

Bully-Proofing Youth Techniques

PLEASE DO NOT POST ON-LINE, BUT SHARING WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS OF YOUR SCHOOL VIA E-MAIL OR PRINT IS FINE

Verbal Bullying:

Students who target feed on fear, attention, and things.

Take these away and you will starve bullying behavior. Just like a stray dog will go away if you stop feeding it, bullies also move on when they don't get the reaction they want from the kids they target.

Kids who target others are constantly testing everyone around them. If you pass their test you are left alone, if you fail their test they continue to target you, and others start to target you. This is the swarm effect. First one kid picks on you, then two, then four, and pretty soon every bully in the school is picking on you. It is almost as if you have one of those Arby's hats glowing over your head saying, "Come pick on me". The good news is that once you learn to take away Fear, Attention, and Things, the Arby's hat goes away and the bullies go away with it. When you respond correctly they will leave you alone as fast as they swarmed you.

You can't control being tested, but you absolutely determine if you continue to be picked on. The bully will not continue to target you unless you give them the reactions they are seeking. I don't care how many flaws you think you have, it doesn't matter. The more things about you that bullies make fun of means only one thing. You may get tested more than other kids, but once you learn to pass their tests you will not be picked on any more. (This technique has worked for kids with many extreme disabilities and shortcomings. They got tested more than their peers, but once they mastered these techniques they were left alone.)

What they are looking for and how to take it away is listed below. These techniques will be thoroughly explained and demonstrated during the student assemblies, as well as the parent training.

FEAR: Don't show kids who are bullying any fear:

Fear reactions is what kids who target feed off of and use to scare their peers into doing whatever they say. If you show any sign of fear, that alone can be enough to keep the boy or girl coming back and picking on you again and again. Most people are not aware that they give off fear signals. These are natural reactions to being uncomfortable. First you must learn what fear signals you are sending, then you must learn and practice sending non-fear signals. This must be practiced until you can do

it without thinking at home, then practiced in real bullying situations with a friend giving you feedback later about any fear you are still radiating. Adults will rarely be able to witness bullying, so peers are the only real feedback available. Below are all of the ways we tend to send fear signals when we become scared, nervous, upset, or angry. Each of the different parts of the body reacts to uncomfortable situations instinctively and feed the dance. Below we will learn how to change these habits to react in the right way.

Each section below describes the wrong and the right way to control all the different parts of the body when you are being picked on by a bully:

HEAD

Wrong: Head tipped forward and down. Tipping the head forward projects fear to a bully and this will keep him or her coming back to pick on you over and over.

Right: Keep your head tipped slightly up. This makes you appear calm and relaxed.

EYES

Wrong: Looking down or nervously around with your eyes. If you watch two dogs approach each other, one of them will always look down to let the other dog know that he or she is “in charge”. This “in charge” feeling is what a bully seeks when picking on you. If you feed him or her that feeling, he or she will continue to target you.

Right: Always keep your eyes higher than eye level and focus on something in the distance. Don't look directly over the bully's head, always slightly to the right or left. This will keep your eyes up and it will also keep your eyes from moving nervously around the room. By doing this you will not be projecting fear with your eyes. Don't look at the bully because this will feed him or her your attention, and he or she might also be able to see fear in your eyes.

MOUTH

Wrong: Chin shaking or moving side to side. Lips held apart and trembling. These signals will tell the bully that you are uncomfortable and scared. The more uncomfortable you appear, the more confident the kid picking on you becomes. Often a bully will become more aggressive as the victim appears more afraid.

Right: Push your tongue against the roof of your mouth or behind your front teeth. This will stop your jaw from shaking. Bring your lips together to stop your lips from trembling, but don't squeeze them together. Your goal is to look as relaxed and calm as possible. Yawning a couple of times quietly will project a very relaxed impression. If you appear bored and relaxed that is the opposite of appearing afraid. Remember how hard it is to sleep after you watch

a scary movie. If you appear sleepy you can't appear scared at the same time.

BREATHING

Wrong: Allowing your breathing to speed up. This indicates fear.

Right: Slow down your breathing silently, and maybe yawn subtly. Really be careful to look natural and not forced. A fake yawn will make things worse.

SHOULDERS

Wrong: Curled forward and/or pulled up toward your ears. Just like a turtle, when we become afraid we try and pull our arms, legs and head into our shell. Unfortunately we don't have shells so we wind up curling our shoulders forward and pulling them up toward our ears. We also tend to keep our arms close to our body and our legs and feet close together.

Right: Keep your shoulders down and relaxed so you don't look tense and afraid. Do not push them down too hard or you will look tense.

ARMS

Wrong: Holding your arms in close to your body. Remember to not hold your arms up close to your body like a kangaroo. Also moving your arms stiffly projects fear.

Right: Let your arms and shoulders swing loosely and naturally as you move. Be careful not to over-exaggerate this or you will look uncomfortable instead of relaxed and confident. Imagine that your arms and shoulders are loose and relaxed. Always drag your arms naturally with your shoulders. Do not move your arms independently of the shoulders or it will not look natural. Any muscle tension in the body radiates fear.

HANDS & FINGERS

Wrong: Letting the bully see your fingers shaking or balled into fists. If the bully sees your fingers shaking they will know you are afraid no matter what other techniques you do to hide your fear. If they see you making fists you will appear to be tense and they will know they are getting to you.

Right: Hold your fingers together and curl them slightly to look natural. Don't look at your hands while you are doing this, simply bring your fingers together in a loose, curled, karate chop position. Next bring the thumb to the curled index finger for somewhere to let it rest naturally.

LEGS & FEET

Wrong: Walking fast to get away from the bully. The faster you walk, the more the bully will know you are afraid. When you come into a room where there is someone who picks on you, don't turn and leave

immediately. First walk slowly past them scuffing your feet and pretend to look closely at some object in the room. Once you have crossed the room, turn and slowly walk past them again as you leave. Try to stay more than an arms length away from them so they can't push or hit you. This will fool the bully and everyone watching into thinking that you are not afraid of the person who picks on you. If the bully or anyone else in the room thinks you are uncomfortable or afraid, he or she may target you in the future.

Right: Walk at half your normal pace and scuff your feet slightly. By scuffing your feet you make sure your pace is slowed and it also makes you look relaxed and confident. If you are standing, make sure your feet are at least shoulder width apart. Shift your weight to one side and maybe dip one of your shoulders.

MOVEMENTS AND WALKING

Wrong: Making quick jerky movements. If you watch any great actor or actress, they always move very slowly and confidently. Slow movements make a person appear cool, calm, collected and confident.

Right: Slow down all your movements as much as you can while still looking natural. For example, if you have to scratch your ear, bring your hand up slowly, scratch your ear slowly, and then drop your hand naturally to your side again. Don't rush anything. Try to keep your hands away from your face when someone is making fun of you. Covering any part of your face sends out fear to the bully. Slow down your walking speed to about half your normal pace. This will confuse the bully, who expects you to speed up to get away. By not speeding up, you are no longer giving the person picking on you the reaction he or she wants. If you don't feed bullies the reaction they want, they will move on and leave you alone. If no one gives them the reaction they seek, they will be forced to be cool to people in order to get a response. This helps bullies learn to be a friend by teaching them how to treat people.

VOICE

Wrong: Talking back to a bully when they put you down. The tone of your voice will tell the bully that you are afraid. When they pick on you, pretend that they are a ghost who you can't see or hear. A bully gets 90% of their putdowns from the victim talking back. Don't respond so the bully won't hear fear in your voice and will quickly run out of things to make fun of you about.

Right: Never say a word to a bully even if you have the perfect comeback. Pretend like you can't hear or see anything they say or do. Silence, combined with the above body language techniques will project a cool and confident air. By not saying anything back to the bully, you will appear cool and mysterious. If you talk back they will

toy with you like a cat playing with a mouse. There is no exception to this rule. If you talk back, they will pick on you forever. Whatever you say back is like playing one-on-one basketball with Michael Jordan and hoping to win. The minute you open your mouth you have already lost and fed the bully both fear and attention. The section below will discuss this in more detail.

ATTENTION: Don't give students who bully attention.

Attention is a bully's second favorite "food". Attention is given to a person in two ways. One way is by looking at the person. Another is by talking or responding to the person. To take your attention away from a bully you must not look at or talk back to him or her in any way. There are no exceptions to this rule. I don't care if you stayed up all night coming up with the best comebacks possible, if you use them the bully will keep coming back and picking on you. Trying to outdo a bully with putdowns would be like playing one-on-one basketball with Michael Jordan. Even if you practice for a whole year, he's still going to beat you. Let's say you get a couple lucky shots that go in...you're still going to lose the game. It is the same with a bully. This is a person who practices putting people down all day, every day. Now suddenly you think you're going to beat this person at their own game with little or no practice. If you are able to win by putting a person down worse than he or she puts you down, you'll probably end up in a fist-fight. And if putting him or her down is easy, you might be a bully yourself.

Remember; never say anything back to a bully no matter what. You will look much cooler pretending like they don't exist and concentrating on not showing any signs of fear listed above. By taking your attention and fear away, you will also take other peoples attention away from the bully. People watch bullying because they want to see how the victim will react. If you don't react to the bully, there will be nothing to watch and everyone will get bored and quit paying attention. The bully, who thrives on attention, will leave you alone because they can no longer use you to get attention and show off their power. This is the secret to no longer being targeted. Once the bully and everyone else know that you will not react to teasing, no one will want to tease you anymore. Remember, showing any sign of fear or giving any sign of attention is reacting.

THINGS: Never give material things to a bully.

It will never work to give a student who is bullying something (money, candy, food, CDs, DVDs, games, clothes, toys, etc.) in order to make him or her like you. As a matter of fact, the more things you give to a person who is bullying, the more things they will demand. The worst part is, the

more things you give to a person targeting you, the less they will like you. Studies have shown that kids who bully view targeted kids who try to buy their friendship as suckers. Never give a person who is mean to you any material reward. It will only keep them coming back to pick on you.

Don't invite kids who bully you to go places with you either. This is the same as giving them things. They will see this as you trying to buy their friendship. Kids who pick on others like the power of knowing that you are so afraid of them that you will try and bribe them to not pick on you. If you meet their demands, they will only be nice for a short time, and then immediately turn and pick on you again. They have to keep you scared in order to get more things from you. This is not friendship, they are simply using you. They probably even make fun of you to other people behind your back. You will never be able to buy a bully's friendship. You can only follow the suggestions above to earn respect. Believe it or not, a boy or girl who bullies will like you more in the long run if you don't feed them Fear, Attention and Things.

The presenter will demonstrate all of the above techniques in role-play form. I encourage parents to practice with their children until all techniques are mastered. Even when a child can do all of the techniques perfectly at home, it is still often difficult to do while they are in a real bullying situation. Many of the fear signals seem to creep back out in real bullying situations. Have your child find a friend who will watch them in real-life situations and give them specific feedback later about the above body-language. This will be the fastest way to master the techniques in real life situations.

Physical bullying:

Physical bullying is a small percentage of the bullying that happens. (3%-5% for boys and 1%-2% for girls) Most bullying is verbal and social. However, when physical bullying does occur it is terrifying for the kids who are targeted.

Most physical bullying happens on the way to and from school (bus-stops and buses) and/or in your child's neighborhood. Bullies will threaten, intimidate, and do subtle physical things at school, but most wait until they are off school grounds and away from adults to get violent. Just like a verbal bully, they feed off of fear. Doing the above body-language techniques becomes very difficult if you think the bully is going to physically attack you.

If your child is attacked he or she has the right to defend him or her self. If your child does not defend him or herself, the violence will escalate and the bully will become more and more aggressive. The chances of more serious injury increase with each attack.

There is a safer way for your child to defend him or her self:

1) Go to a local Martial Arts instructor. It doesn't matter if it is Karate, Kung Fu, Taekwondo or any other form. Any form will be fine. The key is that the instructor is skilled at teaching blocking and control combinations similar to what well trained law enforcement uses.

2) Tell the instructor that you would like your child to learn the instructor's five most effective self-defense (blocking and control) combinations. I don't recommend any type of attacking combinations, simply blocking and control methods. Don't just sign your son or daughter up for Martial Arts classes. Ask specifically for the instructor to teach your child the specific combinations mentioned above in a one-on-one learning style. The goal is to master the five combinations within about two to three months. After that, if your child wants to go on and learn more, great, but at least he or she will be trained quickly to safely and efficiently defend him or her self. If you just sign them up for classes it will take two years before your child will be able to effectively defend him or her self.

3) Once your child masters the five blocking and control combinations a strange thing will happen. Very few bullies will hit them anymore, and if they do it will only happen once. Now when the bully tries to physically intimidate your child, your child will be thinking of what combination he or she will use to defend him or her self. Now instead of radiating fear your child will radiate confidence and a funny thing will happen. The bully will sense your child's confidence and lack of fear and not attack. (Dogs react the same way. When they sense fear they bite. The bully can smell fear like a shark smells blood in the ocean.)

If the bully impulsively attacks anyway, he or she will wind up face down on the ground. (not hurt, but startled) Much like a criminal being controlled by the police, your child will be physically in control of the bully and the situation. Word will travel through the school and no one will physically touch your child again. Not only do these skills prevent violence before it starts, but they also balance your child's power with the bully, and for the first time that boy or girl will respect your son or daughter. Learning to defend your self safely is the key, and there is no shortcut to professional training. The instructor can tailor the training to the specific violent situations and settings that your child is facing. Have them teach blocking and control combinations specifically for what is happening in each bullying setting. (Examples: Hallway shoving, tripping, bus stop attack, etc.)

Many kids who previously bullied your son or daughter will seek out your child as a friend once he or she defends him or herself physically. It will now be your child's choice to decide if they want to hang out with the kid who previously targeted them or not.

How to Stop Social Bullying

Facts about students who socially bully others:

Almost all kids who target others tell their parents they are being targeted by the victim.

Parents are always the last to know what is going on.

You could catch these kids on film targeting others, and the parents of the child doing the bullying would still defend their kid.

Calling the parent of the child bullying yours almost always makes the situation worse, unless the kids are 2nd grade or younger. (The training will explain this in detail, but follow your child's lead. If they say please don't call the bully's parent, listen to them.) If you called in the past, most of the time your child simply quits telling you what is really going on, and you think you fixed the problem.

Punishing the child who targets when we catch them teaches the child that the behavior is wrong, and is really important to do. The frustrating part is that consequences can only be issued when the child is caught by an adult. They know they are innocent until proven guilty, and take full advantage of this. We also have to be careful trusting witnesses, because more than half of the time, they lie in favor of the bully out of fear of retaliation, and we wind up double punishing the targeted child.

One in ten incidents are caught by adults when the bullying is blatant name calling or physical. Only one in fifty incidents are caught by an adult with the sneaky sophisticated social/exclusion type of bullying.

You can coach a child as much as possible, but you can't step on the field for them without almost always making the situation worse. This training will cover how to empower a child to permanently fix the situation, instead of temporarily rescuing them and making things worse in the long run.

Leaders: These are kids who don't target others, are not targeted, and who everyone naturally follows. Ten percent of kids fall into this category. Social bullies may look like leaders to adults, but they are really intimidating other kids under our R.A.D.A.R. Any kid who bullies others is not a true leader. Social bullies are exceptional actors and actresses who fool all adults and even the leader kids they want as friends.

Followers: These are kids who are part of the group, but not a leader in the group. They are the majority, making up 60% to 70% of students at school. Followers are sometimes targeted by kids who bully, but usually not on a daily

basis. These kids rarely initiate bullying, but due to their fear of being picked on next, will often go along with the kids who intimidate and exclude others. The sophisticated bullies count on these followers to go along with them, in order to carry out their exclusion and humiliation strategies.

Kids who are excluded from their group, or don't have a group: These kids are highly targeted. This training is essential for these kids to eliminate bullying from their lives. They often have little or no social support from their peers and are often targeted on a daily basis.

Blatant kids who target: These kids are obvious in the way they target, and are often so desperate for attention, that they will target others right in front of adults. This group would represent the stereotypical bully. That neglected child who picks on others.

Sneaky, under the R.A.D.A.R. kids who target others: These are the little angels around teachers, parents, leader kids, and anyone they want to impress. As soon as the people they are playing to are not looking, they let their peers know who is in charge. These kids run every school by 3rd or 4th grade. This is the age when the blatant bullies become socially isolated, and these sneaky kids begin taking over. Girls often master this a few years sooner than boys.



How the Sneaky Social Bullies Operate

Mildew treats Linda really well and becomes her best friend. Much like a parasite attaches to a host. She also treats parents and teachers with the same charm, but anyone without power is considered unimportant.

Linda is liked by everyone, and is genuinely popular. Mildew appears popular, but is really just feared. Mildew does an incredible job of snowing Linda and adults. She pretends to be like Linda when Linda is around, but the other girls in the circle know her true colors. Keep in mind, Linda is not naïve, Mildew is just that good at snowing her.

I've worked in therapy with about fifty female Mildews, and about 25 male Mildews. They present really well, and don't come to therapy as often as other types of kids. None came to therapy for bullying (because no adults can catch them). It was always for family issues, but they shared their social control methods with me during therapy that was originally focused on other issues. I did not show reactions to what they shared initially, otherwise they would not be honest, and instead tell me what I wanted to hear.

During almost all therapy I pick the brain of whoever I am working with in order to find out how they think. I then can use this to help them change whatever isn't working in their lives. I did not pick the Mildew's brains in order to train their victims. This was simply a by-product of picking the Mildew's brains. I initially did it strictly to help the Mildews change their behavior for their own benefit.

Once fifty girls, and twenty-five guys shared almost identical strategies for controlling their peers, I knew I had stumbled onto something. I realized I had to not just help the Mildews change, but I also needed to help the targeted kids stop them from controlling others. By doing this, both the Mildews and their victims would benefit.

Every time a student hurts another student, they also hurt themselves. The kids who bully just don't realize this.

What I learned from asking the Mildews the right questions was disturbingly fascinating, and that is what we will discuss next.

I will be using female examples to describe behavior, but the same rules apply to male Mildews.

Social Bullying Strategies Used to Control Peers

When asked how they control their peers, all of the sophisticated male and female bullies answered almost identically. The main difference was that the females incorporated rumors, while the males were usually more blatant in their style. Girls were much sneakier, and almost impossible to catch by adults. Guys were sneaky too, but not at the same level.

These kids presented to me initially as the All-American Girl or Guy. Most were good students, good athletes, good at Art, music, good looking, and had peers at school either fooled (The leaders), or controlled (The followers and victims). They also had teachers and parents completely snowed. They would often brag to me about how they would pull this off. Keep in mind, I initially did not react to what they shared, otherwise they would shut down. Later in therapy, when they had shared as much as I thought they could, I would then confront them about their behavior honestly.

The Steps Mildew Takes To Control Peers

Once a week Mildew would blatantly humiliate a peer outside of her group. This was all pre-planned, and not spontaneous. The Mildews were very explicit about showing off their power in front of the follower peers, but hiding it from Linda and adults.

If this were a guy group, just change the names to guy names, and leave out the rumor part. In other words, just dumb it down for my gender.

Once every two weeks or so, all fifty Mildew girls, and several of the older Mildew guys said that they chose a member of their group, and intentionally kicked them out.

I asked the female Mildews what their reasons were for kicking a girl out. The answer was always a form of jealousy. The girl might be getting too close to Mildew's best friend Linda, she might be a better student, a better athlete, or getting more attention from boys.

Remember, Mildew is often a high achiever who is competing with everyone.

I focused on the most common reason for exclusion, which was a girl who started to hang out with Linda too much.

I asked the Mildews, "How do you kick out the girl who is hanging out with Linda too much?" All fifty girls said roughly, "Oh, It's easy, I start a rumor".

The Mildews all explained an almost identical strategy for starting rumors. They talked about using a girl who gossiped to spread their rumor, using a weasel girl who goes along with anything they say to back up their lie. They described how they plant the rumor with the gossip, back it up with the weasel girl confirming it is true, let it spread through the group, and then Mildew comes in like a hero to punish the girl she set up. The training goes into much more detail about how the Mildews pull this off.

Please look at above chart while following this:

If Mildew is kicking out Tina, she will lie to Tonya (Who likes to gossip) and make up something Tina said about Linda. The rumor is almost always about the leader (Linda), because that will turn the rest of the girls against Tina the fastest. When Mildew plants the rumor with Tonya, she brings in Taylor (The weasel) to back up her lie. She then lets Tonya spread the rumor to the other girls (Including Linda). Every Mildew said, "Once a girl hears a rumor from two different girls she thinks it's true". Now Mildew patiently waits for her best friend Linda to bring up what Tina said about her. Mildew acts surprised, and says something like, "No one talks about my best friend like that, we are not talking to

Tina for three weeks". Now Linda feels lucky to have a loyal friend like Mildew to protect her from Tina.

Once Mildew says, "We are not talking to Tina for three weeks". No one talks to Tina until they see Mildew be nice to her again. Mildew also tells the other Mildews (Who each control a group of followers) to tell their follower girls not to talk to Tina, and they all work together like little Mafia families. I've had several Mildews, look me in the eye and say, "I can take away any girl's friends in the entire school in half an hour, and everyone knows it, so they do what I tell them to stay on my good side". Some even said that they liked the power.

When I asked what they did to a girl who talked to Tina after being told not to, all the Mildews said, "Oh, they won't. And if they did, I would pull Tina back in, and force her to betray any girl who tried to support her. That way the girl would never support her again". Some of the girls even said, "I divide and conquer".

I then asked how they keep the girls from telling Linda what they are really like. To this they answered, "I'll find out, because Linda will try to fix things if a follower girl complains, and I will find out, and can secretly punish any girl who talks behind my back to Linda. I will warn the girl not to do it again, and I will pretend like we are getting along fine in front of Linda". The Mildews let Linda think she fixed things, but really the follower girls just stop telling her what is going on.

The consistency of this control method was stunning to me. It was almost like the Mildews read a manual on how to control. In reality, they just trial and error from the time they are in 1st grade, and by middle school they are all doing the same strategy because it works.

Girls who try to split Linda and Mildew will find Mildew 10 chess moves ahead of them. Mildew is like a Chess player thinking 20 moves ahead, and most girls and guys are only thinking one or two moves ahead. I have shown you Mildews Chess moves, now I will focus on how the followers can checkmate Mildew.

How to Stop Mildew

I asked the Mildews what they feared. The answer surprised me. They almost all said, "I'm afraid two girls (or guys) will form a friendship so strong that I can't split them up when I need to, and they will take over my group". Fifty out of fifty girls mentioned this, and about half of the guys alluded to it as well. At this point, a light bulb went off in my dim little brain. The girls even said that they watched their girls, and split up any girls who were getting too close. They would pull one into their inner circle, and exclude the other from the group by starting a rumor.

The whole process was completely conscious, planned, and executed in a calculated manner. This was not impulsive attention seeking behavior, like that found with more blatant styles of bullying behavior.

In order to build this unshakable friendship, it must be done under Mildew's R.A.D.A.R. The reason is that if she senses two girls getting too close, she will split them up before they can seal their friendship. Therefore, I recommend that a student secretly gets together one on one with another student twice a week for at least two months before they let anyone know they are hanging out outside of school. They cannot brag or even let others know they are becoming good friends. This is not a permanent situation, it is to prevent Mildew from splitting them up prematurely before their friendship is strong enough to resist her attempts.

Another technique to reduce Mildew's power to exclude or isolate is to secretly call any student who is isolated or excluded and let them know you still like them. Offer to get together outside of school, or at least own not talking to them, and apologize for not having the courage yet to stand up to Mildew's tactics. This lets students who think all their friends hate them realize Mildew has simply created an illusion, and this really takes away Mildew's power at the core.

The end goal is to not just support those excluded a little bit secretly, but it is to take the power back permanently from Mildew. Once the above mentioned strategies are in place, the following steps are how to truly take the power away from Mildew. It is very important to follow these steps exactly.

- 1) After two months, the two friends now make a pact to stick together no matter what. If Mildew kicks one out, the other goes with her. When Mildew tries to pull the initial person back in to split them up, they continue to stick together. If Mildew can split up the two friends the whole process must start over and she wins. Mildew counts on this, and there is no excuse for not sticking together. If you let Mildew split you, you will remain a pawn in her game, and future attempts will become even more difficult because Mildew knows your weakness. There are no exceptions to this.
- 2) Once this pact is established, wait for Mildew to kick one of you out. Don't worry, you won't have to wait too long. Remember, Mildew still doesn't know about your secret bond and friendship yet.
- 3) When she kicks one girl out, the other friend must go with the person who is kicked out. Regardless of how scary it is, or how nice Mildew is being to the non-targeted person, they must not let her split up their friendship, and force one girl to betray the other. This again must be done at the moment

of exclusion. Standing with your friend is critical. No exceptions or excuses for not doing this.

- 4) Mildew will then switch strategies and try to charm the first targeted person back into the group in order to isolate and exclude the girl who supported her. Do not fall for this tactic, Mildew will always use it to regain control. When it doesn't work, she will turn on both friends and threaten them. It might be, "Big Mistake!", or "You're Done!". Do the body language of confidence and try to look bored with the threat. Mildew is like a cornered cat, who knows her power is limited and her bluff is being called. Mildew will tell everyone not to talk to either of the two students she kicked out. Other kids might fall for it temporarily, but don't worry, deep down they will all gain tremendous respect for the two girls who stood up to Mildew. When I do assemblies, I recommend followers sharing that admiration directly with the two heroes by secretly calling them after school if they chicken out and go along with Mildew. This combination of behaviors is really powerful. At this point during my assemblies I will almost always see the Mildews in my audience begin to squirm, posture, or act as if they are bored. This is the only way I know who some of the Mildews are. Each of the above steps will happen almost like clockwork. Having talked to fifty female, and 25 male Mildews, I promise that these are their best Chess moves. They only have one move left before the two friends "checkmate" them.
- 5) The final "trump card" Mildew will play will often take several weeks. She may punish the two friends who stood up to her by excluding them for a couple weeks. Mildew may also try to start rumors to split them up, but I recommend the friends compare what they heard about each other and laugh. Once you know Mildew's next move it will not work against you. The final move will be slowly bonding and charming both people who stood up to Mildew. As they begin to trust her, Mildew will then begin splitting them by becoming "best friends" with one girl, and then excluding the other. Don't underestimate Mildew's sneakiness or intelligence. She might take a month to carry this out with only one end goal in mind...to split the two friends up and permanently destroy their friendship. Then she will kick the girl she fooled back to the curb. I have seen this happen countless times to girls I have worked with.
- 6) To counter Mildew, here is what I recommend: If Mildew is nice, be nice back. Whenever Mildew excludes either bonded friend, the other friend must stick with the friend and not be lured into Mildew's trap. I have coached many, many girls and guys through this process with absolutely no exceptions. The girls or guys who fell for Mildew's charm, and

- betrayed their real friend all grew to regret their decision within weeks. I would send them back to their real friend to apologize and try to rebuild the trust they had destroyed. If they didn't Mildew won as usual. Most were able to repair the damage, but some had to start over with a different friend. There is no other way out of this dance of which I am aware. Any two people who bond can stand up to Mildew with success. If someone tries alone, they are often kicked to the curb permanently.
- 7) After a few attempts to split the two friends Mildew will give up and quit targeting either one. She will pull them in with Linda and treat all three pretty well. This is not rocket science. Every girl or guy who was able to bond with one other friend as I described above, succeeded at no longer being excluded. Mildew has no interest in kicking out two people who stick together and support each other. This does not make her look powerful and intimidating. Mildew would rather target the people in the group who have no one watching their back.
 - 8) Now I will describe the final step of taking back the power Mildew is abusing. After the two friends are no longer targeted, most of the time, they enjoy being left alone, but don't want to rock Mildew's boat. I plead with them to finish taking the power back, but three out of four kids that I've worked with choose not to.
 - 9) However, one out of four take this next step. When someone else is excluded, the two friends ignore Mildew's exclusion order and talk to the person anyway. No one confronts Mildew (She loves confrontation opportunities), instead they ignore her exclusion orders and continue to include the targeted person. By doing this, the two friends move from being followers to becoming leaders, and the other followers in the group naturally follow them and ignore Mildew's orders as well. No one really likes Mildew, they simply fear her. As soon as Mildew's power to exclude is taken away by the two friends, she falls like a house of cards.
 - 10) This is not about getting even with Mildew, it is simply about going to the root of Mildew's power, and removing it. What is amazing is that almost all of the students who have done this, report that Mildew becomes much nicer when she can no longer exclude. Everyone wins, probably most of all Mildew. She is forced to learn for the first time how to be a real friend, instead of a controlling bully.

The only people who can stop Mildew, are the kids in Mildew's circle. As adults, we are not part of this dance, nor can we prove or punish this behavior consistently, because it is so subtle and sneaky. This has to be done by peers, otherwise, Mildew will go through Middle School and High School making

everyone's life (Including Mildew him or herself) miserable. But life becomes much fairer upon graduation. Here is what I have witnessed working with older Mildews in therapy. Many described friends abandoning them following graduation. People hung out with Mildew because they had nowhere else to go while in school. However, now as adults they will go anywhere Mildew is not. Even Linda fades away from Mildew as his or her colors start to really show.

Now approaching her mid-twenties, Mildew feels profoundly lonely. "Let's get married", she thinks. So Mildew goes out and turns up the charm to lure in a spouse. A happy marriage is not possible with Mildew behavior continuing, so usually I meet older Mildews during relationship or marriage troubles. When the marriage goes bad, many Mildews think kids will fix or secure the marriage.

Now Mildew is in an unhappy marriage with kids who she now raises just like she ran her social group in Middle and High school. She pits them against each other, and makes them compete for her love. Mildew winds up raising a whole litter of little Mildews. This is where they come from.

The little Mildews grow up and move away from mom or dad Mildew as fast as possible. They go off and start Mildew families of their own, and barely visit their parents. Pretty soon mom or dad Mildew can't take care of themselves, so they are put in a nursing home and forgotten. Pretty soon Mildew is 95 years old bullying other old ladies in her nursing home the same way she did in middle school.

Though I am being sarcastic, I am also speaking the truth. The older Mildews know this truth better than anyone. Mildew behavior will drive away friends, spouses, and even children. I do not wish this on anyone, and that is why the behavior must be stopped as early as possible.

How to Help Mildew

Ultimately my goal is to help the victims of Mildew as well as Mildew herself. When I finish understanding how Mildew thinks and confront him or her about his or her behavior, I always end on a positive. I explain what will happen in much greater detail than I described above, but then I give the Mildews the path out. I explain it in three simple steps that need to begin immediately.

I usually talk to them about who they want to be. Most want to be like Linda. I then describe how to go from being Mildew to becoming a Linda. Here are the three steps.

- 1) Apologize to all the girls they have controlled since 1st grade. It did not start in Middle School.
- 2) Tell them to remind her if she slips back into Mildew behavior. Tell them it is a habit that took several years to develop, and will not be immediately changeable, but with their help she will become a real friend. Girls will bend over backward to help Mildew change. They want nothing more than to have her act like Linda.
- 3) Treat every girl like they treat Linda. This is what is amazing. These girls know how to be the best friend Linda could ever want. All they have to do is treat everyone this way, and they will become a Linda.

Only about 20% of the Mildew girls I worked with relayed to me substantial positive change. Some of those may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear, but I think most made serious changes in behavior. Most of the Mildews (80%) never returned to therapy after I confronted them about their behavior. I worry about those girls and guys more than most of their victims. The kids they hurt will outgrow them, and go on to live happy lives. Unfortunately I am not as optimistic about the future of the Mildews.

Cyber-Bullying Outline

Statistics:

43% of teens have been victims of some form of cyber-bullying in the last year.

70% of teens said that being able to block cyber-bullies was the most effective method of prevention.

81% of youth said that others cyber-bully because they think it is funny.

80% of teens said that they either did not have parental rules about internet use, or they found ways around the rules.

30% of teens wanted to seek revenge on those who cyber-bullied them.

Only 11% of teens talked to parents about incidents of cyber-bullying.

20% had a cyber-bully pretend to be someone else in order to trick them online.

17% of teens were victimized by someone lying about them online.

13% learned that someone was pretending to be them while communicating with someone else.

What not to do:

Do not respond in any way to someone trying to get your attention through any kind of electronic device.

Do not try to defend something that was said about you. Any response gives what they said even more power. It will always feed the cyber-bully exactly the reaction they want from you. I know this is difficult, especially when things said are extremely cruel, embarrassing, and/or untrue, but if you make the mistake of responding, the situation will almost always get worse.

What to do:

- 1) Absolutely no response and blocking the cyber-bully wherever possible is the most effective way to shut down a cyber-bully. Some methods for blocking will be listed below. Letting an adult or trusted friend know in order to help you with ways to block a cyber-bully can be very helpful and sometimes necessary. Especially if that adult or friend has more computer/tech knowledge or experience than you.
- 2) Contact the Internet Service or Phone Service Administrator (Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, gmail, Verizon-for texting, ATT-for texting, T-Mobile-for texting, etc.) of the site or service where the cyber-bullying is happening and report the specific abuse. Give them all the information you have available, and have them walk you through the blocking process if you are unable to navigate it yourself. Also ask them about their policies for removing abusers from their service once they are caught. For phone companies, they won't give you the name of a restricted number, but they will block that number (without telling you what it is) from your phone. You will need a parent who holds the phone contract to make this happen. Always block any number (restricted or not) that leaves harassing voice messages or texts.
- 3) Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, YouTube, and most e-mail providers either have a block button that is pretty self-explanatory, or they will have a link that will describe exactly how to block a person who is using their service to bully. Most chat rooms also have this feature. I will discuss social networking platforms in more detail below, because blocking only works on your

page. The cyber-bully can still post stuff to the pages of friends you are linked to in order to still get to you. Again, this will be discussed in more detail below.

- 4) Talk to your parents and get their help in blocking the cyber-bully, or connecting you with a person who can help you block the cyber-bully. In the list of things parents should do below, I talk about the importance of your parents not taking away internet or phone privileges when their child reports cyber-bullying. This is because you are trusting them to help you, not to have them punish you for seeking their help. Have your parents read this outline if you are hesitant to talk to them about being cyber-bullied. Below I will be outlining mistakes that parents sometimes make that lead their kids not to share stuff with them ever again. Look over that section of the outline, because it will probably cover the reaction you are afraid your parent will do. If you are still nervous, have your parent read the outline, and ask them what they would do to support you. If they say something that is not recommended, point out the recommendation in the outline to make sure they will be truly supportive.

- 5) You can purchase a program called Puresight at www.puresight.com. This is a powerful program that recognizes combinations of words that are hostile. It then grabs the message/e-mail/chat/tweet/etc. and puts it in a special folder before the person supposed to receive the message even sees it. The neat thing about Puresight is that it blocks the message before you read it, which keeps you from even letting the cyber-bully's poison into your head. What is even better, is that if you don't receive the mean message, you will respond perfectly...with no response at all. Not getting any reaction whatsoever is the death blow to the whole game of the cyber-bully. I know Puresight is available for installation on any computer, and there is even version that can be installed for Facebook and other social networking platforms. Apps are also constantly being developed for almost all iPhones as well as Android phones. To check for the latest upgrades and updates go to www.puresight.com. I have no affiliation with www.puresight.com. I have simply heard from numerous parents and teens that it was an extremely effective tool that helped to solve their problems with extreme cyber-bullying. The other nice feature is that the folder that mean messages are put into also serves as evidence of the cyber-bullying if it is needed. I love technology that helps stop abusive use of technology, and this is one great example.

- 6) If the cyber-bully makes a direct physical threat (threatening to assault you), sexual threat (saying sexually creepy things to you), or death threat, then it becomes a criminal behavior that law enforcement can become involved with and prosecute with serious consequences to the cyber-bully. If someone is threatening to physically harm you, kill you, or being sexually creepy online, immediately contact your local police with your parent. Always tell your parent if the above type of cyber-bullying is happening. Getting the law involved in a criminal situation is the best way to stop it.

It will not be that difficult to trace where the threats are coming from if they are anonymous once you include law enforcement resources. Do not hesitate to tell your parents and have them get legal advice as well after contacting the police. Someone who makes a direct threat to you has crossed a line with evidence leading right back to them. Take this to the limit of the law in order to make sure they don't ever do this to you or anyone else again. Most cases turn out to be a terrified kid who thought they were anonymous and tough while hiding behind their computer. Once questioned by the police, these cowardly cyber-bullies sing like a canary. Even if they used a friend's computer or phone to carry out the crime, the friend will sing like a canary when questioned by the police and turn them in anyway. I am close friends with several police officers who are excellent at getting to the truth. Do not keep a death threat secret thinking cooperating with the bully will protect you. Once there is a report and an electronic trail back to the person who threatened you, the chances of them acting on the threat drop to almost zero. Why would they follow through with a death threat when they would clearly be the prime suspect. Keeping it a secret and cooperating or letting them control you in any way is much more dangerous.

- 7) Tumblr, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook are a special case because cyber-bullies can post to friends walls in order to get to you. The first step is to ignore the messages posted. Try not to look at them, but I know that can be difficult, especially when friends tell you everything posted. Try your best to not react to the cyber-bully in person if you see them at school. Act as if you haven't seen any messages, and if you have, you couldn't care less. For details on how to do this, review the Bully-Proofing Youth Body-language Techniques section of this outline. If after two weeks the messages haven't stopped, discretely let your other friends know, in a way the cyber-bully won't find out, that you would appreciate them pulling down any mean message from their wall. Also tell them you don't want to hear anything the bully says or does regarding you. Keeping

their poison out of your head as much as possible will really help you react in a cool calm way. Those who cooperate are your real friends. Those that don't are cowards and should be blocked. If they try to talk about things anyway, remind them that you have no interest in playing the cyber-bully's game.

Remember, no matter how painful, you must not give the impression that the cyber-bully is getting to you in any way. This is exactly the reaction he or she is seeking. I know that may be extremely hard at times, but I can assure you it is the fastest way to being left alone. Like a stray dog looking for food, the bully needs a reaction. Without one they will move on and find someone who will react, just like a stray dog moves on when you don't feed it. Trust me, they won't have to look far to find a reactor. Most students struggle with this part and can't control their emotional response. Until they learn not to feed the cyber-bully a reaction, they will stay a potential victim.

If the cyber-bully is persistent beyond a month, remove your profile from Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, or Facebook and go up under an alias. Only share your new profile with true friends who pulled down the bully's posts. If some mean posts start to trickle through, block the friend who is leaving them on their page. If it gets bad again, pull down the profile and repeat the alias with only truly trusted friends.

Dropping off of social networks is the nuclear option, but this is rarely necessary if you strictly limit who your real friends are when you pull down your profile. You can keep your whole profile intact and saved for later bringing it back up. Google, how to do this or contact the social platform instructions for details.

- 8) If someone pretends to be you and does severe damage to your reputation, contact a trusted friend or friends, and have them help you spread the word online and at school that someone imitated you and spread lies. Continue to act as if you are above the situation, even though I know it hurts and is frustrating. Once the rumor gets out that it was not you, people will also have probably heard the cyber-bully talk about setting you up and much of the damage will be undone. (These kids who bully can't control the urge to brag about impersonating you. Almost all of them tell other kids it was them, thinking they look cool or funny, so the damage is usually less than it appears and often falls back on the bully in time) Most imitation cyber-bullying is done to get a reaction from you. Right when they do the imitation they tell their friends exactly what

they are doing, and tell them to watch how upset you become. No response is still the ultimate response, and ruins their entire game.

- 9) If someone chats with you online about someone else and leads you into writing something mean about them, then later shares it with the person, you have just learned a very valuable lesson. If on the phone, online, or texting, always assume the person you are talking about is listening or watching. The reason you need to assume this is because most of the time they are. A favorite cyber-bullying technique is for a bully to call someone and get them to talk about someone else while the person being talked about is there listening. Girls do this much more often than boys, but it is common among both. It is so common that you must always assume it is happening. Even if the bully is leading you to say something mean by saying it first so you will agree with him or her, simply say nothing. If you defend the person, that would be awesome, but if you can't think of anything to defend them, simply remain silent. Silence is a form of support for the person being put down. If they are listening, they will feel guilty and probably like you more as a friend for not agreeing behind their back. It really makes the cyber-bully look like a snake in the grass when you don't play along with their game. I have talked with many kids who have done the talk about a friend trick, and all of them said that when someone doesn't fall for it, it makes them look really mean and petty.

- 10) Get help from a trusted adult like a teacher, counselor, coach, or parent, etc. Have them read this so that they will follow the same guidelines. This is important so that they don't accidentally make the situation worse while trying to help. Believe it or not, adult help in blocking the cyber-bully, as well as brainstorming a strategy is really helpful as long as they don't break the rules of their role. After all, I am an adult, and these strategies were developed over many years of working with and picking the brains of hundreds of teen bullies as well as those that they targeted. Also don't hesitate to consult a computer technical person at your public library. They may be able to assist you with blocking strategies beyond the basics, or lead you to someone who is extremely tech savvy. In an extreme situation you could even go with your parents and consult with Best Buy's "Geek Squad". These people will have ideas and techniques way beyond this outline. Remember, keep looking for more and more tech savvy people until you figure out how to block the person in the most efficient way. Platforms change constantly, but the above advice will continue to apply.

What parents should never do when their teen shares a cyber-bullying incident with them:

- 1) Never take away internet or phone privileges as a solution to the problem. Your son or daughter came to you and trusted you to help them solve a problem, not to be punished for sharing the problem with you. Even if you think you are solving the problem by doing this, ultimately your child will see this as a punishment and never come to you again. Instead focus on helping them block all types of cyber-bullying as outlined above. Get professional technical help if necessary in order to do this as thoroughly as possible. Simply doing a Google search on how to block any specific type of electronic device or internet service platform is the best place to start. Things change so quickly that the only way to really learn how to block is to do a current Google search. When you do this, you are bonding with and empowering your son or daughter to solve future problems without you. Rescuing them is not the goal. Teaching them and empowering them to solve problems when you're not with them is the goal. The great side effect is that they will like you more for this approach, and they will trust you with other issues in the future. I have seen this happen numerous times with teens and their parents. YouTube videos are also an excellent resource. They will visually guide you through the process of many blocking techniques. Google will often lead you to these awesome training videos. I have found videos much easier to follow than written instructions because they show you the screen and the exact tabs.
- 2) Don't insist on calling the parents of the cyber-bully just because your child knows who they are. This is a case by case situation, but here is a clear rule. Your son or daughter gets to ultimately decide if calling the parents will be helpful. If he or she thinks it will work, it might. If the cyber-bully is a friend who was influenced by a real bully and didn't have the guts to say no, it may work. If it is a seasoned cyber-bully, it usually will be seen by the cyber-bully as a helpless reaction they can make fun of under all adult R.A.D.A.R. in the future. If you do call because your son or daughter thinks it might work, tell your child that if it backfires they can still come to you and you will not insist on doing the same thing again and make the situation even worse. Instead you will figure out the next step together.

If you do call the cyber-bully's parent, always protect the "cool" of your child. Tell the parent you keep tabs on your son or daughter's computer and came across the cyber-bullying. Don't ever make it look like they told. This is critically

important. It will allow your son or daughter to act like they couldn't care less about the cyber-bullying, but their snoop parents found it and made a big deal out of it. With the other parents, I would insist that they have their child apologize to your child face to face. Then your son or daughter can act even cooler and pretend it didn't even bother him or her. Never throw your son or daughter's "cool" reputation out the window. Let them make suggestions in exactly how to carry this out. You always take the "uncool" hits for your kid, no matter what the situation. Even if the truth is stretched a little, this is very important. Don't outright lie, but think about how to carefully word things so your son or daughter always looks like they are above the situation, and in the end almost calling off the dogs. You need to be the dogs, and let your son or daughter play the cool kid who was not even upset by the cyber-bullying, and instead says in front of the bully, "We're cool now mom and dad, the apology is enough". It will drastically reduce the cyber-bully from attempting to retaliate or continue the behavior. If it does continue, then a more drastic legal response may be necessary. Your son or daughter can simply say to the bully, "Hey, I gave you a chance, and you knew my parents were monitoring things, yet you kept it up".

- 3) If the cyber-bully makes a serious physical threat, a sexually creepy threat, or a death threat, it is no longer cyber-bullying, it is a crime. Follow the steps listed above for this type of situation.

Here are a list of websites and resources for parents and/or teens:

www.puresight.com Software that blocks cyber-bullying attempts by recognizing phrases, and notifies you as a parent. They also have a cyber-bullying resource tab on their home page.

www.spectorsoft.com Software that lets you monitor everything your child does on-line. What they send, receive, and search will be tracked. Good to get if you suspect or have caught your child targeting others. Also excellent if you are having problems with tech-savvy teenagers going to sites you have prohibited.

www.keylogger.com A free version of software that attempts to do similar functions that spectorsoft performs. Not as good, but free. For less tech-savvy teens this may be enough.

www.internetsuperheroes.org General information and links.
www.stopcyberbullying.org Provides relevant cyber-bullying prevention and Internet safety information for parents, teachers, police officers, kids, and teens.

www.ncpc.org National Crime Prevention Council website. Has internet safety and cyber-bullying information.

www.wiredsafety.org General information and links.

www.cyberbully.org General information and links.

www.netbullies.com General information and links.

www.nolo.com Legal templates and documents

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