

WHY IS EVERYBODY ALWAYS PICKING ON ME?

A Special Curriculum for Young People
To Help Them Cope with Bullying

Ages 9 -14



by
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based on the
Education for Peace Series books
by Dr. Terrence Webster-Doyle

To All Victims:

Do you want to learn how to
never be bullied again?

To All Bullies:

Do you want to learn how to get
what you want without bullying?

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Each of the following lessons can be taught in 20-minute segments. However, the student's ability to experience, understand, and practice the material presented is enhanced by the educator's ability to spend time doing exercises and activities in the addendums to each lesson. Students will benefit more from doing one activity than from going through an entire lesson, if the lesson is taught too quickly. Every fourth lesson is a roleplay, in which students may learn more about bullying than in the lessons themselves, because they will be involved in learning by doing. Students will play parts in pre-scripted roleplays and eventually learn to develop their own roleplays as they learn the process. Roleplay offers direct experience, which strongly enhances understanding.

Lesson #1. What Is a Bully? Bullies are people with problems. They come in many different shapes, ages, lifestyles, and nationalities, but they have traits in common. They are people who are hurt, angry, and afraid, who do not know how to deal with their feelings. As a result, they often hurt others as well as themselves. Story: "Boys Will Be Boys": Read and discuss. Two kinds of bullies: introvert and extrovert. Have volunteers show an extrovert bully in action; then, an introvert. We are all bullies at one time or another. What kind are you? Activity: Divide students into groups. Ask half the groups to come up with many ways they have been bullied. Ask other half to come up with ways they have bullied others. Charts: "Ways We've Been Bullied" and "Ways We've Bullied Others." Tell students this curriculum will show victims how to never be bullied again, and will show bullies how to get what they need without bullying.

Lesson #2. How Does Bullying Affect Us? Story: "The Day of the Bee Sting," in *Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me?* p. 23, in which a child, suddenly stung by a bee, jumps up and knocks a bully over, discovering he is really stronger than the bully. Although this victim "won," he still felt the effect of being bullied over and over again 30 or 40 years later. Frightening incidents that happen to us can cause us to feel hurt, anger and fear all our lives. Ask for volunteers to talk about "A Time I Was Bullied." Kids are often bullied in other ways, such as learning to believe there is something wrong with them because they are "different." This is psychological bullying. Activity: Divide students into two groups. Have one group present an example of physical bullying, and the other group present an example of psychological bullying. The best way to deal with bullies in disguise is to know you can use your mind to keep from being bullied. Kids are not born bullies. We learn how to be bullies from adults.

Lesson #3. Why Do Bullies and Victims Exist? While we are young, we learn to play roles such as child, student, team member; as we become adults, we play conscious roles, such as worker, professional, husband, wife, moth-

er, father. We also take on unconscious roles, such as “someone strong,” “someone weak,” “someone dumb,” “victim,” “bully.” The bully’s characteristics are different from the victim’s, but the things that influence a person to be a bully are the same things that influence a person to be a victim! A bully is a victim in disguise! We all have role models, heroes and heroines, and other influences in the world today. Activity: Divide students into groups of four. Assign each group to determine a way we are influenced (bullied) by 1) family, 2) friends, 3) school, 4) media, 5) community leaders, 6) politicians, 7) military leaders. When we try to imitate role models and do what others tell us, we can get confused about who we really are. Chart: Potential Bullies in Our Lives.

Lesson #4. Roleplay: Ask for volunteers to read parts in the roleplay prepared for today’s lesson. Enact a pre-scripted scene in which a victim becomes a bully who then bullies a new victim, who becomes a bully. Students will see first-hand how the chain reaction begins and how it develops. This particular roleplay will be unresolved, and students will be asked to contribute opinions about how to resolve the conflict. There will be no “right” or “wrong” answers. The exercises are meant to develop students’ interest and ability in making decisions they may not have had the opportunity to make before. All students get the opportunity to roleplay both bully and victim so that they can experience a situation from both sides. This develops their understanding. All students will participate in the development of possible solutions to the conflict between bully and victim.

Lesson #5. Earthlings: Creatures Who Fight to Survive. Story: “The Saber-Toothed Tiger’s Revenge,” pp. 4-7 in Tug of War. Show illustration. It is hard to believe human beings were once the ape-like creatures in this story. We are no longer cave-creatures, but in many ways we are still the same: we protect our families, we are territorial, and we compete with other members of our own species. Activity: Divide students into groups; have each group participate in a pre-scripted roleplay (or one of your own) demonstrating how we compete with other members of our own species. Much of what we say and do today is based on the same instinct the cave creatures had: survival. In the past, survival meant fighting. Cave creatures fought for biological reasons: they needed food and shelter to survive. At present, we still fight, but today we fight for psychological reasons. We fight over who has the most food and the best house. With all our technology, we are still primitive creatures. Our future survival depends on our not fighting. Looking at the world from the astronaut’s point of view, we are a single planet of people whirling around space together. We must learn how to not fight.

Lesson #6. How Can We Stop Bullying? Read the story “School of No Sword.” It is essential for us to believe it is possible for us to stop bullying one another. How? First, we need to SEE the danger and destruction it causes, individually and globally; second, take an interest in stopping it. Then, we must learn to understand why people bully each other. Activity: Divide students into pairs. Ask each pair to participate in a pre-scripted scene in which someone is making fun, embarrassing someone, wanting something he or she does not have, wanting to control, feeling jealous—each scene to illustrate why we bully. Discuss afterward. We must develop ways to walk away with confidence when approached by a bully. It is possible to win by not fighting. When we can practice ways to walk away with confidence, and develop our understanding of why people bully, we can control situations that have threatened us in the past. Add to chart: Ways We’ve Been Bullied. Quote: Read following quotation to students. Ask them to contemplate what it means. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer. “Sitting quietly, doing nothing, spring comes, and the grass grows by itself,” Zenrin Kushu. Ask questions provided, or add your own.

Lesson #7. How Victims Can Become Winners. Story: “Do You Mind if I Warm up?” Ask questions regarding the story and students’ opinions of how conflict was handled in the story. Learning martial arts can give you confidence because you acquire skills that make you feel more secure in protecting yourself. It is essential, however, to learn from a qualified teacher who offers both physical skills and confidence-building mental skills. Faced by a bully, we feel less fear, because we have strengthened body and mind, and a potential attacker is often intimidated before we ever get a chance to use what we have learned. Would you prefer that your students learn to end conflict before it starts, or after? There are 12 basic ways to use your head in stopping a fight before it ever starts. Activity: Assign two ways to each of six groups for them to develop a short, pre-scripted roleplay. These mental skills take time to learn; practice makes perfect. Chart: Twelve Ways to Walk away with Confidence.

Lesson #8. Roleplay: No student should have to roleplay in front of others if he/she does not want to, but all students need to get the experience of being a bully and victim, so some of these roleplays are designed to be done as a group, in partners. Introduce students to the concept of “Stop! Think!” Activity: Divide students into pairs. Have partners perform a roleplay for each other (an audience of one). Then, ask the second partner to read the same roleplay to the first partner. These will be followed by questions and discussion. Do roleplays “For Bullies Only,” in *Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me?* p. 80 and “For Victims Only” (to be designed). Do the same with more roleplays (designed for this section). Discussion and questions afterward. It is essential to be open to all responses and opinions to encourage students to speak their minds. If teachers feel a particular roleplay does not work well for their students, they are invited to create their own or to substitute language for already existing roleplays.

Lesson #9. How Bullies Can Become Winners. Story: “The Beating You Know You Will Get,” in *Fighting the Invisible Enemy*, p. 113. If you have ever felt that everybody is picking on you, then you have felt like a victim and a bully! The bully who picks on someone also feels like a victim. Bullying is a lose/lose situation. It is okay to feel you would like to hurt someone, but it is not okay to actually do it. We have the responsibility to not hurt each other and to resolve our conflict. No one is perfect, but we can focus our intention on not hurting. Activity: Divide students into groups; ask each to participate in a roleplay (either pre-scripted or self-written) demonstrating how we can change negative thinking into positive action. We may think and feel like bullying someone, but we do not have to. We have the power to turn our thinking around, which sometimes takes more strength than bullying. To change our behavior we need an interest in change, energy, commitment to carry it through, awareness, skills to change, knowledge of ways to act with confidence, and an interest in talking things over with friends, family, and teachers.

Lesson #10. Awareness Is Everything. Read story “The Miracle of the Martial Arts” in *Eye of the Hurricane*, p. 33, (also as addendum in curriculum). What does it mean to be successful? We live in a hypocritical world, where we are often bullied into doing or taking something that is not in our best interest. Although we live in a competitive society, you do not have to live your life that way. You are what you remember; negative past experiences can contribute to negative attitudes. Many of us think, “I feel bad, so I must be bad.” Activity: Ask a volunteer to blurt out a negative thought. Ask another volunteer to turn that thought into a positive one. Get all students to

participate. To turn negative thoughts into positive ones, we must: (1) recognize “negative” thoughts and feelings are happening to us; 2) allow them to be there without judging them; 3) talk with someone we trust. We must notice that these thoughts and feelings have to do with the past. Focus on life now. The person you want to be is not far from who you are now. Sometimes we are prevented from being the person we think we should be or should not be. We all have something special to offer.

Lesson #11. How Bullying Affects World Peace. Story: “The Difference between Heaven and Hell,” pp. 100-102, Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me? Show illustration page 100 and 101. The issue of peace has been of great concern to all caring human beings since the beginning of humankind; we still have not been able to attain it for everyone. Activity: Divide students into groups. Tell them: The kind of bullying that happens on the school playground is essentially the same bullying that causes international wars. Both are caused by (1) fear (fight or flight) and (2) ignorance (lack of knowledge). Both use physical force or hostile aggression to “win.” Come up with possible solutions for ending bullying in school and in the world. Discuss verbal bullying, called propaganda. People use it to condition others into believing all sorts of things. There is evidence of it in TV commercials, radio, newspapers, films, magazines, comics. Activity: Introduce doublespeak and other jargon we use today. We are taught to take sides, which creates pain, sorrow, war. Chart: Words and Phrases that Manipulate and Confuse.

Lesson #12. Roleplay. Have students participate in pre-scripted roleplay “I’m Doing It Now,” based on the short story about Jeff and Chris, p. 105 in Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me? Activity: Divide students into groups of four or five and ask each group to develop a roleplay that makes use of two ways they have learned to walk away with confidence. Ask each group to select a bully and victim from within the group (or more than one of each) who will play the roles. Have each group present their roleplay. After all have been performed, have an open discussion. Encourage all responses. Allow students to speak their minds and to be open to opinions different from theirs. If a conflict arises in the classroom between two students’ opinions, take that opportunity to have the rest of the class help these two work out their differences.

Lesson #13. Understanding Aggression. Quotation: “My storehouse having been burnt down, nothing blocks the view of the bright moon.” Discuss the quote and what students believe it means. What is the feeling that comes from this quote? Aggression? Resignation? Understanding? What does “aggressive” mean? We can be easily confused, because this word has two meanings—one is positive and one is negative. Aggressive: 1) energetic, full of energy; and 2) being verbally or physically harmful. Activities: Play “Pushing Apart,” a game in which partners push against one another as a challenge. Follow with another game, “Pulling Together,” in which partners pull to maintain their own and one another’s balance. Discuss the difference. Play, “Getting It off Your Chest,” in which each person gets to tell another something bothering him or her. Play “Ruler for a Day” where a ruler gets others to serve him or her. After each game, examine how students have experienced aggression—both kinds.

Lesson #14. Seeing Yourself as Peacemaker. We can all create pictures in our brain of who we want to be and what we want to happen, then, act based on our thoughts. Do you believe in an eye for an eye? That the honorable solution to resolving conflict is through revenge? An ancient martial art philosopher once said, “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the highest skill.” Do you agree? Activity: Play A New Role to Play – “I Can’t Back

Down!” pp. 109-110 in *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Me?* so students understand there is always an honorable way to back down, if your image of yourself is that of a peacemaker. Play “Seeing Yourself as Peacemaker,” p. 110, in which students develop understanding of what creates conflict; develop skills to resolve conflict non-violently; and visualize themselves as peacemakers. Remember an incident, or make one up, between two real people that almost lead to a fight. See yourself as a peacemaker.

Lesson #15. The Power of a Questioning Mind. Review the concept of “Stop! Think!”? Read Story: “The Empty Cup,” from *Eye of the Hurricane*. Questioning is important in our education. Questioning makes our minds sharp and intelligent. It is a form of mental exercise, just as important as physical exercise. When we stop! think! and question, we are more likely to be who we are and less likely to react in harmful, conditioned ways or be who we think we should or should not be. Go over questions that can help strengthen our minds, such as: “Do you think trying to be perfect is harmful—a form of bullying oneself?” “Can violence bring about peace?” Go over relationship skills (manners) that can help us get along with others. Manners/social skills help us get along in the world, help us get what we want by being respectful, and help us get along without bullying. We can learn how to question, how to act, things we can do that are simple and easy to remember that create positive feelings.

Lesson #16. Roleplay. Activity: Do a roleplay based on cave creatures. See yourself in a deep jungle. Notice the monster cave creatures look small. Speak to the cave creatures and tell them they can solve their conflict without fighting. Speak to them as if they were children you have great affection for. Tell them, “You are the first humans. Why are you acting like wild beasts?” Say, “Let’s put our heads together and think up some peaceful ways to solve your problem. We could affect the entire history of humankind!” Show how. Make connection between early cave creatures and people today. Story: “No War, No More,” in *The Flight of the Golden Eagle*, p. 78 (also in addendum). Read and discuss. Congratulate students on their participation and completion of this curriculum. Leave time to celebrate!