



**EMBRACE
CIVILITY**
IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL

A POSITIVE EMPOWERMENT ACTION PLAN FOR TEENS WHO ARE BEING BULLIED OR HARASSED

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EMBRACE CIVILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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This draft is being publicly provided to solicit feedback from readers. No one has tried to provide this kind of guidance to teens, especially information on a strategy to document and pressure schools to effectively respond to these situations.

INTRODUCTION

You are being bullied or harassed by other students at your school. Possibly you are also being treated badly by a school staff member. Snide comments, nasty rumors, “eye-rolling” have all become part of your life. You are becoming increasingly depressed and often you do not want to go to school.

If you asked for help from the principal, they may have indicated a sincere intent to help make things better, but the bullying or harassment has not stopped. Or perhaps this has made things worse and so now you are afraid to ask for help again.

Alternatively, you may have heard such comments as: “This isn’t bullying.” “They were just joking.” “You are overreacting.” “You just need to learn to deal with it.” “If you would stop (describe behavior), this wouldn’t happen.” All these responses have done is to make you feel worse.

It is most important that you understand that the way you are being treated is not okay and needs to stop. You have a right to feel safe at school and to receive an education. Things can be done to help to make things better. While things may seem tough now, you have the power to get through this and build a positive and happy future.

In this short book, I am going to provide you with:

- **Chapter 1. Information about Bullying and Harassment.** This chapter explains what is going on in bullying behavior, why what schools are doing is not working, and how they could make positive changes.
- **Chapter 2. Bullying and Your Brain.** This chapter provides information about the impact of serious or chronic bullying on your brain and how you can rewire your brain to achieve greater happiness.
- **Chapter 3. Be Positively Powerful Personal Strategies.** This is a huge chapter, that provides information on strategies you can use to increase your resilience, positive feelings, and friendships that can reduce the likelihood that others will treat you badly and reduce the potential that you will become emotionally upset if someone is hurtful. These strategies can be combined into actions you can take at the point in time when someone is being hurtful to help you respond in a positive powerful way.
- **Chapter 4. Respond in a Positively Powerful Way.** This chapter provides you with guidance on how to

respond in a positively powerful way both at the time you are being treated badly and how to insist that the school take positive actions to stop the bullying.

- **Chapter 5. Be a Helpful Ally.** Strategies you can use to step in to help others.

Note that while this guide has been written for teens, with a focus on empowering them to better handle these kinds of hurtful situations, the same strategies can be used by younger children. However, it is expected that in this case, parents will read this document and implement the strategies in partnership with their child.

Also, it is probable that teens will need to work with their parents to accomplish the process set forth in Chapter 4. The reason this is set forth as a process for teens to follow is the desire to empower them as fully participants in the process to work with the school to get the bullying to stop.

CHAPTER 1. ABOUT BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

FIRST SOME TERMS

“Bullying.” When one or more people are repeatedly hurtful to another person in a way that is causing that person emotional distress.

“Harassment.” When this bullying is based on what is called “protected class status” under civil rights laws “Protected class status” includes disabilities, sexual orientation or status, race, national origin, or religion. Harassment also includes sexual harassment. The reason this is important is that the term “protected” means that civil rights laws can be used to require the school to respond to these concerns. (In most of this document I will use the term “bullying” unless I am referring specifically to situations that should be considered harassment.)

“Bully.” I never use the term “bully” and encourage you not to do so either. Bullying is behavior that we hope can be changed. If you call someone “a bully” this tends to make it harder to encourage them to stop their hurtful behavior.

“Victim.” I will also never use the term “victim” to describe someone who is being bullied because I never want someone who is being treated badly to think of themselves as a “victim.” If you have been the “target” of hurtful behavior, you can become powerful and not “victimized” by what has happened. You are a “survivor.”

“Parent.” The term “parent” will be used for any person who is helping you in a parenting capacity. This could be a guardian or an advocate.

“He, She, They.” Traditional rules of grammar indicate that if I am talking about a single person, I should use “he or she” and the like. This leaves out those who are binary. So in this document, I am violating the traditional rules and using “they,” “them,” and “theirs.”

ABOUT BULLYING BEHAVIOR

There appear to be two basic profiles of students who engage in hurtful behavior: “at risk” students and dominant students.

“AT RISK” STUDENTS

Some students who are hurtful are also “at risk” in other ways. These are students who have other challenges and have likely been treated badly. They can be hurtful or aggressive in retaliation for how they have been treated or because they are trying to gain some level of control over what keeps happening to them.

If the student who is being hurtful to you has this kind of background, please realize that this student is also hurting really badly and is also very likely also being bullied and excluded. This student also needs help and support. When you approach the school to report you are being treated badly by a student like this asking to ensure that this student received the support they need would be helpful.

DOMINANT STUDENTS

Most often, students engage in bullying to gain power and social status. What these students do to gain power and social status is denigrate and exclude any students who they consider “different.” They also engage in battles with rivals or those they perceive to be rivals.

These hurtful students are considered “popular” and “cool.” They are socially skilled. Often, they are athletes or hold other leadership positions in the school. These students are in the “privileged” and “entitled” social status in your school.

Realize that what these students are trying to do is show off their personal power to others by being hurtful to you. The most important reasons for their actions may have little to do with you. Their actions are designed to get attention from others and prove their power to those others.

Think of bullying in the context of gaming. A student who is bullying you is trying to obtain “power points” from you. If you are considered “different” they are trying to obtain “power points” from you to demonstrate their power to others. If you are perceived to be a rival, they are trying to gain “power points” over you.

If you respond to being treated badly in a way that demonstrates the perception that you are upset or that this has bothered you by looking sad, having an angry outburst, or retaliating this is the way you lose “power points” to another. When you are being treated badly, it is exceptionally important to remain calm, stand tall, and

keep your personal power—no matter how upset you feel inside. The guidance in Chapter 3 will help you do this.

By the way, you can see plenty of this behavior also in society, especially in politics. You can also see this behaving in the animal kingdom. Chickens will peck a weak “different” chick to death. When they mature, roosters will get into vicious “cock fights” to achieve dominance. The only difference in middle school is that the “hens” can be just as vicious as the “roosters.”

Being treated badly by these kinds of students presents a huge challenge when you are trying to get the school to ensure that they stop treating you badly. This is because they are not considered by school staff to be “problem students.” Further, the hurtful actions of these students are often more subtle, yet still very hurtful. They generally do not engage in such hurtful behavior in front of school staff. Or they are hurtful in ways that cause school staff to simply ignore this behavior—or worse, to laugh.

This presents significant challenges when you are being treated badly by these kinds of socially dominant students. You likely will fear that the principal will not believe you. Your fear is totally well founded, especially if you have had any other challenges related to your behavior.

A pattern that sometimes emerges is that the socially dominant students will pick on those students who they are pretty sure can be triggered to engage in an outburst. The angry outburst from the bullied student is their “reward”—how they have demonstrated their power to themselves and others.

When the student who is being bullied finally gets angry and responds this is behavior that school staff pay attention to—and they then discipline the student who was being bullied—instead of the students who were originally engaging in the bullying.

If this describes a pattern you have gotten into, the guidance in this booklet will help. It is essential that you stop rewarding these students by getting visibly upset when they treat you badly or engage in behavior that results in your being disciplined. It is also necessary to better document what is happening and obtain statements from witnesses to support what is happening to you.

RATIONALIZATIONS

The other thing you need to know about and watch for are when someone “rationalizes.” Students or staff who are hurtful often rationalize their hurtful behavior. The principal or other school staff who do not step in to help may also use these rationalizations.

People like to think of themselves as being “good.” So when they engage in hurtful or inappropriate behavior, they

create what are called “rationalizations.” By rationalizing their actions, they can make it appear that their hurtful behavior wasn’t actually hurtful or was justified. (Search: mechanisms of moral disengagement.)

The four common rationalizations are:

- **Spin It.** A more neutral or inoffensive term is used to describe the action as not that bad. “I was just joking around.” “It was a prank.” “This was just locker room talk.”
- **Deny Personal Responsibility.** This can occur if many are engaging in certain behavior or if someone else can be blamed—or a reason is provided for not taking action. “Everybody does it.” “Someone else started it.” “It wasn’t my fault.” “This wasn’t bullying, so it is not a violation of the policy.” “This was off-campus. It is not my job to respond.”
- **Deny the Harm.** The harm that was caused is minimized. “What happened wasn’t that bad.” “You are overreacting.”
- **Blame the Other.** Those who are targeted may have personal characteristics that make it easier to blame them as being “deviant.” “They deserved it.” “If you would stop (describe behavior), this wouldn’t happen.”

It is helpful to learn to recognize “rationalizations.” If you are in a position where you want to challenge a principal or school staff member for engaging in this kind of rationalization it may help if you show them information about rationalizations. This is more likely to occur if you report hurtful behavior by a socially dominant student. This student is very likely to rationalize their behavior. The principal is very likely to believe these rationalizations and also rationalize the failure to respond.

If the principal gives you a rationalization for why the hurtful behavior you reported does not warrant a response or why they will not do anything, ask the principal to do a search for “mechanisms for moral disengagement” and consider their response in light of this information.

WHY WHAT SCHOOLS ARE DOING IS NOT WORKING

Schools have been seeking to better address bullying for over a decade. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that what schools are doing is working. The approach schools are using meets Einstein’s definition of “insanity”—doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

The data from national student surveys indicates that there has not been any reduction in student reports of being bullied. Ample research demonstrates that the majority of

students do not think educators are doing a good enough job.

These statements are not meant to be “anti educators.” These are simply the facts as demonstrated by the data and the research.

Educators want to better address bullying. They face some barriers that are outside of their control. These include the fact that they have been required to maintain a myopic focus on achievement tests, lack of effective funding for schools, and the fact that bullying is fed by social or community values that are outside of the control of schools.

There are also problems related to what educators have been told about bullying. Educators have been told that the students who engage in bullying are “at risk” students who need to be subjected to punishment to stop. As was discussed earlier, these “at risk” students are not the primary source of bullying. The students who are most often hurtful are the higher social status students who are not considered “problem students.” Most educators actually know this. But they do not know how to better address this.

The way schools have been directed under state statutes to address bullying is a huge part of the problem. Schools have been directed to create a policy against bullying, tell students to report, investigate to determine whether a student violated the policy, and, if so, suspend this student.

But schools have also been told to stop suspending students. Basically, principals are being told: “Do this. No, don’t do this.”

But also, principals are unlikely to suspend socially dominant hurtful students who are the primary source of bullying. These students also have socially dominant parents who know how to exercise power over principals. These students, their parents, and the principal will all rationalize that what happened was just a prank, you are overreacting, if you would just stop (describe behavior), this wouldn’t happen, and, therefore, the school has no responsibility to do anything.

Students are told that if they are being bullied they should tell a staff member, because the staff member will make things better. The majority of students do not report to the school because most of them think that this will not resolve the concern or could make things worse. Also, teens want to be able to resolve these kinds of situations by themselves. Telling the school often feels like admitting failure. Telling the school also often leads to retaliation.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

I have written a book for educators on how they could make positive changes. The title is, *Engage Students to Embrace Civility*. You could recommend this book to your school.

It is my opinion that the situation of bullying will not improve until schools fully engage all students in the school as partners in creating a positive school climate. Realize that in addition to students who are hurtful to achieve social dominance, there are plenty of students who are kind and compassionate and who are ready to step into leadership roles to change the school climate so that being hurtful is not a supported path to being viewed as a “leaders’ within the school. School staff do not have the power to make these kinds of changes in the school climate. Schools need to support the kind and compassionate students in creating this kind of a climate. I advise schools that they should establish a diverse student leadership team to encourage kindness and compassion.

Also, it is important that all students learn effective skills in preventing and responding to negative situations. This includes when they are witnesses, someone has been hurtful to them, or they have been hurtful to others.

I also encourage schools to make sure that school staff know how to help students reduce and respond effectively to these hurtful situations in a manner that restores the relationships and supports all students. This requires supporting students in making the right choices.

When students have been hurtful, I encourage the school to ensure that these students are held accountable. This means that they accept personal responsibility for their hurtful actions and be required to take steps to remedy the harm, both to the student they were hurtful to and to the school community. I advise schools that it is very important to hold the obvious supporters of any hurtful students equally accountable and require that they also take steps to remedy the harm.

Also, if the student who was hurtful is “at risk,” I encourage the school to better support this student.

In more serious or chronic situations, I encourage schools to follow the civil rights regulations and guidelines that have been provided for them by the U.S. Department of Education.

The steps for this include conducting a prompt, thorough, and unbiased investigation. This is not just an investigation to determine whether they can punish a student for violating the disciplinary policy. This investigation must figure out what is happening, why, and what steps need to be taken to stop the hurtful situation from continuing.

After this investigation, the school must take steps that are reasonably calculated to:

- Stop the harassment from continuing and prevent any retaliation.
- Provide support for the student who has been treated badly, including ongoing emotional support and setting up any necessary protections.
- Make any necessary changes in the school environment to address aspects of the environment that may be contributing to ongoing bullying or harassment. This often will include correcting staff behavior to make sure staff are not perceived as being hurtful or ignoring hurtful behavior. This also will include actions to increase feelings of inclusion and support of “protected class students.”
- Monitor to make sure that things have improved.

As you will see in Chapter 4, these are the steps I encourage you and your parents to ensure that the school takes.

CHAPTER 2. BULLYING AND YOUR BRAIN

Because you have experienced or are experiencing serious or chronic bullying, it is important that you know how this has or is likely affecting your brain. When you understand how this is happening, you have the ability to gain better control, limit the harm, and take steps to achieve greater happiness and success.

When someone is bullying you, this is considered a form of trauma. You could have experienced a very troubling, intense incident, such as an incident that involves physical harm or threat. You could also experience more chronic, ongoing harm, like never ending nasty comments and acts of exclusion. Both of these are forms of trauma.

When someone experiences trauma, this has an impact on their brain. Researchers who study this have identified actual physical changes in the brain and changes in brain chemicals associated with being bullied.

YOUR BRAIN AND TRAUMA OR TOXIC STRESS

Your brain developed with a natural tendency to focus on potential danger and risk. Why? Because this was necessary for survival. Failure to note that a dangerous animal is close by could result in death. While these days, the odds of your encountering a cougar or bear in your every day walks are low, however, unfortunately, many young people encounter hurtful peers and sometimes adults who are hurtful.

Because of the need to ensure your survival, your brain looks for bad news, overreacts to bad things that have happened, and stores memories of those bad things so that you can avoid risk in the future. Your brain pays more attention to the bad than to the good.

Experiencing trauma can alter brain functioning in many ways, but four of the most important changes appear to occur in the following areas:

- **Prefrontal Cortex.** The prefrontal cortex or “thinking center” is located near the top of your head, behind your forehead. The prefrontal cortex is where thinking and reasoning occur. When this area of the brain is functioning well, you are able to think clearly, make good decisions, and be aware of yourself and others.

- **Anterior Cingulate Cortex.** The anterior cingulate cortex or “emotional regulation center” is located next to the prefrontal cortex, but is deeper inside the brain. This area is responsible for regulating your emotions. Ideally, the emotional regulation center is working closely with your thinking center. When this connection is working well, you are able to manage difficult thoughts and emotions without being totally overwhelmed.
- **Hippocampus.** The hippocampus or “memory center” is located under the cerebral cortex, also deeper inside the brain. The hippocampus helps to translate short term memory into long term memory.
- **Amygdala.** The amygdala or “threat response center” is a tiny structure deep inside your brain. The job of the amygdala is to receive all incoming information, that is everything you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste, and answer one question: “Is this a threat?”

If your brain detects that a dangerous threat may be present, your amygdala takes over and your whole body goes into a fight, flight, or freeze mode. When this happens, adrenalin rushes through your body and your thinking center shuts down. This is the response necessary to handle that dangerous animal.

This response to a threatening situation is just what we want our brains to do when a threat is present, because this allows our bodies to respond effectively to that threat.

When someone experiences an intense traumatic event, like a soldier on the battle field, this event can cause profound changes in their brain that result in a condition called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. An intense, traumatic bullying incident can also result in this kind of PTSD.

In addition, ongoing chronic difficult situations, sometimes called “toxic stress” can cause PTSD. When you are under constant stress, your brain is constantly pumping more cortisol, the stress hormone, into your system. This causes the more primitive portions of your brain remain activated for longer than they should. This also creates neural pathways that cause you to be more focused on potential threats.

When your amygdala or threat response center is over activated you can experience chronic stress, fear, anxiety,

and irritation and have a harder time feeling safe, calming down, or sleeping.

You can also be more easily triggered by a situation that you perceive to present a similar threat. Your brain has become filled with neural pathways that are trying to help protect you from future danger. You are always alert to when someone might be hurtful to you. You pay closer attention to who is around you and where you are so that you are prepared to respond. You are hypervigilant and stuck in reactive mode.

The hippocampus regulates the storage and retrieval of memories, as well as differentiating between past and present experiences. The increased stress hormones make it more challenging for the hippocampus to function. Trauma actually reduces the amount of gray matter in the hippocampus.

This causes you to have more challenges in telling the difference between past and present experiences. Situations that might resemble prior bullying incidents can cause more intense panic and fear—even though the current situation does not present a threat or that much of a threat. The problem is that it is harder for your brain to tell what is actually happening.

This can at times lead you to make mistaken conclusions. Your brain has less of an ability to figure out whether a current situation is actually threatening or to determine how threatening the situation actually is. Your brain may translate a minor incident as being a more significant incident. You may overreact. This is because the thinking and emotional regulation parts of your brain are under activated because you have been experiencing toxic stress.

The fact that this happens may cause a problem between you and school staff when you report a current hurtful incident. A school staff member may think that you are overreacting. Because of how your brain is responding because you have been experiencing chronic bullying, you may actually be overreacting to this specific event.

This does not mean that nothing should be done about the current hurtful incident. However, you may also need assistance in realizing that what you perceive that you just experienced perhaps was not even intended to be hurtful or was a minor incident that should be able to be more easily resolved.

Because your brain is primed to look for the bad and the potential risk, you are also not as likely to see the good things that are actually happening to you. If you are always worried about someone saying something hurtful to you, you may very well miss the fact that someone just smiled at you.

Because your emotional regulation center is under activated even when you want to calm down and feel better, you just can't. When your thinking center is under

activated, you are likely to have greater difficulties with concentration and attention. You are less able to think clearly. Because of this, you likely will have a harder time learning and remembering what you have learned.

YOUR BRAIN CAN CHANGE

So can this be changed and, if so, how? Absolutely, positively, without any doubt this can change. You can change your brain. You can create new neural pathways that can help your brain focus on the positive. As you do this, you will achieve greater happiness and success.

Neuroplasticity is a term that describes the brain's ability to change. Your brain's neural connections can reorganize by forming new connections throughout your life. Neuroplasticity is possible because of the capacity of your brain's neurons and neural networks to change their connections and behavior in response to new information or changes.

Developmental plasticity occurs when the neurons in a young child's brain rapidly sprout branches and form synapses, or connections. As the brain begins to process sensory information, some of these synapses strengthen and others weaken. This creates a network of neural connections.

Unfortunately, if you have experienced trauma, such as bullying, as you are growing, some of these neural connections have formed in a way that keep your brain functioning in a hypervigilant manner, with a focus on possible threats and a tendency to trigger.

But your brain does not have to remain in this way. Your brain can create new neural pathways that support greater calmness and happiness. By focusing on positive things that are happening in your life, you can change your brain.

One of the key important insights into changing your brain relates to how your brain tends to focus more attention on negative, rather than positive experiences. To rewire your brain to achieve greater happiness, it is necessary to have focused attention on five positive experiences to undo the negative impact of one negative experience.

In Chapter 3, you will learn about seven positive empowerment strategies. All of these strategies are designed to help you rewire your brain and create new neural pathways that will increase your happiness and success.

ASKING FOR HELP

If you have become seriously depressed, it is important to talk with a trusted adult and ask for help from a

professional who has expertise in helping young people who have experienced trauma. The symptoms of serious depression include:

- **Profound sadness.** Feeling hopeless and empty and that no matter how hard you try, you just can't control your negative thoughts.
- **Guilt.** Feeling that that you are worthless and helpless.
- **Irritability.** Feeling angry, anxious, or restless.
- **Trouble thinking clearly.** Difficulties concentrating, making decisions, or remembering details.
- **Physical symptoms.** Aches and pains, headaches, or digestive problems that do not seem to have any other medical cause.
- **Fatigue.** Feeling tired all the time and a loss of energy.
- **Loss of interest.** Not interested in fun activities like hobbies or social interactions.
- **Sleep changes.** Waking up too early in the morning, not being able to fall asleep, or sleeping too much.
- **Appetite changes.** Changes in eating habits like eating too much or too little.
- **Self-harm or risky behavior.** Self-cutting and other forms of self-harm or exceptionally risky behavior that could result in harm.
- **Suicidal thoughts.** Having thoughts of harming or killing yourself. If you're thinking about suicide, you need to get help immediately. The National Suicide Lifeline phone number is 1-800-273-8255. They are available 24/7 with someone you can talk to.

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CHAPTER 3. POSITIVELY POWERFUL STRATEGIES

The objective of these Positively Powerful Personal Strategies is to increase your resilience, positive feelings, and friendships. Resilience is the ability to respond to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. Resilience means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences or the ability to be happy, successful, etc. again after something difficult or bad has happened.

Each of these Positively Powerful Personal Strategies will help your brain to form new neural pathways that will help you to overcome the toxic stress and trauma you have experienced. If you take the time to develop these inner strengths this can help you cope with new challenges, recover from the pain you have experienced, maintain your emotional well-being, and move forward to a successful and happy life.

The overall best way to build your inner strengths is to focus on the positive. The goal is to increase the amount of time that you are focused on the positive things happening in your life, the strengths you are building, and the successes you are having. When you focus on these positive things, your brain is growing new neural pathways that will make lasting changes to support ongoing success and happiness. In other words, by focusing on the good, you are building the connections in your brain to support your positive future.

These Positively Powerful Personal Strategies have been proven by research to work. But they will not work immediately. To work will require constant repetition for a period of time. Only then will you start to see positive results.

To accomplish this repetition, two strategies to keep yourself on path are suggested.

- **Keep a Daily Journal.** Get a hard bound book to keep as your Journal. For many of these suggestions, it will be suggested that you either take specific actions during the day, accomplish certain tasks, or reflect on what happened. Questions will be provided for you to respond to every evening in your Journal.
- **Use Transitions as Reminders.** Use transition times while in school to remind you to focus on certain positive actions. Some examples: One of the positive strategies is to be mindful of your physical posture—to stand tall. Just before you get up out of your seat to go to a new class, remind yourself that you are going to

walk with pride. Another strategy is to practice mindfulness. When you sit down in your next class, remind yourself to take a minute to achieve mindfulness and self-calming.

KEEP YOUR PERSONAL POWER

Bullying is all about gaining dominance over another and taking that person's personal power. So the very important thing you must learn how to do is not allow anyone to take your personal power.

There are two strategies you can implement that can help you to better keep your own personal power in situations where someone is trying to take it from you. These two approaches are: Power Presence and Personal Control Thinking.

STAND TALL

In both humans and other primates, standing tall with a very open posture indicates high power, whereas hunching over and keeping your arms crossed over your chest reflects lower power. Many times students who are bullied maintain physical posture that demonstrate a lack of presence.

Research conducted by Dr. Cuddy, a professor at Harvard School of Business, has demonstrated that adopting a pose that indicates power—a "power pose"—can result in an increase feelings of confidence. An excellent TedTalk by Dr. Cuddy on Power Posing provides greater insight into this. (Search: Cuddy, power posing, tedtalk.)

Dr. Cuddy did an experiment where she had one group of college students stand with power for a period of time and another group maintain a powerless pose. These students were then interviewed as though they were applying for a job. Their interviews were video-taped. People who knew nothing about what the students did before their interview generally picked the students who had stood in a powerful position before the job interview.

What this demonstrates is that holding a "power pose" before a challenging interpersonal relationship task was demonstrated to increase effective performance. In other words, it is possible to "fake it" by assuming a "power pose," which will then help a person feel more confident.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

Stand up and hold yourself in a position that you think indicates that you have no power—shoulders hunched, arms crossed. Hold yourself for a minute like this. How does this make you feel?

Now stand up tall. Shoulders back. Head held high. Arms out to your side or over your head in a celebration post, like you just won a race. Hold yourself for a minute like this. How does this make you feel.

Every morning, before you leave the house to go to school, practice power posing. Perhaps you can do this while looking at yourself in your mirror. Create some affirmations you can say to yourself as you are standing tall.

A transition strategy is remind yourself to stand tall and walk with pride whenever you get out of your seat to go to another class. Another strategy is to make sure whenever you are walking in an area where you previously have experienced concerns to remind yourself to stand tall and walk with pride through this area.

CONTROL YOUR THINKING

You will never be able to control when or if someone might treat you badly. Also, if you are the kind of person who others might consider “different,” then unfortunately, in today’s society, there is a higher probability that you are going to experience people being hurtful than others. Remember, being different is good. The problem is that sometimes others have not yet figured this out.

This very important coping strategy can help when something bad happens. You must know that you have the ability to control your thinking about how you feel about yourself and how you respond.

The key underlying premise of this approach is the understanding that harmful consequences are not just caused by the bad things that happen to us, but also by our beliefs about those bad things. While we can’t control what might happen, we can control our beliefs.

This is an old theory. The underlying principles of the ancient Stoic philosophers, as set forth by Epictetus, who in the first century A.D. stated: “Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.”

Think of this in terms of an A-B-C-model: A is the adversity or bad event. C is the consequence of how you feel or respond. But A is not solely responsible for C. B is what you think or believe about A, not merely that A happened. Thus, $A + B = C$. While it is not possible to change A, it is possible to be in control of B, and thus have greater control over the resulting C.

Translation: We don’t always have control over what happens to us. But we do have the ability to control what we think of ourselves and how we respond.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

If you are even in a situation where someone has been hurtful or find yourself thinking about a past situation that occurred, tell yourself you will not give any other person the power to make you feel bad about yourself.

REMAIN CALM

Those who are treated badly often overreact in response. Realize that the goal of anyone who is being hurtful to you is to get a response from you that provides evidence of the effectiveness of their actions. Further, in many situations, they are trying to get the attention of others. Your reaction to what they have done contributes to their success in getting this attention.

In other words, when you respond in a way that shows your distress, especially if this is evident to any other student who is watching, you are allowing the student who has been hurtful “win.” Your distressed response is evidence of their effectiveness. Your distressed response is their reward. For as long as you are rewarding their hurtful behavior, they are not likely to stop.

As hard as it often is, remaining calm and not reacting when someone is being hurtful is the best way to ensure that this student is not perceived to be effective.

Make yourself a personal goal: “If someone is being hurtful to me, I will not respond in a way that shows that I am upset or distressed.”

However, there is something important you need to know if you have gotten into a pattern of responding with distress when someone has been hurtful and then you stop responding, this very often will cause this person to try harder to get you to respond. Watch for this happening. Realize that if this happens, this is clear evidence that you are achieving success—although, at the time, it likely will not feel this way. Stick to your goal of not responding and the person will soon realize that their efforts are not achieving the success they desire.

Recall the discussion in *Bullying and Your Brain*, because you have experienced trauma, your brain the neural connections in your brain have been wired to be more likely to trigger. So in order to get to the point where you do not show a response to being treated badly, this will take some practice and effort.

Also recall that the experience of trauma can cause damage to the hippocampus in your brain. Research has shown that the regular practice of mindfulness can increase the gray matter in the hippocampus. (Search: hippocampus, mindfulness.)

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

The practice of mindfulness helps people achieve calmness and focus—to self-regulate. (Search: mindfulness.) The website for the organization Mindful, at <http://mindful.org> defines mindfulness like this:

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

You can achieve greater mindfulness by routinely engaging in the practice of meditation. The following are the simple steps from the mindful.org web site.

1) Take a seat. *Whatever you're sitting on—a chair, a meditation cushion, a park bench—find a spot that gives you a stable, solid seat, not perching or hanging back.*

2) Notice what your legs are doing. *If on a cushion on the floor, cross your legs comfortably in front of you. (If you already do some kind of seated yoga posture, go ahead.) If on a chair, it's good if the bottoms of your feet are touching the floor.*

3) Straighten—but don't stiffen— your upper body. *The spine has natural curvature. Let it be there. Your head and shoulders can comfortably rest on top of your vertebrae.*

4) Situate your upper arms parallel to your upper body. *Then let your hands drop onto the tops of your legs. With your upper arms at your sides, your hands will land in the right spot. Too far forward will make you hunch. Too far back will make you stiff. You're tuning the strings of your body—not too tight and not too loose.*

5) Drop your chin a little and let your gaze fall gently downward. *You may let your eyelids lower. If you feel the need, you may lower them completely, but it's not necessary to close your eyes when meditating. You can simply let what appears before your eyes be there without focusing on it.*

6) Be there for a few moments. *Relax. Now get up and go about your day. And if the next thing on the agenda is doing some mindfulness practice by paying attention to your breath or the sensations in your body, you've started off on the right foot—and hands and arms and everything else.*

7) Begin again. *When your posture is established, feel your breath—or some say “follow” it—as it goes out and as it goes in. (Some versions of the practice put more emphasis on the outbreath, and for the inbreath you simply leave a spacious pause.) Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—return your attention*

to the breath. Don't bother judging yourself or obsessing over the content of the thoughts. Come back. You go away, you come back.

That's it. That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.

Consider how long this activity might take—not long at all. Realize that the more you can intentionally practice being mindful, the more effectively you will prepare your brain so that it does not trigger when someone is hurtful or a challenging situation emerges.

You will find that if you routinely do this, not only will you be better able to retain your calm in a hurtful situation, you will also increase your success in your academic studies. When you achieve mindfulness, this shifts your focus to your prefrontal cortex, which allows you to think more clearly.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

A strategy to routinely practice mindfulness is to use the Transitions in school as a reminder. When you come into a new class, take your seat and take a few minutes to go through the mindfulness steps described above.

When you are at home, you may find some longer mediation audios or videos online. More extended periods of mindfulness or meditation can be helpful. You may also take a yoga class, which is considered “movement mindfulness.”

One fun way to achieve mindfulness is to create and use a “glitter jar.” Conduct a search for this online and you will find instructions for creating one. Then when you come into a class and are going through the mindfulness steps, you could close your eyes and see in your mind's eye your glitter jar at home settling down.

KNOW HOW TO DE-ESCALATE

If someone is hurtful to you or you become upset by something else, it is exceptionally important that you de-escalate as rapidly as possible. Frequent practicing of mindfulness will have created neural pathways to allow you to do this more effectively. This is why frequent practice is so important.

There are seven stages in an escalation of distress:

- **Calm.** You feel calm and relaxed.
- **Trigger.** Something happens that triggers you by making you feel upset.
- **Agitation.** You become increasingly unfocused and upset.
- **Acceleration.** As the situation remains unresolved, your entire focus is now on the upset.

- **Peak.** You become out of control and engage in severe disruptive behavior.
- **De-escalation.** Having triggered and lost control, you now feel confused and embarrassed, but the severity of the peak behavior has passed.
- **Recovery.** The time it takes for you to calm down and regain the ability to resume activities.

The key to effective self-de-escalation is to have a good idea of what triggers you so that when this happens you can be mindful of what might happen next. Then, if you start to feel agitated, this is the time to take a specific step to take yourself out of the current situation to get to a place where you can de-escalate.

The mindfulness approach set forth above is a good approach also for de-escalation. You may also need to engage in some physical activity. If when you triggered your amygdala caused your body to release adrenalin it is important to get this out of your system. Vigorous physical activity is the best way to do this.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

If you have a history of escalating, you will need to talk with the school to obtain special permission to remove yourself from any classroom or other situation when you start to feel agitated. You may agree to a place where you can go to de-escalate. This might be the counselor's office or perhaps the school library. You should have some kind of a permanent pass, so that no other staff person stops you from going to a place to de-escalate.

If you triggered and started to escalate, be sure to note this in your Journal. Write out what happened and how you handled the situation. Do a self-evaluation of your effectiveness and decide whether there are things you might want to change.

THINK THINGS THROUGH

When you gain interpersonal relationship problem solving skills—that is learn how to think of their own solutions to problems, consequences to your actions, and how you and others feel about things you can become more resilient in figuring out how to respond if someone is hurtful. It is also helpful for you to focus on goal setting and action planning.

USE EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

There are interrelated skills that are necessary to engage in effective problem solving:

- Stepping back from the situation and thinking about what has happened to make sure you have a clear understanding of what has happened.

- Identifying what you would like to achieve.
- Identifying several different strategies or actions you could take to resolve a problem or respond to a situation. It is helpful in this step to identify strategies or actions that use one of your identified Character Strengths.
- Effectively predicting what might happen if you followed each of those strategies or actions.
- After thinking through what might happen as a consequence of each strategy you thought of, weighing pros and cons or risks and benefits to decide which strategy or action to take.
- Determining what steps to take to accomplish this strategy or action.
- Evaluating effectiveness, knowing that the first thing you try might not work, and determining whether something else must occur.
- Repeating this process if the first strategy or action did not achieve the desired goal.

The Think Things Through steps are to ask these questions:

- What is the situation?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- What strategies could I use?
- Is each in accord with my values and strengths?
- For each, what might happen?
- What is my best choice?
- If that does not work, what else could I do?

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

At the end of the day, in your Journal, think about what happened and whether you faced a situation where you needed to engage in effective problem solving. Write about what happened and how you used this Think Things Through strategy. How did this work? What might you do differently next time?

ENGAGE IN GOAL SETTING AND ACTION PLANNING

If you can maintain a focus on your future and engage in effective goal setting and action planning this will also help you to achieve greater resilience and ability to achieve positive outcomes in your life.

Essential steps in effective goal setting are:

- Set goals that are motivating because they are important and have value.

- Make sure goals are specific, relevant, and attainable in a specific time.
- Put goals in writing.
- Make sure the goal is measurable so it is clear when it has been attained.

Following the setting of goals, it is necessary to create an action plan. The steps to create an action plan are:

- Problem solve to identify the action steps necessary to achieve your goal.
- Put those action steps in a sequence based on time.
- Identify when action step is accomplished.
- Evaluate effectiveness of actions.
- Revise the action plan as necessary.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

At the end of the day, in your Journal, identify a goal that you want to achieve the following day. Then outline the actions plan you will follow to achieve this goal. Then the following night, note how well you followed your action plan to achieve this goal.

Once you are achieving success in following your action plan to achieve your daily goals, set some longer term goals. Perhaps you could set a goal to achieve over a week. Then expand this to more longer term goals and action plans.

MAKE POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

Positive connections with both good friends and trusted adults are important for your emotional well-being.

MAKE GOOD FRIENDS

Having some good friends can help you feel better about yourself and have more fun in your life. Having some good friends also is very helpful if another student is being hurtful to you. Being able to get support from friends and talking through what has happened to decide what else you might need to do can be exceptionally helpful.

To have good friends, you have to put forth the effort. No one is going to come knocking on your door to ask you to be a friend. If you have one or a few friends, you might see if they are interested in expanding your friendship circle.

The biggest barrier to finding new friends is fear of rejection. The best way to deal with the fear is to not place a high priority on achieving closer relations with everyone you interact with. Just focus on getting to know others better and reaching out to be kind to them. If a closer friendship emerges, this is great. If it turns out that this person is not interested in a closer relationship, that is also

fine. You can both get to know each other without any more extensive expectations.

The best way to find new friends is to start with an activity that you are interested in. Is there a club at school you might want to join or a class you might want to take? Is there an after school center you could go to? Get engaged in these activities with the idea of enjoying the activity and possibly making a new friend. You can come together based on your mutual interests.

When interacting with people smile and reach out to be kind. Smiling is an invitation to others that you want to interact with them. Make sure that you are not keeping yourself in a bubble. Present yourself as someone who wants to get to know other people. Put away your smart phone at first—but if it seems like you might want to continue your connection be sure to share contact information.

Be the friend that you want to have. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Be available to someone when they need you. Make sure that you are giving as much to the other person as you are getting from them. Be encouraging. Let them know that you believe in them and support them.

Give your friends space. Don't be too clingy or expect too much of their time and attention. Don't be offended if they turn you down because they are busy or need some alone time.

Realize that friendship break-ups happen. This is a normal part of life and does not mean that anything is wrong with either of you. If you have a friendship break-up do not allow your pain to turn to anger and attack. Let go of your feelings of hurt by forgiving the other person. Accept that the friendship is over, acknowledge it was meaningful, and take time to grieve your loss. Practice something to say about what happened if someone asks. Keep yourself busy doing things that you enjoy and be open to meet new people or trying a new activity.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

Conduct a friendship audit. Who are your current friends? What interests do you share? What are the strengths of these friendships? What are any weaknesses? How can you build on these strengths? How can you make new friends?

CONNECT WITH A TRUSTED ADULT

Having trusted adults in your life is also important. Trusted adults are people you can turn to when you have a problem, when something bad is happening to you, or when you have embarrassing or difficult questions.

A trusted adult is someone you can talk with about anything, someone you feel happy being around, and someone who is a good listener. A trusted adult is someone you feel comfortable talking with about something that makes you feel uncomfortable, or confused or a problem

you might be having. A trusted adult is someone you believe would try to help you solve the problem situation.

Trusted adults may include your parents, a teachers, a coach or youth organization leader, a faith leader, or others. It is generally best to be able to identify a number of trusted adults who you could talk to in different situations.

Sometimes, adults will take the responsibility to reach out to young people to offer to support them. However, to find some helpful trusted adults, it is also probably necessary that you take the steps to reach out. Consider this a form of a quest—a quest to find some adults, even just one adult, who you can really trust to help you.

- A trusted adult should make you feel safe and be someone you think you could share more serious concerns with.
- A trusted adult should be a good listener—someone who will listen to your opinions and ideas, seek to understand your perspective by asking questions, and offer validation for your feelings, rather than telling you to stop feeling the way that you do.
- A trusted adult should help you figure out how to respond to a situation and not immediately jump to their conclusion about what you should do.

Before you decide to share information that is more sensitive with an adult you are not yet sure you can trust, try having a conversation about something else less important. This can be about anything. Ask yourself: Does this adult listen to you? Does this adult accept your opinions?

After this, then imagine yourself revealing something difficult or embarrassing to this adult. How would you feel sharing this? Do you think this adult listen to you and try to help you? Would this adult help and support you—or try to take over?

If you start to share some more sensitive information with an adult you are not yet sure you can trust, do so slowly and be very watchful for warning signs. Is this person listening to you with an open perspective? Or are there signs that the person might be wrongly judging you—questioning look, a defensive body posture, statements that include "should," or a disapproving tone? If any of these warning signs appear, stop explaining the situation, wait for this person to make one statement of "what you should do," thank this person, and leave.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

Conduct a trusted adult audit. Do you have a sufficient number of adults in your life who you trust that you can talk to about serious concerns? If not, go on a quest to find one or several trusted adults.

REACH OUT TO BE KIND

Two strategies are helpful for increasing your positive relations with others. These are engaging in regular acts of kindness and accepting personal responsibility and taking steps to remedy the harm if you have made a mistake and have been hurtful to another.

BE KIND TO OTHERS

One of the best ways you can both reduce the potential of being treated badly and improve your own happiness is by intentionally reaching out to be kind to others many times a day. Research has documented many positive benefits of being kind to others. These include:

- Being kind can significant increase your positive mood and decrease your feelings of separation from others.
- Being kind can help you feel stronger, more energetic, calmer, less depressed, and leads to increased feelings of self-worth.
- When you are kind to another person, your brain's pleasure and reward centers light up, as if you were the recipient of the good deed.
- Kindness is contagious—witnessing kindness or having someone be kind leads other people to be kind.

Young people who demonstrate greater compassion for others and regularly reach out to be kind have richer friendship networks and are more accepted by their peers than those who do not.

One key study in a school demonstrated that students who were instructed to perform three acts of kindness for others every day experienced significant increases in positive acceptance by their peers. This insight provides a powerful, and easy to implement approach to increase the peer acceptance of those who are treated badly.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

One of the best things you could do to reduce the potential that other students will be hurtful to you is to set of goal of reaching out to be kind to others at least five or more times a day. It is very important that you are intentional about this.

Here is a fun strategy: Get five bright copper pennies and begin the day with those pennies in your left pocket. When you intentionally reach out to be kind to someone, transfer one of those pennies over to your right pocket. When you find that you transfer five pennies by lunch time, you can increase to 10.

At the end of the day, in your Journal, write down what you accomplished:

- Who did you reach out to be kind to? (Describe the person if you do not know their name.)
- What did you do to be kind?
- How did this person respond?
- How did you feel?

When you have gotten into the practice of being intentionally kind several times a day and feel more effective in doing so, now is the time to “up your game.”

Make note of the friends of any student who has been hurtful to you. Whenever you have the opportunity to do so, reach out to be kind to one of these friends. What this has the potential of doing is causing this friend to tell their friend to stop being hurtful. Keep a special note of the times that you are able to do this.

By the way, in the future when you get a job, you will find that this daily practice of reaching out to be kind to others will be very helpful in achieving success in the workplace.

STOP, OWN IT, AND FIX IT IF YOU HAVE BEEN HURTFUL

Think through the reasons why you would not want to be hurtful to another. These reasons could include:

- How I would feel if someone did this to me or to someone I care about.
- How I would feel about myself because of how this reflects on me.
- It is against my values to be hurtful to others.
- How I would make the other student feel.
- What my mom, dad, or other adult whose opinion I value would think.
- What my friends would think.
- How this might damage my reputation.
- That I might get into trouble.

Also think through how you can best respond if someone has been hurtful to you and avoid getting into a Cycle of Hurt. A Cycle of Hurt starts with hurtful act or a student’s perspective that someone has been hurtful, which leads them to engage in retaliation, which is followed by more retaliation by the other person, and on and on this goes with everyone ending up feeling bad. If someone has been hurtful to you and you feel like retaliating, you can think about this:

- I can remain calm.
- I can choose not to let another person control how I feel about myself or act.

- I know that people can change and just because someone was hurtful does not mean he or she will continue to be hurtful.
- I can Think Things Through to find a positive way to respond that avoids engaging in retaliation.

If you have made a mistake and were hurtful to someone else, realize that you can change, make better choices, and make things better for one who you harmed. You can Stop, Own It, and Fix It. These are the steps you can take if you have made a mistake and were hurtful:

- Walk away and calm myself.
- Think Things Through about what I did and what I was trying to accomplish.
- Think about the excuses or rationalizations I made for my behavior.
- Dig deeper and think about what is going on inside of me that lead me to treat someone badly.
- Acknowledge that what I did was wrong.
- Take steps to make things right.
- If things are not right for me, ask for help.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

At the end of the day in your Journal think about any time when the way you treated another might have not been in accord with your values. If you were treated badly, did you avoid engaging in retaliation? If you were hurtful, did you accept personal responsibility and take steps to make things right? Are there any more actions you need to take to ensure positive relationships?

BUILD AND USE YOUR STRENGTHS

Drs. Peterson and Seligman led a team of 55 distinguished social scientists to identify and classify the core capacities that lead to goodness in human beings across cultures, nations, and beliefs. These are called Character Strengths.

The VIA Institute on Character has a free Character Strengths Inventory on its web site that you can complete. (at <http://viacharacter.org>) A brief version of this, developed with their permission, is provided in this booklet. Everyone has different character strengths. This survey will help you to identify your top character strengths.

One experiment the researchers did with this survey was to provide participants in a study with insight into their top five character strengths. The participants were then were asked to use one of these strengths in a new and different way each day. This strategy was found to have excellent success in generating happiness and decreasing depression.

On the VIA Institute for Character web site there is guidance on strategies you can use to build every one of these Character Strengths.

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths

1. *Wisdom and Knowledge–Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.*

- *Creativity [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.*
- *Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.*
- *Judgment [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one’s mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.*
- *Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematic ally to what one knows.*
- *Perspective [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.*

2. *Courage–Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal.*

- *Bravery [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.*
- *Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks.*
- *Honesty [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions.*
- *Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.*

3. *Humanity-Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others.*

• *Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.*

• *Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.*

• *Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.*

4. *Justice-Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life.*

• *Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one’s share.*

• *Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.*

• *Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.*

5. *Temperance–Strengths that protect against excess.*

• *Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.*

• *Humility: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.*

• *Prudence: Being careful about one’s choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.*

• *Self-Regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions.*

6. *Transcendence-Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning.*

• *Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.*

• *Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.*

• *Hope [optimism, future - mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and*

working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.

- *Humor [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes.*
- *Spirituality [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.*

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

Every day you pick a different Character Strength to work on. At the end of the day write a report on the Character Strength you used and how this worked in your Journal.

Knowing your Character Strengths can also support effective Problem Solving. When thinking about possible strategies to respond to a more challenging situation it is important to identify strategies that use one of your personal Character Strengths. In your Journal when you report on a time when you Thought Things Through, be sure to identify which Character Strength you decided to use.

Write down a way that you could respond immediately in situations where someone has been hurtful, using each of your top Strengths. Create at least five possible responses, each using a different one of your Strengths. Practice these immediate responses. Envision a hurtful incident. Remain Calm. Keep Your Personal Power. Use Your Strength to respond.

FOCUS ON THE GOOD

The more you can maintain positive feelings about yourself, the less likely you will be to act in ways that demonstrates a perceived weakness that could lead to your being targeted and avoid thinking badly of themselves if this occurs. The best way to maintain positive feelings is to focus on positive experiences and be grateful for those experiences.

Remember in the discussion on how your brain functions that our brain is wired to focus more on negative experiences than positive ones. When you intentionally seek to shift your focus, you can rewire your brain to be more happy.

Please take the time to watch a TedTalk on this by Dr. Rick Hanson called Hardwiring Happiness. (Search: hanson, hardwiring happiness, tedtalk.) The approach Dr. Hanson recommends to use a focus on positive experiences to change your brain. Dr. Hanson calls this approach the HEAL method—Have, Enrich, Absorb, Link.

- **Step 1. Have a Good Experience.** Either notice a positive experience that is happening to you or create a positive experience for yourself.
- **Step 2. Enrich It.** Keep thinking about this experience for at least 10 seconds or longer. Feel the positive experience in your body. Enjoy it. Think about how wonderful this is. Really take the time to feel good.
- **Step 3. Absorb It.** Think about this positive experience as being absorbed by you—traveling deep into your mind and warming your heart. Bring the experience deeply into your being.
- **Step 4. Link Positive and Negative Material Together.** This step is considered optional by Dr. Hanson. The idea is to strongly feel this positive experience, briefly bring to mind a negative thought, and then let go of the negative thought and just focus on the positive experience. If you try this, make sure not to let the negative thinking take over. Simply hold the positive, then briefly, just for a second, reflect on the negative, and then return to the positive.

Your goal should be to focus on five positive experiences for every negative experience or thought. This means that every time you experience a negative incident or think about a negative incident, you should shift your focus to five positive things.

BE POSITIVELY POWERFUL PERSONAL STRATEGY

To translate this into action while you are at school, if you experience someone being hurtful to you, as soon as you can pull out a notebook and a pen and write down five recent positive experiences or things you are grateful for. For each of these positive experiences you write down take a brief moment to Enrich It and Absorb It. Then, if you find yourself thinking about the negative incident again, look at what you wrote and shift to positive thinking.

An additional strategy may also have a positive impact. During Step 2 or 3, when you are thinking strongly about this positive experience shift your eyes so that you are looking to the right and left, back and forth, several times. This can help to make sure that this positive experience is embedded into both sides of your brain.

In the evening, when you are writing in your Journal, be sure to write down five positive things that happened to you this day. The act of writing itself provides another way to enrich and absorb the positive experiences.

Lastly, you may consider writing a gratitude letter or thank you note to someone to whom you are grateful.

CHAPTER 4. A POSITIVELY POWERFUL RESPONSE

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

At any time when someone is hurtful to you, you can combine the use of the strategies set forth in Chapter 3 to respond in a positively powerful way. As noted before, think of bullying in the context of gaming. A student who is engaging in bullying is trying to obtain “power points” from you.

If you respond to being treated badly in a way that demonstrates the perception that you are upset or that this has bothered you by looking sad, having an angry outburst, or retaliating this is the way you lose “power points” to another. When you are being treated badly, it is exceptionally important to remain calm, stand tall, and keep your personal power—no matter how upset you feel inside.

The reason it is suggested that you practice these strategies on a daily basis, reminding yourself during Transitions and keeping a Journal, is so that your brain can form new neural pathways that will increase your effectiveness in situations when someone is hurtful to you.

Here is the combined process to respond in a positively powerful way:

- If someone is hurtful:
 - I will Remain Calm and Keep my Personal Power by standing tall and thinking to myself, “I am worthy. I deserve respect. I choose not to give that person the power to make me feel bad.”
 - I will Think Things Through regarding whether I can or should respond immediately.
 - If I respond immediately—I will keep it short and powerful—using one of my Strengths or with humor or kindness, rather than anger or distress. Or if I choose to simply ignore the situation, I will hold my head high and walk away with pride. I know that it is best if I walk to a place where there is a school staff member who would be in a position to witness continuing harm. But I will not talk to that staff member in front of other students because this may be interpreted as me “tattling.”

- If I am online—I will capture the post, report abuse to the site, and block this person. Then, I will keep my hands off the keyboard until I am certain I am calm.
- After I have walked away or while I am keeping my hands off of the keyboard, I will Think Things Through to decide what else I need to do. I will Make a Positive Connection with a friend or trusted adult to describe what happened, receive support, and discuss what an additional response should be.
- I will figure out how to Stop, Own It and Fix It, if I have also been hurtful.
- I will Reach Out to be Kind to another person, because I know this will make me feel better.
- I will document in my Journal what happened and how I responded. I will then shift to a Focus on the Good by writing down five positive things that have recently happened to me.

POWERFULLY INSIST ON A POSITIVE RESPONSE BY THE SCHOOL

Work with your parent to powerfully insist that the school respond in a positive way to the hurtful situation. However, it is important that you ensure that you will be actively involved. Decisions about you should not be made without consulting with you.

THE BASICS: POLICIES AND LAWS

BULLYING POLICY

Your school district has a disciplinary policy that addresses bullying and harassment. This is included in a document that should have been provided to you at the beginning of the school year. If you do not have this, you can ask for a copy in the front office of your school or find this online at the district web site.

This district policy was likely adopted by the district to be in compliance with a state statute. You might want to also

look at the state statute. (Search: name of your state, bullying statute.)

Make sure that you have a copy of the district's policy so that you know how and what school staff should do to address these situations.

Additionally, this policy will hopefully provide guidance on how you can proceed if your report to the principal does not achieve a positive result. This involves filing a complaint with the district or even the state, which will be discussed below.

One concern, however, is that in any situation where a student is accused of violating the disciplinary code, a number of important protections come into place for the accused student. This includes due process protections.

What too often happens in these situations is that the question shifts from how can we resolve these hurtful interactions to a question of whether or not the accused student will be punished under the disciplinary policy.

Additionally, if the student is punished in accord with the policy, the school is prohibited by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act from telling you anything about any disciplinary consequence. This creates a horrible situation for you because the principal will tell you, "I did something," but the principal is unable, by law, to inform you how this was handled.

Often, if there is not clear independent evidence against the accused student or the hurtful act does not precisely fit the statutory and policy definition of "bullying," the principal may simply conclude that this was not a disciplinary code violation—and do nothing to address the underlying concerns.

If you or your parent pressure the principal to suspend student who is being hurtful this is most likely not going to make things better for you—and could very well make things worse. Suspensions do not stop hurtful behavior. Requesting a restorative intervention is a better approach. This is discussed below.

DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT AND CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

Several federal laws, as well as state laws, govern discriminatory harassment based on "protected class." These laws are enforced through agency actions by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) or your state department of education. At this point in time, it is likely better to work at the state level. These statutes also provide the basis to file a law suit against the school.

- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.** Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex by an educational program or activity receiving federal funds. Title IX also prohibits gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on sex-

role stereotyping based on sexual orientation or identity.

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.** Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any educational program or activity receiving federal funds. Title VI includes discrimination based on religion, if grounded in national origin.
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).** Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).** Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

The legal standard is this: Public school districts violate civil rights laws when harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability is sufficiently serious to create a hostile environment, and school staff encourage, tolerate, do not adequately address, or ignore such harassment. Let's break this down to questions:

- Was a student repeatedly bullied by one or more students or staff member based on the student's membership or perceived membership in a "protected class?"
- Was the bullying sufficiently serious to significantly interfere with the student's learning or activities at school? If this is the case, this is considered a "hostile environment."
- Did a staff member who had authority to take corrective action, which includes teachers, know or should this person have known of the conduct or have actual knowledge of a significant risk of harm?
- Did the school fail to take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the hurtful conduct, correct the hostile environment, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects?

Therefore, if you:

- Are in a protected class or is perceived to be.
- Are being repeatedly harassed either by one student or many students or by a staff member.
- This is causing you to be distressed and this is interfering with your ability to learn or participate in other school activities.
- The school knows about this—or should have known.
- The school does not address both the individual incidents and investigate and address aspects of the hostile environment that may be supporting this harassment.

Then, it would appear the school is in violation of federal and state civil rights laws and the ongoing hurtful behavior directed at you should be considered discriminatory harassment.

Unfortunately, if you are not a member of a protected class or perceived to be, the level of protection you have is less. My recommendation is that you insist on the same kind of protective actions as would be provided for a student who is within a protected class.

SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW

If you have a disability and are receiving education services on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) you receive additional protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA you have a right to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

If you are being bullied and this is interfering with your ability to learn or to participate in school activities, then you are being denied FAPE. Your school is supposed to conduct an investigation of the situation and then address this in an IEP meeting.

While one focus in this meeting might be on helping you improve your social relationship skills, because your rights are also protected under the civil rights law Section 504, the primary focus in the meeting must be on the action items set forth above.

DOCUMENTING CONCERNS AND COMMUNICATIONS

DOCUMENTING SERIOUS OR ONGOING CONCERNS

Keeping a written record of what is happening is going to be your responsibility—because you are the one who is present when students are being hurtful to you.

Get a notebook that you use solely for documenting concerns of being treated badly. After any incident, describe what happened, who was present, what the outcome was. As you are likely just starting this notebook, and may just be starting this documentation of concerns, you might want to go back and write about things that have happened in the past.

Note that every time you write something in this notebook, also take the time to shift to positive by writing down five positive things that have recently happened. It is exceptionally important that keeping this notebook not become a source of stress for you.

The approach you take after reading this book is going to depend on the situation you are in. Many times, students have stopped reporting incidents to the principal because nothing is ever done to address the concerns—or what has been done has just made things worse.

Sometimes, there are serious incidents that should immediately be reported. This includes any incidents where there has been physical harm or threat of harm. This also includes any incidents where a staff member has been hurtful. To report this kind of a situation, document what has happened, who was involved, where, and when, and identify any witnesses. Put this in writing. Make sure you keep a copy.

More often, students are experiencing many repeated incidents each of which is not all that serious, but are emotionally distressing because they are ongoing. Very often, students do not report these more minor incidents because they know from past experiences that the school is not likely to respond. It is necessary to document a pattern of hurtful behavior over time and the harmful impact.

Here you will need to make a decision. Will you provide this documentation only to the principal to give the principal the opportunity to respond in a more effective manner? Or will you provide this document both to the principal and as a complaint filed with the district?

In making this decision it is likely best to think about how responsive the principal has been to prior reports of concerns. If there has been a lack of effective response, it is likely best to provide this documentation as a complaint at the district level—and then agree on an informal school level resolution, if this is offered. More on this below.

The following is the information you will want to be able to present to the school, the district, or the state department of education to document the concern that a hostile environment exists for you because of how you are being treated by students and possibly by staff. Once a school or district receives a report of a hostile environment, this increases their responsibilities in investigation and intervention.

- Describe how you have been the target of hurtful acts by other students while at school, the target of off-campus digital speech by other students from the school, or the target of hurtful behavior by a staff member.
 - What has happened? Where and how has this happened? Who was being hurtful? Who was supporting the hurtful acts?
 - If your friends were present, obtain written statements from them describing what happened. Note the identity of students who you think may be supportive of you who witnessed this.
- Describe any hurtful incidents involving other students that occurred in the presence of staff members or that you reported to a staff member.
 - What staff member was present? Did you tell a staff member? How did the staff member respond?

- If your friends were present, obtain statements from them describing what happened.
- Describe how, as a result of these hurtful acts, you are feeling.
 - Are you feeling anxious or really sad, wanting to retaliate against people or to hurt yourself? Are you having headaches, problems sleeping, stomach pain? Are you avoiding people?
- Describe how as a result of these hurtful acts, there has been an interference your learning and/or participate in school activities.
 - Have you skipped school one or more days, skipped a class one or more times, had difficulties concentrating in class, found it hard to complete assignments, received lower grades, or not felt comfortable participating in class discussions or class activities?
 - Have you avoided riding the bus, certain areas of the school building, using the bathroom, using the locker room, going into the cafeteria, participating in school clubs, participating on a school sports team, attending school activities?
 - Describe this interference in detail, including locations and dates where possible or appropriate.

If you are a member of a protected class protected under federal or state civil rights statutes and some of the hurtful acts have been based on your membership in this class—or a perception thereof—these are the things to describe:

- Describe how you are a member of a protected class as defined by federal or state civil rights laws. Alternatively, describe how you are being treated badly based on the perspective that you are.
- Describe how the hurtful acts appear to be related to your membership, or perceived membership, in this protected class. Demonstrate this based on what been said, written, or other acts.
- Describe aspects of the school climate that appear to be reinforcing the disparagement and harassment of certain students based on their protected class status.
 - This may include district policies, school practices, statements made by staff, curriculum choices, as well as overall aspects of the school climate.

A situation where a school staff member is abusing, denigrating, or bullying you can be very challenging to handle. To address this concern, you are going to have to have very excellent documentation.

- Pay attention to what other staff members were close by.

- If staff members witness another staff being hurtful, they are supposed to report this.
- Identify what other students were close by.
 - Hopefully, some of these students will be willing to provide you with a written description of what they saw. Tell them that if they are concerned about being identified, they can ask the school to keep this confidential.
- If this is happening regularly and can be predicted, ask a friend to be prepared to capture what is happening on their cell phone video.

COMMUNICATIONS

It is also exceptionally important to write down any communications you have with a staff member about these concerns. This is to avoid ending up in a “they said, you said” dispute. Also ask your parent to fully document any communications that have been made on your behalf.

- Any time you report to the principal about a hurtful incident, put this into writing. Ask the front office to make a copy of what you wrote for you to keep.
- Write down all communications you have with any teacher or other staff member about your being treated badly—as soon after the time this communication occurred as possible.
- Ask the principal, in writing, to conduct an investigation and provide a written plan of action to you about what they intend to do.
- Immediately after any meeting with the principal, write an email to the principal, or if your parent was present have your parent write an email, detailing everything that was discussed and all agreements that were made. Close this email with this statement: “This is my understanding of what we discussed and the agreements that were made. If this is any different from your understanding, please let me know.”
- Alternatively, if you are having a meeting with the principal, ask to be able to use your phone to record the conversation.

In this way you will have a recorded history of the commitments made by the school and they cannot at a later time indicate that they disagree with your recollection of what was discussed and the agreements that were made.

EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION AND INTERVENTION

As discussed earlier, due to the language of most state bullying prevention statutes, many principals think the

only thing they are supposed to do if someone reports bullying is investigate to determine whether the accused student should be suspended. Additionally, schools are also under strong pressure to stop suspending students. So there is a huge pressure on principals or the district to decide that a reported incident is “not bullying” and not be willing to do any more.

Under federal civil rights regulations and guidelines, if there has been a report that a hostile environment exists there are more stringent response requirements. This is why it is so important for you to take the time to document that what you are experiencing is a hostile environment, as outlined above.

What the school is required under civil rights regulations and guidelines to do is conduct a prompt, thorough, and unbiased investigation. This investigation must figure out what is happening and why to determine what steps need to be taken to stop the hurtful situation—the hostile environment—from continuing.

After this investigation, the school is required to take steps that are reasonably calculated to:

- Stop the harassment from continuing and prevent any retaliation. You have a right to know what the principal intends to do to stop this harassment.
- Remedy the harm to you.
- Correct aspects of the environment that may be supporting the hostile environment.
- Monitor to make sure that the hurtful situation—the hostile environment—has stopped.

These are the actions steps that are required of the school in a situation of discriminatory harassment. This is what the principal must be held accountable to do. If you are on an IEP, this should be fully discussed with the IEP team and included in a revised IEP plan. Even if you are not in a protected class, this is what the principal should do, but you may have greater difficulties making sure this occurs.

Here is language to include at the bottom of your report outlining the concerns:

“It is my understanding that the school is required to conduct a prompt, thorough, and unbiased investigation of this situation. After this investigation, the school is required to take steps that are reasonably calculated to stop the bullying or harassment from occurring and prevent any retaliation, remedy the harm to me, correct aspects of the school environment that may be supporting this hostile environment (add, if appropriate, which needs to include correcting how staff respond), and monitor the situation to make sure the hurtful situation stops.

It is my request that the school conduct the prompt, unbiased and thorough investigation and provide this to

me so that I can make any necessary corrections. I want to receive a written proposed plan of action that I can review to consider whether this will be sufficient to stop the ongoing harm prior to a meeting to discuss this.”

RESTORATIVE INTERVENTION

As noted several times, suspending a student for being hurtful rarely is sufficient to stop the hurtful behavior. It is best to ensure that the principal engages in appropriate actions to hold those who have been hurtful and their supporters accountable in a restorative manner. It is best to request a restorative resolution that includes:

- The students who were hurtful and any identified supporters will enter into a written agreement where they acknowledge what actions they engaged in, the harm that was done to you, and the steps they will take to remedy the harm both to you and to the school community. If these students engage in any further harmful acts, they should know this will result in a suspension.
- If any staff members were hurtful or ignored hurtful situations that occurred in their presence, these staff members will also provide written acknowledgement of what actions they engaged in, the harm that was done to you, and outline the steps the staff members will take to make corrections.
- If you require any protections safe passages agreement for hallways or rest rooms, a process and place you can do to if you are feeling unsafe or need to de-escalation, or any other support, this will be set forth in a written plan. This may also include removing any hurtful students from a class they have with you if they have been hurtful to you in this class. It would also be helpful to set up a process where you have a designated staff supporter who you can check in with every day.
- If any corrections need to be made to the school environment to ensure greater inclusion, the steps that will be taken to ensure this happens. This should include student involved activities to foster greater inclusion and kindness.
- The school agrees to engage in ongoing monitoring, especially of the hurtful students and supporters, and also checking in with you to ensure this approach has been successful.

FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE DISTRICT OR STATE

Schools have a process to make complaints at a district level, with a possible appeal to the state department of education. Every state has a different statute and regulations. In some states, there is a state process and a requirement that each district adopt a district policy, and these district policies could vary. Therefore, the guidance

provided in this section could vary based on your local process guidelines.

The complaint process may be set forth in your district's disciplinary code. It may be necessary for you to look on the district web site for "complaint process." It may also be helpful to look on your state department of education's web site to find out about the appeal process up to the state level. You may have to call this district to find out who to file the complaint with.

There may be a different process to follow for a complaint if the concern is discriminatory harassment under civil rights laws. There also may be a different process if you are receiving special education services.

These processes are for complaints against school staff. If the bullying or harassment has been ongoing and the manner in which the principal has responded has not been effective in getting it to stop, your complaint is not against the other students. Your complaint is against the principal who has failed to respond in an effective manner. Your complaint may also be against a staff member who has been hurtful or who has been ignoring the situations where students have been hurtful to you.

The following steps are recommended in situations where after completing the above documentation of a hostile environment, the principal does not engage in an appropriate investigation, does not create an action plan that includes the above components, or the action plan has not been effective and the principal has declined to do anything more. Alternatively, if reports have been made to the principal and there has not been an appropriate response, you may want to skip approaching the principal yet one more time and file this complaint at the district level.

The complaint and review process in most districts starts with district level staff, either the superintendent or a designee. If you are a member of a protected class, it may be appropriate to file the complaint with the district's "civil rights coordinator."

There may be a complaint form that asks these kinds of questions:

- Please briefly explain your concerns:
- What have you already done to try to resolve the problem?
- What results would you like to achieve?

If you simply state that you are being bullied, you have reported this concern to the principal and the bullying has continued, and you want to get the bullying to stop, you will likely not achieve much success.

Because many principals and district leaders think that all they need to do in these situations is investigate and decide

whether to suspend the student who was accused of being hurtful, has acted in a way that was in violation of the policy and should be suspended, the principal and even the district could just respond that what has happened to you is not a violation of the policy and therefore nothing more will be done. This is why the documentation described above is so important.

If you are going to file a complaint at the district level, more documentation is recommended. Arrange for a meeting with your doctor and/or a counselor and explain what is happening to them. Ask them to write a letter to the school explaining what they were told was happening and the harmful impact they think this is having on you based on what they know from both you and the research. Having a report from a professional like this can be exceptionally helpful because they will have more credibility than you.

If the concerns appear to be related to a staff member, this will make things more challenging. The union will get involved and this could turn into a battle. If this is a staff member who appears to be overwhelmed and lacks classroom management skills, you can request a restorative response—that the staff member receive professional development and support to improve their skills. If there are concerns of unacceptable bias related to "protected class," it may be safer to work with a local advocacy group or an attorney to address this. Bringing in other students who have experienced similar problems may be most appropriate.

The district will most likely try to arrange for a meeting with the principal and pursue an informal resolution. This is likely an appropriate way to proceed. However, require that the process that was outlined above be followed:

- Request that an investigation report of the situation be provided to you to allow you to make any necessary corrections. If you agree with the findings of this investigation, you can proceed to the second step. If you disagree, ask that the district bring in an independent investigator.
- Following your approval of the investigation report, the principal/district should present a plan of action to you to correct the hostile environment that includes all of the above components.

If you think what has been outlined in an informal resolution process will make things better, then you can agree to this. If you do not think that what has been outlined will make things better, you might be able to request mediation. Alternatively, this may be appealed to the school board. This would be addressed in a closed school board meeting. Or an appeal to the state department of education may be the appropriate path.

It is exceptionally important to note any timelines that are set forth in these regulations. If you do not approve of a decision that is made, you often have a very short time to

appeal to a higher level. Any time you agree to pursue a proposed path, be sure that you put in writing that you reserve your right to shift your complaint to a formal level, if things do not get markedly better quickly.

If you are a member of a “protected class” and other students within this protected class are also being harassed, you can work as a group to develop the documentation that a hostile environment exists in a school for all members of your “protected class.”

If you are not a member of a “protected class” and the district responds that the investigation and intervention actions that are required under civil rights laws are not designed to protect you, make sure you get this in writing and send the documentation you have prepared to both your representatives at the state legislature.

CHAPTER 5. BE A HELPFUL ALLY

This Chapter provides insight into strategies you can use to be a Helpful Ally. Helpful Allies are those who step in to help when they witness a hurtful situation. Because you know what it feels like to be treated badly and are now becoming empowered, you can become a very effective Helpful Ally.

STEPPING IN TO HELP

While it is true that some of your peers think that those who engage in bullying are “cool” and “popular” what you need to understand is that the vast majority of students do not personally like to see bullying and do not admire those who are hurtful.

When other students do step in to help, they are often successful in getting the hurtful situations to stop.

Essentially, when you witness bullying or other hurtful behavior, you have a choice. You can be a:

- **Hurtful Participant.** Who joins in or supports the harm.
- **Passive Observer.** Who ignores what is happening or walks away.
- **Helpful Ally.** Who steps in to help.

Helpful Allies can help in a variety of ways:

- **Reach Out.** Reach out to be kind to the person being hurt or left out and help friends resolve conflict.
- **Say, “Stop.”** Publicly or privately tell the person being hurtful to stop.
- **Report Concerns.** Tell an adult who can help.

WAYS TO BE A HELPFUL ALLY

These are essential skills to be a Helpful Ally:

REACH OUT

WHY HELP

If you see someone being treated badly, but are afraid to reach out to help, you could think of this:

- How I would feel if someone treated me badly and no one reached out to me?
- How I would feel about myself if I could have reached out to help, but didn't?

What are some other reasons why you would want to reach out to help?

WAYS TO REACH OUT TO BE KIND

These are some general ways you could reach out to help:

- Tell them that you did not like what happened and you want to help.
- Post a friendly note on their locker.
- Text them to make sure they are okay.
- Smile and say, “hi” when you see them.
- Ask them to join you for lunch.
- Offer to go along to report to an adult.
- Work with them on a team project.

What are some other ways you could reach out to be kind?

STEP IN TO HELP IN HURTFUL SITUATIONS

If you see someone being treated badly, this is what you could do:

- Determine whether it is safe for you to do anything. If it is not safe for you to do anything, immediately report this to someone who can help.
- Take a deep breath and stand tall.
- Ignore the one being hurtful. Go up to the one being treated badly and start a conversation on something totally unrelated to the hurtful situation.
- Continue to ignore the one who is being hurtful and encourage the one who was being treated badly to walk away with me.

- Then, help this person Think Things Through to determine what else to do.

HELP OTHERS RESOLVE CONFLICT

If you have some friends who are engaged in a conflict, you can help them to resolve this by helping them Think Things Through. Here is a process:

- Make sure both are calm.
- Ask each to explain what happened and how this made them feel.
- Reflect back: “You are feeling __, because __.”
- Make sure both understand the other.
- Ask them to Think Things Through to find solutions that would allow them both to be happy.
- Help them agree what they will try first and if this does not work, what they will try next.
- Ask them to “shake hands” on their agreement.
- Check back later to see if things are okay.

HELP A FRIEND IN DIFFICULT TIMES

If a friend is going through difficult times, these are some ways you can help:

Keep in frequent contact.

Take the time to listen with attention and without judgement.

Invite your friend to participate in fun activities.

Help your friend to Think Things Through to decide what to do.

Help your friend to focus on their future and the good things that are happening.

Tell your friend they are not alone, that help is available, and that things will get better.

Help your friend reach out to a trusted adult.

SAY “STOP”

IMPORTANT SAFETY GUIDELINES

- Keep myself safe.
- Work with others as a team.
- Strive not to increase attention to the one being hurtful.
- Don’t get into an argument.
- Don’t retaliate.

- If it is not safe, tell an adult who can help.

WAYS TO SAY “STOP”

These are some ways you could say “stop:”

- “How would you feel if someone did that to you?”
- “This really isn’t funny.”
- “We don’t do stuff like that here.”
- “Why are you doing this?”
- “Please walk away and chill out.”
- “Please use another word.”

What are some other ways you could say “stop?”

HELP A HURTFUL FRIEND STOP, OWN IT, AND FIX IT

You can help a hurtful friend accept personal responsibility and stop being hurtful by asking:

- How would you feel if someone did that to you or to me?
- Why do you think what you are doing is okay?
- What do you think others think about what you said or did?
- Are you willing to own it?

You can encourage your friend to accept personal responsibility and to make things right. You can encourage your friend to Think Things Through to decide how to make things right.

If your friend refuses to stop, own it, and fix it, you will probably want to ask yourself whether your friend’s values in accord with your own and how others might think of you if it appears you support your friend in being hurtful.

REPORT CONCERNS

WHEN TO REPORT CONCERNS

These are the kinds of concerns that should be reported to a trusted adult:

- If a person is struggling to deal with a big loss or significant challenge in their life, feeling very hopeless and helpless. is in significant emotional pain, anxious, on edge, or unusually angry and/or is talking about wanting to hurt themselves or others others.
- Many others are being are being hurtful in person or on social media.

- An adult is being hurtful to a young person.
- Someone tried to get a hurtful situation to stop and this has not worked.
- A situation is wrong and it is not safe for you to do something about it by yourself.
- Your “gut” is telling you something is wrong.

HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS

If you need to report concerns, you should:

- Tell the whole story. Who is involved. What happened. When and where. Why this is happening, if you know.

- Tell an adult who can help:
 - If at school, tell a principal, counselor, or other staff.
 - If with a youth group, tell staff.
 - If online, I will save the digital postings, file an abuse report on site, and report and provide the digital evidence to someone locally.
 - If possibly really serious, call 9-1-1.
 - If not sure, talk to my parent or other trusted adult.
 - If the first adult you tell does not respond in a way that you think is effective, tell another adult.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR JOURNAL

It is recommended that you get a hardbound journal to write in. Write in your Journal every evening. These are some suggested questions or things to note. You can also modify these suggestions and expand on what you write about.

As noted in the book, it can take some time to change the neural connections in your brain to allow you to achieve greater happiness and success. You should not expect to achieve success immediately. Try to make a commitment to keep this Journal for at least 40 days. Then make a decision about whether you want to continue this.

- Did you have a heart-to-heart connection with a friend today? If so, who was this and what did you do or talk about?
- Did you have a heart-to-heart connection with a trusted adult today? If so, who was this and what did you do or talk about?
- How did you reach out to be kind to others today? (Goal is reaching out to at least 5 people.) What did you do? How do you think this made this person feel? How did this make you feel?
- What personal character strengths of yours did you intentionally use today (Goal is to intentionally use a character strength you have or are developing at least 5 times a day.) What character strength did you use? What did you do? How do you think this worked? What did you learn?
- What positive experiences did you intentionally take the time to focus on today? (Goal is to intentionally focus on at least 5 positive experiences a day.) What was the positive experience? Why did this make you feel happy?
- Did you take several minutes at least 5 times a day to achieve a state of mindfulness? Did you engage in one longer session of meditation or yoga?
- Did you have an experience where you needed to intentionally stand tall and remind yourself to keep your personal power? If so, describe the situation, describe how you responded, describe how this worked, and describe what you learned?
- Did you have an experience where you needed to intentionally think things through to identify a strategy to take in response to a situation that occurred? If so, describe the situation, describe the strategies you considered, the strategy you chose and why, describe how this worked, and describe what you learned?
- Did you set a goal for today and decide on several action steps to accomplish this goal? If so, describe your goal and action steps, describe what happened, and describe what you learned?
- End your daily writing with this statement: “Every day in every way, I am getting better and better.”

CHARACTER STRENGTHS SURVEY

Think about who you are as a person. Indicate whether each strength is very much like you, often like you, at times like you, not often like you, or not at all like you. Realize that people have different strengths and that you can choose to build new strengths throughout your life.

Strength	Description	Very Much Like Me	Often Like me	At Times Like Me	Not Often Like Me	Not At All Like Me
Creativity	I like to think of new and better ways of doing things.					
Curiosity	I am always asking questions and love to discover new things.					
Judgment	I look at all sides of an issue to come up with the right answer.					
Love of learning	I love to learn new things.					
Wisdom	I am considered wise because I evaluate things from different perspectives.					
Bravery	I speak up for what is right, even if others do not agree with me.					
Perseverance	I finish what I start, even if it becomes difficult.					
Honesty	I speak the truth and I take responsibility for my feelings and behaviors.					
Zest	I live life as an adventure filled with excitement and energy.					
Love	I value the close relationships I have with others.					
Kindness	I enjoy helping others, even if I do not know them well.					
Social intelligence	I pay attention to the motives and feelings of others.					
Teamwork	I always do my share and I work hard for the success of my group.					
Fairness	I treat all people in a fair and just manner.					
Leadership	I am good at providing leadership and direction when I am with a group of people.					
Forgiveness	I am willing to forgive someone who has done something wrong.					
Humility	I am humble and let my actions speak more than my words.					

Strength	Description	Very Much Like Me	Often Like me	At Times Like Me	Not Often Like Me	Not At All Like Me
Prudence	I am careful about what I do and strive not to do things I might later regret.					
Self-control	I pay attention and am always in control of what I do and say.					
Appreciation of excellence	I appreciate the beautiful and wonderful things in life.					
Gratitude	I pay attention to the good things that happen to me and express my thanks.					
Hope	I believe that good things are coming to me now.					
Humor	I like to laugh, smile, and see the good in all situations.					
Spirituality	I feel my life has a higher purpose that fits within the larger meaning of life.					

Looking over this list, what do you think are your five most important strengths?

Looking over this list, what are the strengths you would most like to develop?

These Character Strengths were first included in Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This inventory of strengths was developed based on material from the VIA Institute on Character. A more comprehensive survey of personal strengths is available on their web site. © Copyright 2004-2014, VIA Institute on Character. All rights reserved. <http://www.viacharacter.org>. This Inventory was created and is disseminated with permission.