our own behavior directly –
we instantly alter our behavior!**

- ☐ **Think:** Become aware of when you feel lonely, or act strangely, or feel vengeful toward someone. Stop! Think! about your feelings!
- ☐ **Remember:** Notice how you feel when you become "aware." Do your feelings stay the same, or do they change?
- ☐ **Observe:** When we just OBSERVE a thought we have that doesn't feel good – when we don't judge it, when we just become AWARE of it – the thought loses its power!
- ☐ **Talk:** If you are DIRECTLY AWARE of what happens when, for example, you scream at someone, you are more likely to notice that you are hurting that person. Awareness brings to our attention not only how we are feeling, but also the effect our thoughts and actions may be having on another person.

■ **Activities and Talks**

- ☐ If past painful experiences fill our minds, they can affect the way we relate to people. But we have the power to do something about this! Let's look at the activity on the following page.

ACTIVITY 4A

Uh-Oh! I'm Judging Again!

Ask students:

- ❑ Think of a time when you have judged yourself for doing something “bad” or “wrong.” Ask for a volunteer who is ready to talk about such an experience.

Then say:

Recognize that you are judging yourself with negative thoughts. Can you see that you are?

Allow those thoughts to be there – just let them be there – and look at them! Do you see them?

Look at your feelings about these thoughts. Notice that they have to do with the past and don't have to interfere with who you are now. Can you see that?

Let the negative thoughts and feelings come up, and then let them go. Say “Hello, negative thoughts! Goodbye, negative thoughts!”

Talk about how it feels to let go of them. Realize that life does not judge you – you do! So you don't have to! Life doesn't hold on to what hurt you yesterday – you do! So let go of it!

Focus on things in your life that are good, instead of past hurts. Start with one good thought. Then, let others into your mind. What's your first good thought? What's something special we should know about you?

- ❑ Try this pattern with as many students as you have time for.
- ❑ At some point during this course, give every one of your students an opportunity to go through this challenge.
- ❑ On the next page is an activity that can be used in your classroom – a list of positive messages students can give themselves. You can create a chart and ask students to add to the chart every day.

ACTIVITY 4B

Things To Say To Myself!



Create a chart on which you list the following things students can practice saying to themselves. Add some of your own.

Encourage students to add some of their own, too.

- ☐ I have a lot to contribute! A contribution I'll make today is:
- ☐ I know how to make intelligent decisions! Today's decision is:
- ☐ I am responsible for what I think, say and do!
- ☐ I am interested in cooperating with other people!
- ☐ I know I can decide to *not* fight with anyone.
- ☐ I can find healthy ways to get what I want without bullying!
- ☐ One way I'll get what I need today is:
- ☐ I can find ways to express my emotions that don't create conflict!
- ☐ Awareness is everything! When I'm aware, I am confident enough to handle anything!
- ☐
- ☐

LESSON 5

How Bullying Affects The World

The Difference Between Heaven and Hell – A Wise Story

A young armed arrogant warrior came to see an old wise man. He said, “Oh, wise man, tell me the secret of life. What is the difference between Heaven and Hell?”

The wise man thought for a moment and said, “You are a stupid young fool! How can an idiot like you even begin to understand this? You are far too ignorant!”

Upon hearing these words, the young warrior became enraged. “I could kill you for what you said!” he screamed.

When he started to draw his sword to kill the wise man, the wise man, pointing to the drawn sword, said, “*That* is Hell!”

Hearing the wise man’s words, the warrior put his sword back in its shield. Seeing the sword put away and the warrior more relaxed, the wise man said, “*That* is Heaven.”

1. Read students the above story, and then ask:

- ☐ What created the argument between the young warrior and the wise man? How did it begin?
- ☐ Why did the wise man say the insulting things he said? Did he know the kind of response he would get? Who is the bully in this story?
- ☐ Was the wise man testing the young warrior’s ability to think for himself, rather than act on judgmental feelings?

2. Tell students:

- The kind of bullying that happens on the school playground is the same kind of bullying that causes international wars. People get hurt, both use physical force, both lack understanding and they act out of past hurts without pausing to “Stop! Think”!
- Another kind of bullying comes from advertisements, billboards, TV and Internet commercials – filled with people trying to sell us products. They use lights, pictures, sound, music and images to persuade us to buy what they advertise.

- Politicians use the media (TV, radio, newspapers, cartoons, videos, films, magazines) to bully us into believing their way is “the right way.”
- Nations bully us into believing that “the other side” – the other country – is bad, evil or the enemy – and that we are the heroes.
- Every day, wherever we are, we are continually being bullied to believe one thing or another, which is why it’s important to become AWARE of thinking for ourselves!
- Bully-like thinking tends to make us believe that people around the world are unequal – that we are different. This causes separation.

**When we separate ourselves from other people,
we create conditions for conflict and war.**

- **Think:** We need to become aware of why people, groups and organizations become divided in their thoughts and actions.
- **Remember:** We don’t all have to look or dress alike, or speak the same language or practice the same customs to get along.
- **Observe:** Differences can be beautiful, once we realize that they aren’t threatening, and that we can respect them for what they are. And we can respect people for who they are.
- **Talk:** Talk about how people who use misinformation are just as much bullies as the ones on the school playground!

■ **Activities and Talks**

To help students learn the difference between an observation and a judgment, use the activity on the following page.

ACTIVITY 5

Am I Observing or Judging?

For each of the situations listed below, ask students: Is this an observation, or is it a judgment?

- ☐ “Mohammed speaks a different language than I do. I can’t communicate with him and probably never will.”
- ☐ “Sylvia doesn’t speak much of our language, but I get the feeling that we have a lot to say to each other. We keep working on it!”
- ☐ “We’re having trouble getting along with neighbors next door to us. We’re thinking of just building a fence so we don’t have to speak with them.”
- ☐ “Our new neighbors just put up a fence so that we can’t see into their yard anymore. I understand their need for privacy. Hope we didn’t make too much noise.”
- ☐ “Indira wears clothing different from what we wear. Some of the kids make fun of her, but I think she looks great.”
- ☐ “Never mind what I stand for! Let me tell you about who I am.
- ☐ “The way to keep the peace is to arm ourselves for war.”
- ☐ “You’re crazy not to buy my video game. It’s the best deal in town and you’re a fool if you walk away from it!”
- ☐ “I’m calling to sell you the best food deal you’ve ever heard of. Let me add you to our list, even though you’re not interested today.”
- ☐ “I believe that war is not healthy for all human beings.”

**When we respect people who are different from us,
and understand what their differences are,
we no longer have a need to be afraid of them.**

LESSON 6

Becoming A Peacemaker

1. Ask students:

- ☐ Do you ever see yourself as a bully?
- ☐ Do you ever see yourself as a victim?
- ☐ Do you feel you have a reputation to uphold to those around you and, therefore, that you can never back down when you get caught in a conflict situation?

2. Tell students:

- Your perspective makes all the difference. Your perspective is either heaven or hell!
- If you see yourself as a “Tough Guy,” that makes it hard for you to back down. That’s hell!
- If you see yourself as “Poor Me,” and you’re afraid to look like a coward, it’s hard for you to back down. That’s hell, too.
- If you see yourself as a “Peacemaker,” you go to your “Stop! Think!” place and you are not afraid to back off or back down.
- As a peacemaker, you know that what’s most important to you is to not fight – to not create conflict! That is heaven!

**When you decide to be a peacemaker,
you show yourself and others
that you have the power and self-control
to solve conflict intelligently – without fighting!**

This takes a lot more strength than fighting!

3. Ask students:

- ☐ Do you think you have a new understanding of what creates conflict, bullying?
- ☐ How do you plan to practice developing your skills to resolve conflict wisely?
- ☐ Can you visualize yourself being a peacemaker? If so, what do you see?
- ☐ Imagine you're on your school playground, or at home, and two people are fighting. As a peacemaker, what would you say? What would you do?

A Word or Two About Manners

- ☐ **Think:** What are some ways you can practice making peace today? How about using some good manners – greeting people you meet with respect? Or holding a door open for someone? Or waiting to speak until someone else is finished talking?
- ☐ **Remember:** Good manners make it possible for people to have intelligent and happy relationships.
- ☐ **Observe:** Look at how people act and react when people act respectfully toward them by using good manners.
- ☐ **Talk:** Just like alternatives to fighting, manners must be practiced. Talk about how you plan to practice the art of good manners!

■ Activities and Talks

On the next page are some “Stop! Think!” questions. Review them with your students. Have fun with them – make a game out of them, if you can.

ACTIVITY 6

Stop! Think! Questions!

Ask students:

- ☐ Do you believe that “might is right”? Why do you think so?
- ☐ Where do you think you learned to believe this?
- ☐ How do TV, newspapers, radio and social media influence you?
- ☐ Who do you think taught you to value what they have to say?
- ☐ Do you have heroes? Who are they? Why are they your heroes?
- ☐ Do you think it's a good idea to harshly punish kids who disobey? Why do you think so? How did you come to believe this?
- ☐ Do you believe everything your family believes?
- ☐ Do you think young people bully because they've been hurt? Why do you think so?
- ☐ Do you think bullies act the way they do, just for the fun of it? Or do you think there's a reason why they bully?
- ☐ Do you think it's okay to be tough and push people around?
- ☐ Do you feel pressure to compete with others? In what way?
- ☐ Do you think that trying to be “perfect” might be a way of bullying yourself?
- ☐ What are some effects of bullying you've seen at school or at home?
- ☐ What are some effects of global bullying you've seen?
- ☐ Have you seen differences between male bullies and female bullies? What are they?

- ☐ Do you think bullying can create “the enemy”? How?
- ☐ Do you believe that bullying leads to war? In what ways?
- ☐ Can violence bring about peace?
- ☐ What do you think you can do personally to create more peace – at home, at school, in the world?
- ☐ Do you understand that there’s only one person in the world you can actually change – and that person is you?
- ☐ What will be your first step?

**Congratulate students on their good work. Tell them:
May the source of your real power be with you!
You have the world in your hands!**

