



Let's Talk About  
**BULLYING**

Table-Talk Tips  
for  
Families

Dr. Pat Fosarelli

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## **USING THIS BOOK**

The best way for you to determine if your child or teen is being bullied is to maintain a good level of communication. Children or teens who are convinced that their parents care about them are much more likely to divulge information about both the good and bad parts of their lives. Although some children and teens might try to hide bullying behavior from their parents to protect themselves or to avoid having to answer questions about it, good communication remains the best tool that parents have for learning what is occurring in their child's or teen's life. This is also true for children and teens who witness bullying but who are unsure how to deal with it.

Family Pages: 3 - 21

Start the communication process by reading through these pages as a family. Let the information in this book be a discussion- and devotion-time starter as you begin to discuss the topic of bullying. Just work on two or three pages at a time. Answer the questions out loud as you are comfortable. Questions in the orange thought bubbles are for parents. Questions in blue are for children and teens. Green thought bubbles are for both parents and their children. The purple boxes contain Scripture quotes. Remember that God is always a central part of these family discussions.

Parent Pages: 22 - 31

Parents, these pages are for you. Study the information on these pages *BEFORE* beginning the family discussions with your children. You will find answers to your personal questions about bullying as well as answers to questions that may arise during "table talk" time.

# Family Pages

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:10 - 12

## Parents and Children:

How well do you share the important parts of your life with each other? If not so well, why is this happening? Do you talk about your days (at school, at work, at home) with each other? Why or why not?



# LET'S TALK...

It's another Monday morning and 6-year-old Tess doesn't want to go to school again. "Mommy, can't I just stay home?" "No," her mother says firmly. "Tess, we go through this every Monday." "But," Tess cries, "Stacy doesn't like my hair and every day she says she's going to cut it off. She shook scissors at me last week." Tess' mother sighs. "Tess, Stacy is 6 years old; what can she do to you?"

Children: What should Tess' mother have said to her? If you were Tess' friend, what would you tell her to do?

Parents: Imagine Tess is your daughter. What other information would you want to know?

James is the shortest boy in his 3rd grade class, and Leroy gives him a hard time about it every day. "Hey, shrimp!" he calls out to James. "You're a big nothing." "Please stop calling me names," James says. "Only if you give me your lunch money," counters Leroy. "If you don't, me and my friends are going to come to your house when you're sleeping, and you'll be sorry." James now refuses to sleep in his own room.

Parents: If James was your son, how would you handle his fear about sleeping in his own room?

Children/Teens: If you were James' best friend, what would you tell him to do? If you heard Leroy talking to James like this, would you say anything? If so, what would you say?

Edgar is the smartest student in his 5th grade class. Thom, one of his classmates, struggles in school, but he makes up for it by his bravado. One day outside school, he said to Edgar, “Hey, puke face.” When Edgar ignored him, Thom became angry and said, “Don’t pretend you don’t hear me, loser.” With that, he knocked the books out of Edgar’s arms and laughed. “You do as I say,” Thom said, “and we’ll get along fine.”

Parents: If Edgar was your son, how would you handle this situation?

Children/Teens: If Edgar was your friend, what would you tell him to do? If you heard Thom being mean to Edgar, would you say anything? If so, what? What else might you do?

Alicia is in the 8th grade. She is shy and tries to keep to herself. Alicia has entered puberty before most of the other girls in her class, and they don’t like it. Several call her “Ho.” Some of the girls are spreading stories about things Alicia is doing with the boys in her class. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the sensitive Alicia is afraid and has begun to have stomachaches that prevent her from attending school.

Children/Teens: You are Alicia’s friend. What would you tell Alicia to do? If you heard other girls calling her names, would you say anything? If so, what? What else might you do?

Parents: How would you handle Alicia’s school refusal? How would you handle the larger situation?

In the past many would have called what is occurring in these four situations “kids beings kids.” Today, we call them episodes of bullying. One can bully with words, actions, gossip or threatened actions.

# WHAT IS BULLYING?

People define bullying in many different ways, but the easiest definition is that bullying is the unwanted, aggressive pressure placed upon another person in order to scare or threaten that person to get him to do what the bully wants. Bullying is not only just between two people; one group can be bullied by another group. Bullying is not limited by age, gender, religious group or ethnic group. Just as children can be bullied in school, adults can be bullied at work.

Bullies want—and need to—control others or situations. They can do this openly or secretly. In many cases, bullies are more powerful than those whom they bully, but sometimes it only seems that way. Those who are bullied often feel afraid and helpless; they don't know what to do to make the bullying stop, and even if they did, they can't seem to do it.

Bullies want to harm the person being bullied. If the bullied person feels threatened or is hurt—physically, emotionally, socially or spiritually—bullying exists, regardless of what the bully says (for example, “It was only a joke.”).



## PHYSICAL HARM

- Hitting, slapping, punching
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Tripping
- Taking an object
- Knocking an object out of someone's hands or arms
- Destroying the property of the bullied person

Parents and Children:  
Each person in the family say the word *bullying* out loud. Then share what that word means to you.

## EMOTIONAL HARM

- Name calling
- Intimidation or threats
- Instilling fear or a sense of inferiority
- Gossiping, whether the information is true or not
- Implying wrongdoing has been done by the bullied person to merit her treatment and to instill in her guilt or shame

## SOCIAL HARM

- Exclusion of the one being bullied
- Spreading rumors about him that would make others avoid him or ridicule him
- Posting pictures, videos or texts about that person on the Internet

## SPIRITUAL HARM

- Making the one being bullied feel as if he is not loved by God
- Implying that the person's actions will not be forgiven by God
- Ridiculing another's religion or religious practices

Children/Teens: Go through this list and answer with a simple yes or no. Have you ever witnessed examples of these kinds of harm?

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me.

Matthew 5:11

## THE BULLIED

Bullies choose their “victims” for certain reasons, as it is rare for bullies to bully just anyone. In other words, bullies pick those whom they think they can successfully control.

Often these children and teens are afraid of what might be done to them in the future. They might feel responsible for their situation, even if that is not true or realistic. They worry that no one will ever like them because they are the target of a bully and don't stand up for themselves. Hence, they often lack a good same-age friend. They might be very angry—at the bully and the situation—but their fear prevents them from expressing their anger toward the source of their problem. Instead, a bullied child or teen might lash out at loved ones instead, often causing people to label the bullied child or teen as moody. Although some research has suggested that the parents of children who are bullied might have overprotected their children (leading to their lack of assertiveness), that finding is not uniform across studies.

