



James Burns

13 Simple  
Anti  
Bullying  
Activities

That Really  
Work

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## Introduction

Bullying has become an epidemic in our schools. However it is defined, bullying is not just child’s play, but a terrifying experience many American school children face every day. It can be as direct as teasing, hitting, or threatening, or indirect as exclusion, rumors, or manipulation. During the past decade, bullying has become more lethal and has occurred more frequently than it had in the previous two decades. Cyber bullying with the use of cell phones, the computer and the social media have created an environment for our children where they can be bullied at any time and in any place. The recent suicides by some of the victims of bullying have gained much media attention have proven further that, bullying can no longer be explained away, as some adults are inclined to do, as a normal part of growing up. Bullying has only harmful, not beneficial, effects for the target and the perpetrator- even the bystander. Many children in our nation’s schools are robbed of the opportunity to learn because they are bullied and victimized daily. Bullying exacts a terrible toll on children, and the scars can last a lifetime.

## Activities

### Activity One – The Thing I Like Most About You

In order to create a classroom of caring and compassionate learners, teachers should encourage language in the classroom that edifies the student. Too often students say things to one another in a hurtful manner and are not even aware of the damage that they do to another person. This activity will provide the participants with a strategy that gives their students more positive language. This is not only important for the bully to learn but for the whole class. In reality the entire class is a bystander to bullying behavior. Based upon the previous activity the class should have enough information to complete this activity.

#### “The Thing I Like Most About You”

- 1) Have the students write their name on a piece of paper and place it in a hat or a container.
- 2) The teacher will draw a name out of the hat. Let's say the name is Jim.
- 3) Jim will not be involved in the activity at this time.
- 4) The students will then be instructed to write one paragraph describing the thing that they like most about Jim.
- 5) The paragraph must contain one quality that they like with supporting details.
- 6) Each student will then read his/her short essay to Jim.
- 7) The essays should be collected by the teacher first and screened so that any negative comments or backhanded compliments would NOT be read.
- 8) Jim would receive these essays in a decorated folder to take home and to read when he would like to.
- 9) This activity should start around October when the students have had a chance to get to know each other

#### **Possible Questions about this activity:**

**Q -What if a student refuses to write the essay?**

**A –** His/her name is removed from the hat until he participates.

**Q – Should all students have to do this?**

**A-** Yes. It is not about feeling like it at this point. It is to give the students the language to say positive things to their classmates.

**Q -What if student writes negative comments?**

**A** – His/her essay is pulled and the teacher determines if this was intentional or if the student just didn't know any better. The teacher then sits with the student to assist in making revisions.

**How does this help stop bullying in your classroom?**

This activity creates an environment of caring and concern and provides bystanders (the class) with the language and the ability to speak up when negative comments are made. The student who is selected and has the essays written for him or her receives the support of the class and begins to be viewed differently by other class members. The bully has to participate as well, and is far more reluctant to make negative comments and bully victims after the activity is completed. He realizes that the class is using different language and is more supportive of each other. This activity should be ongoing and be done at least once per week. It helps bystanders by creating in them the idea that they are not in the minority but the majority. It can also be done as part of a creative writing lesson.

**Activity Two - Bully Free School Guided Fantasy**

The students will be given an opportunity to imagine what a bully free school might look like. The teacher will read the following to the students (see below) and have the participants visualize a bully free school. Once this is completed, the participant will use the information to create the bully free environment and fill in the stems that follow.

I want you to find a comfortable position that you can stay in the whole time I am reading. When you are comfortable, I want you to close your eyes. Take a deep breath – breathe in, and now breathe out. Let your body begin to relax, as you breathe deeply in and out, let all the noises around you fade into the background. We are going to use our imaginations to take a journey to a school. This school is your school, but it is special because in this school there is no name-calling and no bullying at all. I am going to help you walk through this school, but it is up to you to decide what this school looks like, sounds like, and how it feels to be there. We'll talk later about what you see, but for now, let's start our trip.

You are standing in front of the bully-free school building. You are looking at the building and you can see the name of the school written on the front. What is the school called? What does it look like? Take a look around to see what is outside the school, and then move a little closer so that you are near the door of the school. Turn your head towards the door, and listen to the sounds coming from inside. What do you hear? Is it noisy or quiet inside? Based on the noises you hear, what do you think people inside are doing at this time of day?

Now take a step so that you are inside the school. You can see a school office ahead of you, and there are adults and students inside, working and talking. What are the people in the office doing? What are they talking about? Walk past the office and into one of the school hallways. There are students in the hallway, opening lockers and talking. Can you hear their conversations? What do you hear the students saying to one another? How are they acting? What do you see?

Now walk past the students in the hallway until you get to the door of the classroom. Stand outside the classroom for a moment and listen by the door. You can hear a teacher's voice – what is it saying? How does the teacher's voice sound? Now you can hear students talking and answering the teacher. What are the students saying? Walk into the classroom and look around. What does the classroom look like? How are the students sitting in the room? What is hanging on the walls? What types of activities are students doing? As you look around, remember that in this school there is no bullying, and no one calls names.

When you are ready, stand up and walk back into the hallway. Walk down the hall until you see the door that leads into the cafeteria. Wait outside the door and listen to what is going on inside the cafeteria. It is lunchtime for some of the students at the school. Is it noisy or quiet? Step inside the cafeteria and walk towards the tables where students are eating lunch. Sit down at the table and listen to students talking as they eat. What are the students talking about? Look around and notice how students are seated at the tables. Are students sitting alone or in groups? Is anyone left out? Do students seem happy to be in the cafeteria today, or are they eager to leave and go back to class?

Stand up and use the door on the side of the cafeteria to walk outside to the playground where some students are having recess. Walk over to where students are playing on the swings, monkey bars, and slide. Watch how they play – are they playing in big groups or small groups? Are some students playing alone? What do you hear students saying to one another while playing? Walk over to where two students both want to use a swing. Listen to the students talk about what to do.

Remember, neither student is calling names or bullying the other. How do they figure out how to share the swing?

As you watch the students solve the problem, begin to walk back towards the school. As you leave the playground, look around at the students playing and think about if what you see there looks different from what occurs at our school. Walk back to the door and go through the cafeteria again, out into the hallway, and back towards the office. When you reach the front of the school, enter the office and ask to speak to the principal of the school. The principal comes out – what does she/he look like? Say hello, and tell the principal one thing that you really like about your visit to the school. Say goodbye to the principal, and leave the office. Walk out the front door of the school.

We are done with our tour of the bully-free school now, and it's time to talk about what each of you saw, heard, and felt while we were visiting. When you are ready you can open your eyes and share your ideas.

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**If the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school) was free of name-calling and bullying it would: LOOK LIKE THIS, SOUND LIKE THIS, AND FEEL LIKE THIS. Participants will write their description based upon the senses mentioned. They will then share it with a partner, base group, and then the class.**

### **Activity Three - Class Mural**

The students will take their notes from the previous activity and will design an anti bullying mural that will be displayed in the room. This mural can have pictures, words, and sayings that indicate what a bully free classroom/school might look like. The class can work in cooperative groups of 3, 4, or 5 and create two or three murals if they like. The students may also create a digital (PowerPoint) presentation of their bully-free classroom and share it with the class.

## Activity Four - Cyber Bullying Vocabulary

The following are tactics used by cyber bullies against their targets:

- **Bashing** – Using the Internet to make contact and commit direct verbal or visual attacks at any time. Cyber bullies may post comments on blogs or send text messages from a phone. They may also take photos of targets or steal a photo from an online source to alter images in damaging ways or add cruel or derogatory comments and post them online for others to see. One very concerning trend is the videoing of students being beaten, and then having these posted on video sharing sites.
- **Exclusion** – Being excluded from participating in online activities with their peers, which can bring on feelings of rejection. Exclusion may occur in an online gaming environment, group blogging environment, or any other password-protected community. Exclusion may also occur in an instant messaging or text messaging environment when a cyber bully pointedly excludes their target from the buddy list of a group of students.
- **Flaming** – A heated, short-lived argument that often includes offensive, rude, and vulgar language, insults and sometimes threats. Flaming can occur via text or instant messaging, in blogs of social networking sites, chat rooms, discussion boards, or online gaming sites.
- **Outing** – Disclosing secrets or personal and private information about the target that embarrasses or humiliates him or her. A common way to “out” someone is to forward a message from the target that contains intimate, personal information to others.
- **Posing** – A form of indirect attack where a cyber bully creates Web sites pretending to be the target, or, using the target’s user access information, posts defamatory comments on other sites; when the cyber bully pretends to be the target and says mean things about the target’s friends, it can cause those friends to reject them.

**Name that Tactic:** After being introduced to the above list the students will be given the following scenarios or the scenarios can be read to them and be asked to identify what tactic was used.

For the scenarios below, which bullying tactic (**posing, outing, flaming, bashing, exclusion**) is each an example of:

1. Tom and Jim had never liked each other, especially on the soccer field. After practice they would use electronic messages to send insults and call each other names. Finally, Jim told Tom he better watch his back at soccer practice the next day.

\_\_\_\_\_ (***Bashing***)

2. Sandy and Kim were fairly good friends, but Sandy was secretly envious of Kim because John was her boyfriend. One afternoon, they were working on a social studies project on the computer at Kim's house. Sandy watched Kim log onto her email and in the process discovered Kim's password and user name. Later, Sandy logged on to Kim's account and, pretending to be Kim, sent a hurtful message to her boyfriend.

\_\_\_\_\_ (***Posing***)

3. Thomas was a fairly popular seventh grader. But he had been overweight most of his life and was sensitive about the other guys seeing him change clothes in the locker room. Seth, a new student having trouble making friends, used his cell phone to take a picture of Thomas with his shirt off in the locker room. By the time the next class started, this unflattering picture of Thomas was flying around school.

\_\_\_\_\_ (***Outing***)

4. Alisha had tried really hard to fit in with a group of popular girls at school. She had a disagreement with the leader of this group and now the girls have all blocked her from their IM accounts. (***Exclusion***)\_\_\_\_\_

5. Sara was recently honored for her good grades. Kim, a girl who had been a friend of Sara's, felt she was getting stuck up, so she created a "Sara Thinks She's Better" Web site. There Kim, with help from some friends, posted some unflattering jokes and untrue gossip about Sara.

\_\_\_\_\_ (***Flaming***)



## **Activity Five - The Creation of Cyber Bullying Public Service Announcement**

. The students should be broken into pairs and prepare a public service announcement designed to create awareness about the topic of cyber bullying. This announcement can be a “radio spot,” a television message (skit), or even a PowerPoint presentation. In preparing this **announcement the students should realize that an effective public service announcement is for the good of the community and it must:**

- Attract the attention of your target audience (Create awareness and a need: to stop cyber bullying)
- Speak to the audience in their own language (use terms that parents and teachers can relate to)
- Relate to the audience’s lives (Are their students or children being cyber bullied?)
- Deliver a single core message (Stop cyber bullying)
- Deliver the message with clarity (To the point)
- Motivate the audience to act. (What can be done?)

## **Activity Six - Social Media Friend or Foe**

. This is a great activity for middle or high school students. It creates a lively debate and has the students researching both sides of the social media dilemma. The class will be divided in half. One half, the Pro side, will prepare to defend the following statement:

**Social Media has allowed for greater convenience and has created an environment for people to get to know each other much more easily.**

The other half, the Con side, will prepare to defend this statement:

**Social Media has invaded privacy and allows for individuals to bully and harass people at a much greater rate than in the past.**

The debate begins with the Pro team presenting their case for 5 minutes. While the Pro team presents, the Con team should be developing challenge questions. The Con team has 10 minutes to ask rebuttal questions.

Now the Con team presents their case for 5 minutes and the Pro team challenges for 10 minutes.

Next there is a 15 minute preparation period for each side to construct their closing arguments. The Con team has 3 minutes to present their closing statements, followed by the Pro team closing statements. One member from each side with the instructor will decide the winner.

From its inception technology has been used to create worldwide communication and convenience. Convenience being the keyword; anything can now be written to anyone at any time. Cyber bullying is something that can be done anywhere at any time. What can be done to control the impulse that drives someone to bully on line or by using the social media?

## **Activity Seven - Creation of an Acceptable Use Policy for Cyber Bullying**

Schools normally have an acceptable use policy for internet use. Educating students about acceptable media use both in and out of school is becoming more and more important for teachers. Classroom teachers should not only be aware of what is acceptable and not acceptable but also be able to teach this to their students. Students regard digital technologies as powerful and compelling tools for learning, productivity, communication and collaboration. Thoughtful, progressive policy realizes the potential of technology and acknowledges that ICT (information and communication technology) must be broad-based and used intensively by educators, administrators and students — the critical dynamic if teachers and students are to communicate, share new knowledge and extend learning beyond school walls and classroom hours.. **The students will in cooperative groups develop an acceptable use policy that they can use a guideline for internet use and cyber bullying.**

### **Four Big Ideas for Your Acceptable Use Policy**

- Responsible personal conduct within the online environment is no different than responsible personal conduct face-to-face. (You don't text something that you would not say in person)
- Individuals must protect personal safety online. (How can I be affected by social media?)
- Civic life has an expanding digital dimension that demands responsible engagement by individuals and groups. (Am I responsible for my words and actions?)
- There are long--lasting implications to publishing in the online environment. (How am I affecting another person?)

Once the acceptable use policy has been developed the class will share their policy with the class. This policy should be developed based upon grade level and be language specific to both younger and older children. **The schools' role in this is to educate the students regarding the potential damage that can be done by cyber bullying.**

### **Activity Eight - Positive Self Talk Game**

**Research indicates that 77% of self talk is negative and for every minute of a negative thought, it requires 100 minutes to change.** Have the students write a series of put downs on individual slips of paper. (No obscene language, personal, or racist comments). Drop the slips into a hat or container. Invite one student to draw a slip out of the hat and give it to you. Write the put down on chart paper. Have the class form two lines with enough space between them for you and the student to walk comfortably. As you and the student walk through the group, the other students call him/her the name, or use the put down. Meanwhile, you whisper positive comments in the student's ear. (Example: "You're not like that." "You can stay calm." "Don't believe what they say." "You're more mature than they are." Next, the students walks back through the group alone using positive self talk ("I'm not like that," etc. Repeat this process with other students.

### **Activity Nine - Messages From ME-ME**

**Messages From ME-ME** – Have the student's select four statements from the list below and write the statements down on an index card. With a hole-punch, put a hole in each corner and tie some yarn or string to each corner so it is long enough to put over their head. Have the participants wear this card throughout the day. With a little creativity these statements can be laminated, reduced and made into

key rings for the students. it is a great way to reinforce the sayings especially when students are in difficult situations.

**“I DESERVE TO BE TREATED WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT.”**

“I’m special and unique.”

“I’m creative and talented.”

**“I CAN SET GOALS AND REACH THEM.”**

“I can solve problems.”

“I can ask other people for help.”

“I have a right to be imperfect.”

“I have a right to make mistakes.”

**“EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES.”**

“I can learn from my mistakes.”

“I’m valuable and worthwhile . . . just the way I am.”

**“I CAN GET THROUGH THIS.”**

“I’m learning and growing.”

“I’m not alone.”

**“I’M OKAY.”**

“I’m strong and capable.”

“Even if I don’t feel so great right now, I’ll feel better soon.”

The previous two activities have been adapted from [“The Bully Free Classroom” by Allan L. Beane, Ph.D](#)

## **Activity Ten - Wrinkled Wanda**

On chart paper, have the participants trace an outline of a full body person. (See below for an example) Once the outline has been traced, the participants will write unkind, rude, and disrespectful statements all over the outline. These are statements that could be made to another person like, “You’re a loser, Nobody likes you, You are dumb.” Identify the drawing as a girl named Wanda. After Wanda is completely filled with a variety of negative comments, have the participants crumble the drawing, and then un-crumble it. Post the wrinkled drawings around the room. Explain to the class that these drawings are examples of what negative comments can do to a person who is bullied. Bullying comments can destroy a person’s self image and often leads to a defeated body language in the victim. Next have the participants do the drawing again. This time write as many positive comments on the drawing as possible. Statements like, “You did such a nice job, or I enjoy your friendship. Fill it with really nice statements. Cut

this drawing out, but don't wrinkle it. Post these drawings around the room. This person is now just called Wanda. What is the difference between the two? Have the participants get into base groups and discuss how they would introduce this lesson to their students and invent any variations on the activity that would be helpful to their students.

### **Activity Eleven - The Toothpaste Activity**

Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Place a strip of masking tape on the length of the table. With a tube of toothpaste, have the volunteer run a bead of toothpaste on the length of the masking tape. Now ask the participant to put the toothpaste back in the tube. Obviously, it can't be done. This is an example of how hurtful words once spoken cannot be taken back. Bullies say hurtful words frequently and need to know the impact that their words have on their victims.

### **Activity Twelve - Who am I?**

This activity requires an illustration about something that happened to me from the time I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade until I graduated from high school. My name is Jim and it became rather endearing to some to call me Jimbo. I really didn't mind it but someone decided to drop the Jim at some point and call me Bo. I accepted the handle but way down deep I wish that folks would just call me by my real name, Jim. Oh, everyone meant no harm, but my parent's, teachers, friends, coaches, all called me Bo. I didn't have the heart to tell them that I didn't like it. I lived with it. Once I got to college, I made everyone aware that my name was Jim. Often we as teachers can call students by names that we hear other students call them, and may not even be aware that they may not like being called certain names. Address your students by their actual name to avoid leveling the ground and jeopardizing your authority. If you have any question about this ask yourself what Beaver Cleaver's teacher called him. "Theodore."

Have the participants write down on a sheet of paper names that they were called when they were younger or that they may even be called now. After they have done this have them crumble up the paper and throw it in the garbage can as indicator that they will never be called this name again. Next have the participants write down on another sheet of paper what they want to be called as an indicator that this is what my name actually is.

In their classrooms teachers can have their students do this activity and write down the names that they want to be called and with the use of a name book describe all the positive attributes that that their name has connected with it. For example, James means truthful. Post the students names around the room on laminated cards and celebrate each student's name, what it means, and who they are.

## **Activity Thirteen - Character Education and Respect**

Bullying behavior displays a lack of regard for the rights and privileges of another person. Often teachers will focus on the behavior and ignore the root problem of disrespect. Character education is mostly taught in a haphazard manner and is almost ceremonious in nature. Bullies are anti social, lack empathy and conscience. It is extremely important to incorporate lessons that speak to the development of character and emotional intelligence. Have the students in pairs come up with synonyms for the word respect. While the students are in pairs have them share one unique thing about themselves to their partner. **Some examples might be: esteem, honor, regard, value, cherish, appreciate, admire. Have them share their list with the class and post these synonyms around the room.**

**Valuing the Differences** – Everyone has different qualities that make them unique. Bullies usually focus on the weaknesses of others and have little regard for the differences that another person has. They do not value the very unique qualities of others.

**A Truly Unique Person** – The students will now in cooperative groups draw a truly unique person. Each person in the group will be responsible for drawing one or more body parts and explain why they believe that it is unique. Follow the following format.

- Draw a truly unique person, one part at a time.
- Create a totally unique person, with a head drawn by one student, a torso drawn by another student, and lower body drawn by another.
- Define the most positive qualities of this person.
- Display the drawings in the room