

Reflecting Inward Life Coaching

Bullying: The Need For Power & Control

Objectives

1. Recognize the difference between someone who bullies and just a mean person
2. Understand how someone who bullies is created and why they bully others
3. Understand how a person who bullies choose their victims
4. Learn how to respond in a bully situation
5. Learn how to prevent bullies and victims from being created

What is a bully?

A person who bullies is someone who targets specific individuals who they perceive to be weaker than them and harasses them either verbally (socially, emotionally, mentally) or physically (including verbal threats of violence). A mean person *acts like* a bully to nearly *everyone*. They don't focus on a certain person or group that they feel are weaker.

Why do people who bully...bully?

What do you think makes a person who bullies act the way they do?

Many bullies treat others as subordinate in order to feel powerful and in control. Sometimes this is because they don't feel like they have power or control in other parts of their lives, so they create situations where they can feel like they have some level of control. Let's jump into a little history-based social psychology to better understand the need for power and control over others. Not long ago, the human race's...race...for survival was necessary. If you didn't have land, you didn't have food! So, you were either someone's indentured servant, a serf, or a slave to someone with more power. Knowing this, what would motivate a "master" to keep your status? Land was a sign (and still is) of

social status. We still have world leaders going to war over land! For many individuals, the *fear* of losing status, power, control and *options* for a life of *struggle and uncertainty* was enough to blindly look at others as *worthy* of being “lower-class” citizens *meant to be used* for service to the more “civilized”, “worthy”, or “chosen” by a personally accepted superior force (ie God). If you have an unconscious (even if irrational) drive to survive (fill your “needs”), it is easy to forgo others’ needs. To understand this deeper, European and Euroasian culture has valued “ownership” of land and, well, all stuff, as a part of status and power- which insures their “survival.” In contrast, Indigenous American, Australian, and African cultures were the exact opposite. No one could own Mother Earth or anything in nature. They simply respected each other’s current place of dwelling, used what was *necessary* and *gave back* to Mother Nature. They saw themselves as a part of nature and its cycle of life instead of as masters of power, control, and ownership over it.

How are the need for power/control and survival related? How is this connection seen in today’s world?

Consider what it means to “survive.” Do you feel our ancestor’s need to survive and our own today are expressed the same? Explain. Do you feel the modern world’s way of survival is the healthiest? Why or why not?

Besides our historical background that is passed down through attitudes and beliefs as a part of our culture, there are other ways a bully is created, including:

- An example observed in their primary environment is also a bully. If this is the case, they literally have been taught that this way of thinking, feeling, and acting is normal. This learning via environmental observation happens by age two. If they have observed a bully/victim relationship in their primary environment, they have seen the consequences and benefits of being a victim versus bully and have decided to be the stronger, more dominant one. Even at the age of two. They don’t want to become a victim themselves. Unfortunately, the behavior of a bully is not acceptable in any healthily functioning society. As they progress through life,

they will find **all** their relationships to be stressed and hurt many people along the way. As a result, they will choose relationships that are like their childhood primary environment and may never learn how to heal the parts of them that will allow them to have what every human longs for: An emotionally safe, loving place in the world, where they are valued for their positive strengths.

- They, deep down, feel like they're not good enough, and their natural defense is to lash out to show bystanders they are strong and capable. This may be due to an early childhood experience where they felt rejected or neglected by those in their primary environment. ***This experience(s) were likely unintentional by those who hurt them, and they may have no idea what impact it has had and will continue to have on the child throughout their life. We all do the best we know how, until we learn a different, better way.***

Without access to proper guidance to overcome the false belief that they are “not good enough,” they learn other ways to emotionally survive. This means that they are not aware of and do not know how to process their thoughts or emotions that lead to their behavior. They have not yet learned how to express prosocial behaviors. These unresolved insecurities are readily making up stories about their place in their environment and potentially misinterpreting signals all around them. For example, a look, gesture, or words not about them but interpreted as about them may trigger their false beliefs about themselves and lead to them lashing out to emotionally preserve themselves.

With this being said, bullies, generally, have a fairly high self-esteem. They may see themselves as great while putting up a 10-foot-thick wall of protection that allows them to effectively ignore the thoughts and emotions that cause them to engage in bullying behaviors. *To recap, a person who bullies is not born a bully. It is not who they are! This is why I refer to them as “a person who bullies” instead of “a bully.” They are created and simply haven't learned the appropriate skills to see and value themselves or others and to not fear the idea that it is ok to be equal to others.*

What are the 3 ways described above that “create” a bully? Based on this information, what are some things you can do to help someone acting like a bully? Be specific.



Bullies need to see examples of how to communicate their needs.

Bullies need to understand their feelings and needs.

How A Person Who Bullies Chooses Their Victims

People who bully choose victims who:

1- Don't have friends to support or defend them. It's a lot easier for a lion to attack a wildebeest if they are alone in a field. Unfortunately, those who are bullied are often seen by their peers as lower on the social ladder *because* they are bullied! It's a vicious cycle.

2- Don't have the social skills necessary to stand up for themselves.

3- Are generally passive (won't fight back). A person who bullies is not looking for competition. They're looking for an easy take-down.

- a. The victim may have learned not to fight back from their own emotional trauma situations. If their fight or flight response is telling them to "freeze," they may not have a choice until they learn the skills to override this response. Question: Does this sound like a person who deserves to be hurt even more?
- b. Another easy victim is an HSP, which stands for *Highly Sensitive Person*. Despite what you may be thinking about this title, this is *not* someone who gets their feelings hurt easily. HSP is a personality type that is seen from soon after birth. These people are aware of every stimulus in their environment. Their 5 senses are *not* any better than others, but their brain picks up and processes the most minute detail of everything around them. This can be extremely overwhelming, especially at school or in other environments that are highly populated. Every voice, every locker slammed, lights and music pulsing, the energy (positive or negative) of every person permeating and pushing in upon them. These people might seek refuge by avoiding large groups of people, avoiding eye contact, listening to noise-canceling music with headphones, or even running to the bathroom to cry (for seemingly unknown reasons to the observer) when overstimulated. *This is especially challenging for a person who does not know they are an HSP personality type.* An observer may think HSPs are depressed, withdrawn, a loner, or non-social, when really they are trying to remain balanced in a world that never

stops. This may lead to less social relationships, which leads us back to less social support and appearing as “weak” to a bully. There is *nothing wrong* with HSPs. They are simply more aware of their surroundings than the 70% of the world that are non-HSPs. However, because they do not know about the 30% that are like them, they may be treated like and believe that there is something wrong with them. Again, I ask the question: Does this sound like the kind of person who deserves to be bullied?

Now that you know why people who bully do so and how they choose their victims, what can you personally do to help prevent bully situations/events?

Those who are frequently bullied may also be dealing with their own self-worth issues and need to discover and accept their personal value. The same is true for many bullies. One person with unmet emotional needs or false self-beliefs goes on to be a bully to feel important while the other ends up being their victim. Sounds like both of these individuals need some guidance to understand just how important they are, especially since their main environment is teaching them otherwise.

What is something you could do to help these people become aware of their individual importance?

One of the quickest ways I’ve seen attitudes and behaviors change is to find something you like about the other person and *tell them* about it. If you can’t find something immediately about their character that you like, stick with something simple. “Hey, I like your shoes” has changed mortal enemies to friends several times in my experience working with youth.

How To Respond To A Bully Situation

Hopefully, you have caught on to some necessary steps to respond to a bully already, such as ensuring that those who don’t have a lot of friends or support have *you* to come

to their defense as a human being worthy of kindness.

It's time to get serious here. The suicide rates in America, especially among youth, have skyrocketed due to bullying and/or lifestyle rejection (which is personal rejection). A lifestyle which is rejected because it goes against what is considered "culturally acceptable" *at this point in history*. I hope none of you ever have to experience what it is like to have a peer die to suicide via bullying or personal rejection. However, if you knew that a peer being bullied (either in person or electronically) was actually going to take their own life, would you want to stop them? I hope you said 'yes'. And if you are doing this activity as a class, I hope your whole class said 'yes'. One of the biggest challenges in social situations is called *the bystander effect*. This is when a group of people see something happening that they don't agree with, but no one does anything until someone else does. If someone else steps forward, others will. This is where the next very important way to respond to a bully situation comes into play. I want to make sure it is very clear.

The more people who step forward to surround and defend a victim-even if to just physically stand with them, the more likely a bully will stop bullying them and the more likely the victim will feel supported and important. Thus, there is a significantly decreased chance that they will attempt suicide due to bullying.

You don't have to be friends. You don't have to agree with their choices or lifestyle. But as a human being, we all deserve the chance to figure out life and our place in it.

The way to approach a bully situation depends on if the bullying tactics are social/emotional or physically violent/ life threatening. First, let's talk about what you say in a bullying situation that is social or emotional. If the bully has learned to be angry, defensive, and lash out when they feel threatened, is yelling at them, calling names, humiliating them etc., the best way for them to learn a better way? It's time to reach into our Understanding of Human Emotional Needs Suitcase. This person who bullies chooses to do so to fill an emotional need.

What are some of the emotional needs that a person who bullies may have but is not receiving in their normal environment?

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When we step forward to support the victim, what can we say to fill those needs? (Remember to avoid sending a message that makes them feel weak or “lesser” than others).

This is an example I thought of for how to talk to Billy, someone who has been bullying Stephanie:

“Billy, your actions are saying that you are feeling angry right now. Stephanie hasn’t done anything to you to make you feel angry. She is talented and kind and hasn’t done anything to you to deserve this kind of treatment. We want you to know that we care about you and are here to listen and help you when you are ready to talk about what it is you need. However, if you don’t try to express your needs in a better way, it will be difficult to find people who care to support you in the future. Go take some time to think about how to tell us what you need.” And then either wait for Billy to walk away or walk away as a group...including Stephanie . P.S. If you are in a school environment, you need to go straight to the counselor (with Stephanie) and report what happened. Your positive peer posse will explain to your teacher, if necessary. You might also consider ending your comment with “Do you want to go with us to Ms. Jones’ office to talk through what you're needing? We’re on our way right now.” It’s a genuine invitation to get help, but if Billy’s not ready, it will definitely make him walk away.

Take a moment to think about what was in my example. What messages were being sent? Was there potential for Billy to misunderstand the intention? If not, explain. If so, how can it be changed to send the most supportive, positive message?

Look back at your original response to what to say to fill a bully’s needs in a bully situation. Is there anything you would like to change or add? Explain and rewrite the soapbox message to *your* Billy.

It's time to make a decision. As a group. As a community. As a human just like the human being victimized.

What can you do, in the moment, to stop a person who is bullying someone?

Now, let's talk about when the person who is bullying is using a life threatening approach such as wielding a knife, gun, or is otherwise physically violent. This is when our amygdala (fight or flight center) is on fire to *truly* save our lives by fighting, running, or freezing, and *we are entitled to utilize any and all means to save our lives! Yes! Run! If it's absolutely necessary*, then *fight*. This doesn't mean punching them for making fun of you, putting you in the garbage can, or stealing your lunch money (or someone else's). This means that in order to live in this exact moment, you *need to fight* for your life. If they are *threatening* to use these physical tactics, but aren't seeming to use them *right now*, you need to report this *immediately* and any observers need to go with you for the report. Threats for physical harm include statements such as: "I'm going to kill you", "I'll break your legs", and "I'll make sure you never see with those ugly eyes again." This last one is a social threat (calling their eyes ugly) but also a threat to damage/remove them or kill the person.

If you are a part of a group of people observing, then you are all a part of the situation!

1- If possible, one (or more) person(s) can call 911 for immediate help.

2- One or more person(s) need to run to get immediate help.

Let's think: Who does this person running need to get and where would they find them? If that person is not available, what next? What can you think of to find someone as quickly as possible?

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Avoid becoming a victim yourself, if possible.

If you are in a class for this activity, discuss with your teacher/counselor what some other appropriate approaches would be that agree with your school's policies.

If you are the one being bullied and no one is around to help you...

Your greatest defense is to strengthen your self-confidence. This will prepare you to calmly look them in the eye and unflinchingly tell them that you don't deserve to be treated this way and to leave you alone. Empower yourself by doing the [VIA Character Strengths](#), [Personality Type](#), [Personal Values](#), [High 5 Strengths](#), and [Gardner's Intelligence](#) assessments. You are valuable and can confidently stand with a knowledge of your value when you see *on paper* just how important you are. Also, practice your own verbal response to a bully.

What is an appropriate thing to say (with confidence!!) if you are the one being bullied?

However, if your life is immediately threatened, then you have two options:

- 1) *Run... as fast as you can... screaming for help. Try yelling "FIRE."*
- 2) *Fight with everything you've got knowing this world needs you!*

How to Prevent Bullies and Victims From Being Created

Today, we're going to focus on the importance of helping *all people* to find and apply their personal strengths as valuable individuals in our community and society. Not only

do you need to see your own value, but you need to see *others'* value as well so that they know there is a place for them in the world. But first, I want to give some bullet points that are applicable to all humans:

- Everyone does the best they know how until they learn a different/better way. This means that no one *intended* to hurt you, it was an automatic response due to their training.
- The way people feel and behave toward you is not about you. It's about *them*. We're all in charge of our own feelings and behavior, no matter what the other person has done to instigate feelings within us. With that being said, never assume you have no fault in the situation. Their feelings and behavior may be theirs, but that isn't a free ticket to knowingly manipulate a situation.
- Awareness of our feelings, thoughts, and emotions is paramount in all social interactions. Our ability to *quickly* understand our feelings, correct irrational thoughts, and respond with appropriate behavior is called *Emotional Intelligence* and is crucial for a healthily-functioning society.
 - Now, a little biology lesson! The amygdala, the immediate and automatic “fight or flight” center of our brains, used to be very important for our physical survival because we used to be prey. Our physical safety is not challenged as frequently as it used to be, and the amygdala has been retrained to respond (again, immediately and automatically) to socially and emotionally charged situations. They respond when our comfort zones are being “threatened” the fear of which can lead to chaos for civilized societies.

Can you think of some ways that emotional amygdalas might be causing discord in today's world? What do you think would change if people were aware of their amygdalas' role and how to control it? What can you do to become more aware of your own amygdala?

Now to the nitty-gritty of being very aware of just how important each individual is. That includes you! Click on the following blue links to complete the activity/assessment and fill the boxes with your answers. You will need access to an email account.

My top 5 [VIA Character Strengths](#) are:

- 1-
- 2-
- 3-
- 4-
- 5-

My Myers-Briggs [Personality Type](#) is:

My top 5 Core/[Personal Values](#) are:

- 1-
- 2-
- 3-
- 4-
- 5-

My [High 5 Strengths](#) are:

- 1-
- 2-
- 3-
- 4-
- 5-

My highest scoring [Gardner's Intelligence](#) is:

I am passionate about_____

If I could change anything in the world it would be_____

[My life mission/purpose statement](#) is:

Now, take a good look at everything above. This is a picture of who you are at this point in your life *based on your own assessment*. Let's be honest: that person is amazing! If you saw that information about anyone else you'd think they were fantastic, and it's ***you!*** ***You*** are needed. Don't forget, though, that everyone else has their own strengths and are needed as well. We may have different goals (being a CEO vs eco friendly housing designs vs new technology vs social reform) but that doesn't mean others' dreams aren't important.

If you are in a classroom, consider sharing your results with a group of classmates *that are outside of your regular social group*. Discuss the following prompt:

What I think is really cool/like about (person in group)'s results is ____ because _____. I think that _____ (Think of the potential and possibilities for that person. What characteristics do you see in them now that will have a positive impact in the future?)

For Those Who Are Victims of Bully Training or Attract Bullies:

It's estimated that 80-85% of the world has experienced severe enough trauma in childhood to negatively impact every part of their lives as adults. The following activities are helpful to all humans as we learn how to increase emotional intelligence and heal from the unconscious lies that keep us from thriving in life. If nothing else, they will help the 10-15% to better understand, have compassion for, and interact with those who have experienced trauma. You may find that they hit home hard with bullies and their victims, so I would suggest one-on-one engagement for these activities if you know they fit into one of these categories. These are to be completed ***only after*** all of the strength exercises above have been completed. When facing the lies that keep us hurt, we need to challenge them with the truth about ourselves, which can be found through the previous activities.



[Feelings 101](#)

[Challenging Limiting Beliefs \(Unconscious Lies\)](#)

[Overcoming Fear of Rejection/Uncomfortable Situations](#)

[Overcoming Comparing to Others](#)

[Social Trust Part 1](#)

[Social Trust Part 2](#)

[Dealing With Trauma & Its Effects](#)

[Conflict Resolution](#) (how to express needs)