



Confessions from a Bully

By Krystal Walker, Aim For Success Speaker

It's hard to admit, but when I was a kid . . . I was a bully. Despite the fact that I came from a good home and I grew up in the church . . . I was a bully. I wasn't always a mean kid – but somewhere along the way, the wheels came off and I definitely went astray.

Ironically, today I'm a speaker for Aim For Success and I've spoken to thousands of students about the pain of bullying. In each presentation, I explain what bullying is and how students can take a stand and put an end to bullying in their schools. I also share my personal story and I suppose that's what challenged me to rethink my past and analyze how I went from being a nice kid to a bully and how it impacted me and those around me.

I grew up in a middle class neighborhood where my parents constantly instilled within me strong beliefs and morals. We attended church regularly as a family and great role models and mentors surrounded me. I was taught to always treat people the way I want to be treated. I honestly listened to these teachings and followed their instructions. Consequently, I was known as the nice girl – the one who got along with everyone. Teachers spoke highly of me and I never got in trouble.

But everything changed the day I decided I wanted to hang with the cool girls.

The cool girls were the popular kids who thought they were better than everyone else. They were the pretty girls with "good hair." Oh yea, "good hair" was the thing to have back then! These girls kept up with the latest trends and fashion and seemed to have an attitude about everything and *no one messed with them!*

I wanted to be liked and accepted by the cool girls so I tried to ease my way into their group. Unfortunately, I never stopped to count the cost. (*Math never was my best subject.*) I didn't realize hanging with the cool girls meant I had to talk like they talked, dress like they dressed and do what they did. The cool kids were everything, but nice. They rolled their eyes and had nasty attitudes. They made fun of kids who didn't wear name brand clothes or have cool hair.



Today, I tell students one of the primary ways girls bully is by excluding others, gossiping, telling secrets and spreading rumors – something the cool girls in my school had definitely mastered. In fact, they were flat out mean! And sadly, I became just like them. I began to pick on kids and make their life miserable. I was beginning to like the new me and felt good about my new image. The more I picked on kids the more the cool kids embraced me. And that's exactly what I wanted, to be accepted and liked. Their approval meant everything to me.

Things progressed to the point where I was actually bullying my best friend. But she wasn't just my best friend at school, we were neighbors and our families were close. And the more I hung out with the cool kids, the more I excluded her. I stooped so low that I would pick on her in front of the cool girls just to gain more approval.

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But why – why was I doing this? I had traded a friendship I cared deeply about for the acceptance of some really mean girls. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but to me – it was worth the tradeoff.

What's even more amazing . . . there was a time when I was the one who was bullied. I knew exactly how it felt to be picked on, to be excluded and made fun of by others. I can't believe I could then turn around and inflict that same pain on others – especially my best friend.

I now understand that although my actions were wrong – they were typical. Research shows that kids who take on the role of a bully have often experienced severe emotional or physical pain from others at home or school. At some point, most kids (and even adults) come to a breaking point where they can't take the pain any longer. Soon they find it feels better to be the one inflicting the pain than receiving the pain. Sort of like kicking the proverbial dog.

Eventually, I began to feel horrible about what I was doing. My initial goal was never to hurt people. My goal was to be accepted. Hurting people just became the means to the goal. I struggled deeply with my desires to fit in, yet the inner conflict was so real and I knew I had to do something about it.



I then came to the conclusion that being labeled as a cool kid wasn't worth the pain I was causing others. So I made a conscious decision to STOP. I literally walked away from the mean girls and that disgusting lifestyle and traded it for a life focused on being a friend to everyone. My goal from that point on was to treat people exactly the way I wanted to be treated. So in essence, I had made a full circle and returned to my parent's values and teachings.

When I speak to students, I speak from a place of experience. I understand exactly what they are going through – whether they are the bully, the one being bullied or the student who is nice to EVERYONE. I encourage students to stop the bullying by being nice to absolutely everyone. After all, anyone can be nice to their friends, but it takes effort to go out of your way to be nice to EVERYONE.

Remember:

Life's a lot more fun when you spend your day making people smile instead of inflicting pain.

Amazing 6 Minute Youtube for the Entire Family
<http://youtu.be/PIHtuKc3Gjg>

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Is There a Bully in Your Home?

Bullying often starts at home and children in elementary school have often perfected their bullying skills. If bullying doesn't stop by middle school or high school, it often continues throughout a person's life. So here are some really tough questions for each person in your family to answer.

Are YOU a bully?

- Dad's, do you bully your children and/or your wife?
- Mom's, do you bully your children and/or your husband?
- Children, do you bully your parents and/or your siblings?
- Do you bully people at school or work?

Are you guilty of:

- Rolling your eyes in disgust at certain family members?
- Putting down and bad mouthing family members?
- Embarrassing or making fun of family members?
- Inflicting physical or emotion pain on family members?

Would your spouse, children or acquaintances describe you primarily as:

- Encouraging or Annoying?
- Kind or Hurtful?
- Supportive or Demeaning?

In our Bullying Presentations we teach students something that might be helpful in your home...

It's never okay to be mean or sit back and watch while others are mistreated.

Schedule Your Programs for this year and next year.

You've heard us say our calendar is filling fast – but this year we mean it more than ever before. This year's schedule is really getting tight! If you want programs this school year please call or emails ASAP!

And it's not too early to schedule your programs for next year. By scheduling now, you'll have a far better chance of getting your desired dates.

Call or email Stacey at
ssheehan@aimforsuccess.org
or Call 972-422-2322, ext. 223

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