

BULLYING

BULLY NO MORE



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

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JUNE HUNT



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Dear Friend,

How I wish you could meet my young friend, Jessica. Raised in an affirming home by encouraging parents, she's bright, respectful, hard-working—the kind of teenager who desires to spread *truth* wherever she goes. That's why it didn't surprise me to learn about her reaction to seeing a couple of classmates cheating on a math test.

Honor compelled her to privately tell her teacher about the matter. No, that didn't surprise me at all. But what happened next was a tragedy!

When confronted, the two accused students turned on their teacher, alleging that *she* had trumped up the charges. To gain credibility, the teacher divulged that a *student* had been an eyewitness to the cheating. Later, Jessica's mom, Hannah, a former HOPE FOR THE HEART team member, confided that, by naming Jessica as the source, the teacher “fed my daughter to the wolves.”

Indeed, a feeding frenzy ensued. Hannah explained, “The two girls made it their personal mission to terrorize Jessica. They told the teacher and their friends that my daughter was lying. In volleyball, the girls would intentionally spike the ball to hit her head. After being injured during one game, she could no longer play. And these girls stayed on the attack: ‘She's just faking it to sabotage the team. After all, we know she is a liar.’”

At first, Jessica did what many bullied children do: she suffered in silence and kept the problem

from her parents. She thought that ignoring it would make it go away. Her mom, the school choir director, admitted, “I wish I could say the terror lessened once my husband and I got involved ... but it didn’t. This was a torturous time for our entire family.” In truth, they each witnessed the impact of Proverbs 29:22 upon their lives, “*An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.*”

Hannah added, “Before the year ended, my husband (a coach at the school) changed jobs, and we found a new school for Jessica. I’m happy to say the new school provided a time of healing for all of us. Still, we’ll never forget this difficult chapter in our lives—especially the terrible pain that bullies can inflict and the fallout when bullying is mishandled or ignored.”

Bullying is usually not a onetime act, but is rather repeated, harmful harassment. Therefore, those who are bullied live with continual fear of future abuse, and some even become bullies to try to stop the barrage of belittling upon themselves. Indeed, most bullies likely have been bullied for a period of time in their past. Proverbs 24:1–2 sums up the inner world of bullies: “*... their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble.*”

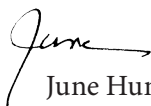
While Jessica’s story has a positive ending, many instances of bullying do not. Bullying can lead to a host of emotional problems, including depression, anxiety attacks, even suicide. This is why early reporting and intervention are crucial.

And this is why I'm grateful you hold this book in your hands! Each page is filled with *biblical hope and practical help* to stop this pervasive and growing problem. Yes, bullying can be curtailed by skillful intervention.

After you read this book, pass it on to others who can benefit from it: parents, youth workers, teachers and other educators. Typically, there are three participants in bullying: the bully, the bullied, and the bystander—and the bystander has the most power!

Realize, your life can make a difference—you can bring life-changing hope to someone's bullied heart.

Yours in the Lord's hope,



June Hunt

P.S. The Bible reminds us, "*The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty*" (Proverbs 22:3).

(Names changed to protect privacy.)

BULLYING

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“Stop it! Don’t talk to her that way!” “Stop making fun of them! That’s mean!” “Stop hitting him! Or I will tell someone *right now!*” If only *bystanders* would speak up when they see belittling behavior. If only they were taught to speak up and speak out, there would be fewer bullies and fewer victims of bullying.

Sometimes recognizing bullying can be a challenge. Fights between friends may be simply that—“friendly fights.” But not so with bullies. Bullying takes place when one person possesses more power than another person and intentionally leverages that power to threaten, scare, isolate, or hurt that other person.

Between the three groups—the *bullies*, the *bullied*, and the *bystanders*—those with the most power to cause the most change are the bystanders. Learning the right assertive response can curtail bullying sooner rather than later.

The Bible’s book of wisdom describes the type of words that flow from both those who are right and those who are wrong toward others, from those who help and from those who hurt ...

**“The mouth of the righteous is
a fountain of life, but the mouth of the
wicked conceals violence.”**

(Proverbs 10:11)



DEFINITIONS

Phoebe Prince was the “new girl” who caused quite a stir—a 15-year-old who arrived from Ireland with her mother in the fall of 2009.

Being in a new country and a new school, Phoebe was excited and optimistic about her future. She even signed off her text messages, “Life is an opportunity in itself.”¹

But by January 14, 2010, Phoebe believed there was only one option available to her, only one path to peace. She saw only one way to escape the constant criticism, the relentless barrage of *bullying*.

The Bible describes such desperate despair ...

**“What I feared has come upon me;
what I dreaded has happened to me.
I have no peace, no quietness;
I have no rest, but only turmoil.”
(Job 3:25–26)**

WHAT IS Bullying?

Somehow Phoebe ignited a fuse of jealousy—a fuse that caused a firestorm that blazed out of control. Some said it was jealousy over her looks—her raven hair and sparkling eyes—that inflamed a band of popular girls at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts. Others said it was jealousy over boys—the two guys she dated—that provoked a warning from a notorious clique that fits the profile of the proverbial “Mean Girls.” They stalked the hallways projecting their prominence and power, and they issued a directive to Phoebe: Stay away from “people’s men.”²

Phoebe had previously caught the eye of Sean, the captain of the football team, who began dating her but failed to mention he already had a girlfriend. When Phoebe found out about Kayla, she apologized to her and assumed all was resolved.

The Irish teen later dated Austin, which raised the ire of his on-again, off-again girlfriend—the not-so-nice Flannery. This dating dilemma prompted Phoebe to offer yet another apology. But Phoebe’s pursuit of peace was met only with threats—threats of violence, which is characteristic of bullying.³

The arrogant heart of a bully is described in Scripture—one who hunts down victims ...

**“In his arrogance the wicked man hunts
down the weak, who are caught in the
schemes he devises.”**

(Psalm 10:2)

The “art” of bullying casts a wide net:⁴

- ▶ **Bullying** is any deliberate, hostile, physical, psychological, or verbal activity involving an imbalance of power with the intent to harm and induce fear.
- ▶ **Bullying** seeks to emotionally harass or physically harm others, even to the extent of damaging property and destroying pets, in order to cause debilitating fear and distress.
- ▶ **Bullying** is persistent, pervasive abuse that creates an intimidating or terrorizing environment.
- ▶ **Bullying** is not a onetime act, but rather repeated, persistent harassment by a person or group, often targeting someone perceived to be weaker physically or psychologically.
- ▶ **Bullying** does not stop without intervention, but it must stop!

The following acrostic addresses the four primary components found in bullying:

S—Severe: Intensely harsh, stern, and critical

T—Threatening: Intentionally fear-producing and terrorizing

O—Out-of-Balance: Imbalance of power; ill-matched and unequal strength

P—Persistent: Incessant, continual, not a onetime act

These words of Scripture will apply to bullies ...

**“Because of your stubbornness
and your unrepentant heart,
you are storing up wrath against yourself
for the day of God’s wrath,
when his righteous judgment
will be revealed.”
(Romans 2:5)**

Relationally Aggressive Bullies

QUESTION: “What is Relational Aggression?”

ANSWER: *Relational Aggression* (RA) is a type of bullying practiced especially by girls and is designed to intimidate, control, or hurt a victim’s social relationships and reputation by forming manipulative relationships.⁵ Their indirect acts and attacks can appear like a “love/hate” relationship that can include making another girl look foolish, stealing her friends, and telling others not to associate with her.

Relationally aggressive bullies lure victims closer and closer, pretending to be friends—even “best friends”—only to deal the devastating blow of total rejection, betrayal, and abandonment.

In the Bible, David describes this kind of betrayal ...

**“They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my friendship.”
(Psalm 109:5)**

WHAT IS the Difference between Common Conflict and Bullying?

Phoebe was a victim of viciousness that depleted her vitality. The extreme bullying at school and cyberbullying online obliterated her optimism, filled her with fear, and weakened her will.

According to a friend in Ireland, Phoebe's initial coping strategy was to "keep her head high, smile and just let it go past her."⁶

However, Phoebe just couldn't shake the taunts, verbal assaults, and painful postings on a social media site from the "Mean Girls" who told her, "Go kill yourself."⁷

How hauntingly true-to-life is the following Psalm ...

**"The enemy pursues me ... crushes me
to the ground ... makes me dwell in the
darkness like those long dead.
So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed."
(Psalm 143:3-4)**

Conflict exists in every relationship. But there are clear and distinct differences between conflicts in healthy relationships and those in bullying relationships.

HEALTHY COMMON CONFLICTS	UNHEALTHY BULLYING CONFLICTS
Involve equal power between people	Involve unequal power between the bully and the bullied
Occur occasionally	Occur repeatedly
Often unintentional	Always intentional
Seldom serious	Often serious
Not power-seeking	Always power-seeking
Usually result in remorse	Never result in remorse
Occur with the desire to solve the problem	Occur with no desire to solve the problem
Never initiated to cause harm	Always initiated to cause harm

The Word of God gives this eye-opening description of the relationship between a bully and conflict ...

“A troublemaker and a villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks maliciously with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart— he always stirs up conflict.”
(Proverbs 6:12–14)

BULLYING CAN'T BE RESOLVED BY CONVENTIONAL MEANS.⁸

- ▶ Bullying involves an ongoing abusive relationship of unequal power, producing an abusive cycle that children and teens are not normally equipped to resolve.
 - Traditional conflict resolution is designed to address common conflicts in which power is roughly equal.
 - Using traditional methods to resolve bullying could subject the bullied child to further victimization.
- ▶ Mediation and traditional counseling generally find some portion of fault with each party.
 - In a bullying situation, all blame must be assigned to the bully.
 - A bullied child should not be asked nor expected to accept responsibility for the abuse.
- ▶ Most mediators are trained to avoid taking a moral position on the issues they confront.
 - It's crucial for involved adults to articulate the wrongness of bullying.
 - It's equally crucial for bullies to accept responsibility for their wrong actions and for those who have been victimized to understand they are not at fault.