

THE BULLY VACCINE WORKBOOK

DESIGNED TO HELP YOU CREATE A PRAGMATIC EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO BULLYING

The purpose of this workbook is to help you define better what is happening, when it is happening and why it is happening so that you can create an effective comprehensive plan to deal with it and most importantly, get the bullying to stop.

This workbook is part of The Bully Vaccine Home Vaccination Toolkit which includes; a documentation log, a bullying response flow chart, a video tutorial, tip sheet for coping with any sort of bullying and a complimentary copy of The Bully Vaccine. It is a good idea to read The Bully Vaccine first so that you understand the concepts and ideas presented in the toolkit.

This workbook is divided into several sections.

The first section is designed to help you define when and where and how you are being bullied. Bullying is a pattern of harassment. If you can identify the pattern of when it is happening, you can devise a strategy to deal with the bullying.

You will then be asked to consider why the bullies are bullying you. In order to create an effective strategy, you have to have some understanding of what is truly motivating them. Only then can you eliminate the reward they are getting for their bad behavior.

It is also important to find ways to think about your bully compassionately. This will help you better implement your strategy and will help inoculate you against the negative emotions that come with being bullied.

Finally, you are going to create a plan of action. Specifically, what will you do the next time your bullies hassle you? For each of the identified patterns of harassment you identify, you need to come up with a specific strategy for each situation.

Finally, you need to identify individuals and authority figures who can help you implement this strategy and support you in your efforts.

OVERVIEW

One of the main reason bullying continues to plague school children across America is because there is precious little accurate information on how to get it to stop. Sure, we can analyze why bullies bully. But that hasn't helped us to get it to stop.

The problem is that parents and victims often have unrealistic expectations of how exactly to get bullying to stop. They are hoping they can report it once and the problem will go away on it's own without any further intervention.

The reality is that getting a bully to stop isn't as simple as reporting what is going on. The reward the bully is seeking is received from the victim. In order to get the bullying to stop, the reward has to be taken away. And this requires the central point behavior modification to be applied by the victim. Most victims not only lack the skills and knowledge required to undertake the required behavioral modifications, they also lack the confidence required to even begin.

The problem is that just as the victim has been inadvertently rewarding their bully, the bully has also conditioned their victim to be a victim. It is impossible to get the bullying to stop until or unless the victim is trained how to no longer reward their bully and is given enough knowledge to implement the strategy.

Everyone involved, including the victim, is hoping for a quick resolution. What they aren't expecting and do not want to deal with at all is the escalation known as a blowout. The number of kids and parents who think it isn't even worth trying to get bullying to stop because any attempts to get it to stop just make it worse is disheartening.

In order to get bullying to stop, you need to be consistent. You cannot reward your bully, no matter how hard they try to get you to respond. If the bullying has been going on for a while, you need to expect your bully to do what is known as a blowout, meaning when you eliminate their reward, they will become more aggressive to get you to respond as they want. They will escalate their behavior in an attempt to find another way to get to you. It is critical that you do not respond. As your bullies change their strategy, you must be prepared to change yours as well.

The key to getting this to work is to be consistent. Bullies never stop just because you ask. You have to train them to stop and that takes time. You don't expect a dog to stop barking just because you ask them to and you shouldn't expect a bully to stop either. It takes time to learn new behaviors. Plus, if the old behavior is still working, there is no reason to learn the new one. Be patient with them and with yourself, and continue to provide your chosen non-reinforcement behavior and eventually your bullies will give up. So hang in there and be consistent.

Just know that once you learn and master these skills, your confidence will soar and you will become fearless because you will know the secret to handling even the most obnoxious people. You can do this, you just need to stick to the plan and be consistent. It takes time for people to

break bad habits. Just keep encouraging them to give up the bad habit by not rewarding them for their bad behavior.

BULLYING LOG

Your toolkit includes a Bully Documentation Log. In order to come up with a plan on how to proceed, you need to use this log to identify when and where and how you are being bullied. If you are experiencing a chronic bullying situation, you will want to keep a log for at least a week to make sure the various ways you are bullied are covered.

Once you have filled out the log, review it. Are there any repeating patterns when you are most vulnerable? I spoke to a reporter once who told that when she was in high school, some boys would tease her when she got on the bus. To avoid this, she made sure her stuff was packed and ready to go before the final period so she could get on the bus before the bullies did. After about a month, they stopped because she wasn't available for them to hassle anymore. If your bullies don't have access to you, they can't bully you.

If you can identify times and places where bullying occurs, you can often arrange your schedule to avoid those places at those times. For instance, if you get bullied in between classes in a certain hallway, is there another route you can take. It may take you longer to get to your next class, but you will avoid your bullies and prevent them from having access to you.

If you are consistently bullied during recess, can you ask a teacher or staff member to be present to closely monitor you so that the bullies, again, won't have access to you.

If you can identify places and times you are most vulnerable, you can create a strategy for those specific situations to keep yourself safe.

If your bullies change their patterns in order to gain continued access to you, create a new strategy to compensate for their change in behavior. If your bullies are really addicted to bullying you, they may get creative. Just remember to adjust your strategy as they adjust theirs.

FINDING REASON AND COMPASSION

Your toolkit contains a Reason and Compassion Worksheet. You will need it for this section. The purpose of this worksheet is to try and figure out the reasons why your bully is bullying and to find ways to make them seem less horrid to you.

It is very easy to think of bullies as horrible people. We often call people who behave poorly and abuse others “ogres.” This name calling serves to dehumanize them so that we no longer feel compelled to consider them compassionately. After all, why should we feel compassion for someone who isn’t compassionate with us?

The reason you want to find compassion for obnoxious and abusive people is because feeling compassion is something you do for you. It will help you emotionally distance yourself from the abuse. Insults don’t sting nearly as much when all you can think is how sad it is that this person feels so horrible that they can’t help but act horrible. This really does work.

REASONS WHY

What I want you to do is take a sheet for each of the people who are bullying you. And fill it out. Why do you think they are behaving poorly? Are their parents absent all the time? Are they jealous of you? Do they get beat up at home? Are they insecure about something? I want you to come up with three potential reasons why they might bully.

You won’t be able to answer these questions with any degree of certainty. But that’s not the reason you should do this exercise. By taking the time to think of all the different reasons why someone is behaving poorly it helps you understand that what they are doing isn’t about you. It is about them and their inability to handle whatever it is that is bothering them. And this is, again, key to distancing yourself from the emotional trauma that often comes along with bullying.

COMPASSION

I then want you to list all the positive attributes your bully has that you can think of. Are they handsome or pretty? Can they sing well? Dance well? Are they smart? What about them do you admire? Again, I want you to list at least three things.

The reason for doing this is to help you humanize the bully. You need to understand that they are a human being just like you are who has similar fears and insecurities just like you. You also need to consider that just because they are being mean to you doesn’t mean they are evil. Everyone has the capacity for both good and evil. If you can think about the good aspects of your bully, it will help you interact with them with compassion instead of anger. And that is critical because one of the responses the bully wants, is for you to get angry. Don’t get angry – think kind compassionate thoughts instead.

FEAR

The final thing I want you to consider is what is your bully afraid of? Everyone is afraid of something. Bullies often bully because they are trying to compensate for something that makes them afraid. Identify what is making them afraid and you may just be able to help them cope with their fears more effectively.

You may not guess this section correctly. However, making the effort to consider the fears, again, humanizes a bully and helps you consider them as someone who is scared and needs help as opposed to someone you should be afraid of.

When you realize your bully is just as scared as you, you will be less afraid of them. This will translate into you being able to respond not only more calmly, which will help get the bullying to stop. It will also help you understand that while they are bullying you, their behavior isn't really about you, and so you shouldn't take it personally.

PLAN OF ACTION

Now that you know when you are bullied, and have some idea of what motivates your bully to bully, you need to come up with a plan of action. What are you going to do when (not if) this happens again.

Each recurring bullying situation will require its own Action Plan Worksheet.

First, list the specific bullying situation you are creating a plan for and note what type of situation it is. You also should note when and where this particular bullying situation tends to occur.

Can you avoid this situation entirely? If so, how will you avoid it? If the bullying is taking place on the bus, can you have your parents drive you to school? If it is happening in a hallway, can you take a different route? If it is happening on the playground, can you make sure a teacher or other adult is assigned to monitor you to keep you safe?

Because you can't always avoid the bullies, you will also want to come up with a go to phrase you can say in this situation that will not reinforce the bully. You want to let the bully know that a) you aren't bothered by their behavior and b) that you aren't going to tolerate their behavior either. This needs to be something you can say in a bored and matter of fact manner while looking the bully straight in the eye.

For instance, if you are being teased, what is your retort? Don't be mean, don't be angry, just think of what you can say that will let the bully know you don't care that they just said something mean. My favorite is "Thank you very much for that information, it's very helpful."

If you are being threatened with violence, what can you say that will let the bully know that if they carry through with their threat, you will report them? Again, don't be mean, you want a calm and relaxed thing to say as if what is happening is no big deal. For instance, "If you do that I'm going to report you" is straightforward and something that can be said in a completely deadpan voice.

If you are being physically assaulted you will need to extract yourself and report the incident immediately.

Another thing you will want to consider is who might be willing to help you. Are their kids who will help stand by you and help you face down the bullies? Are their teachers or aids or janitors or lunch ladies who are available and around during these incidents. If so, you will want to enlist them to help you.

If you do have people willing to help, what is it that they can do to help you? Often, all it takes is for one bystander to be willing to say to the bully, "stop or I will report you." If you are being physically battered, you will need someone whose job it is to run and get an adult as soon as a situation starts.

You will also need to decide who the best person is you should report this incident to at the school. Is it your teacher, the principal, the lunch lady, the bus driver? Who exactly will you report this to? You need to report every incident so you need to know exactly who you are going to go to.

Finally, we need to discuss the role your parents have. If the school isn't being cooperative or if, for some reason, reporting bullying situations isn't something you can do, you need to have your parents or other trusted adult report these things for you. Parents can help monitor and put pressure on the school to support you as you implement your action plan. You, your parents and your teachers all need to be working together if the bullying is going to stop.

Finally, some situations are so egregious you will want to consider taking legal action. This should be considered as a last resort, but some situations warrant legal action. Particularly if the behavior has gotten violent and if the school isn't supportive or interested in helping. Pursuing legal options is very difficult and can be emotionally draining, however, when all else fails, it may be your best choice.

PARENTS:

It is heartbreaking to know your child is being bullied. However, always remember, your child needs you to help them learn how to navigate these difficult and possibly dangerous situations. Your job is to teach them what they need to know and to support them and help them when they need help and are unable to complete a task on their own.

I encourage you to read through my 7 tips for parents report. This will help you better understand how to support your child through a bullying situation. It is important to remember, you can't fix this problem for them. All you can do is help and encourage them to tackle this on their own providing them with the support and tools they need to be successful.

To get through this, you and your child have to work together and your child needs to know you will help them learn the skills they need and will help them with the tasks they can't complete on their own.

When it comes to learning how to cope effectively with bullies, you need to be the one who teaches your child the skills they need. That means, you need to educate yourself on exactly what is required to get a bully to stop. This knowledge will help you help your child and will also help you cope more effectively with the difficult people you face in your life as well.

Questions to ask yourself

- When my child comes to me to tell me about a problem at school – do I give them my full attention?
- Am I willing to intervene with the school on their behalf?
- Am I willing to go out of my way and be inconvenienced to help them avoid dangerous situations?
- What specific skills does my child need to learn?
- Can I help them practice their go to phrases?
- Can I follow up with their teachers?
- And most importantly, what do you need to do to help your child continue when they are ready to give up because they are facing an escalation of bullying behavior due to a blow out?

GETTING HELP

When it comes to dealing with a bullying situation, know that you aren't alone. Even if you have tried to get the school to help you in the past and it didn't work, that doesn't mean that the school doesn't care or won't help you. It is just nearly impossible for them to get bullying to stop once it is established.

The key to being successful is being realistic. Often when parents first report problems they expect the school to magically make the problem disappear. It doesn't work that way. You can't just report something and have it stop. It takes time and a concerted effort by not just the school, but also by your child over a period of time to get a bullying situation under control. As frustrated as you may be, you need to give them an opportunity to help you properly now that your expectations are more realistic.

Once you have a better idea of what is happening and you have a bullying log in place and you and your child have some idea of what your ideal action plans look like, it is a good idea to schedule a meeting at the school to discuss the situation and what can be done. You need to be specific about what situations your child is facing and what exactly you expect them to do to support your child. They need to know what your child is planning to do so that they can support your child and help them succeed. Can they make sure an extra teacher is on the playground? If the hallways are problematic, can they station someone there to monitor your child? Who exactly should be your contact as you and the school work together to help your child? Who exactly should your child report problems to? What is that person's phone number? Can you call them anytime? How often will you meet to discuss the changing needs of your child's situation as the bully(s) change their behavior as part of their blow out process? What will be their response to reports made so that you and your child know what to expect. The goal is to have everyone on the same page and to have a realistic idea of what can be accomplished.

It is also a good idea to contact the school districts safety person. Most school districts have a staff member dedicated to school safety. Find out who this person is and call them to discuss your situation. Get them involved in help you and the school deal with this situation. Schools may not have the staff needed to help you as effectively as you would like. By getting the school district staff involved, you can often bring extra resources to the school to help. Keep in touch and keep them updated as to your situation. If the school is unhelpful, often getting the district involved is enough to mobilize the resources needed to help your child.

If, for some reason, the school and the school district refuse to help you, which would be really unusual, you may need to seek legal help. In this case, you will want to know what state laws are applicable and either hire a lawyer to help or you will need to have a contact at the police or sheriff's office. Most law enforcement agencies have staff dedicated to juvenile issues. Those are the officers you will want to be in touch with.

TO RECAP:

Work with the school first, get the name and phone number of a primary contact person who will be your liaison with the school.

Even if the school is supportive, it is a good idea to let the school district's safety officer know what is going on so that they can provide support to the school and assist you in helping your child. They may also have resources available to you that the school may not. Again, you will want to know the name and the number to keep them informed as the situation develops.

Finally, if all else fails and/or if it is suggested by the school or the school district, you will want to know the name and phone number of an officer assigned to juvenile crimes to assist you if it comes to that.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Bullying can have a devastating emotional impact on the victim. But, it doesn't have to be that way. There are fairly simple ways you can inoculate yourself against the emotional barrage being directed at you. By harnessing your feelings of compassion for yourself and others, you can help yourself feel stronger and feel less bothered by the negativity being pushed in your direction.

There are fairly simple things you can do to get a bully to stop. It takes courage, emotional balance (gained through the practice of compassion) and a willingness to stick at it until the bullying stops. The main reason why kids fail to get bullying to stop is because they try something and it doesn't work so they give up. Don't give up. Giving up will only make your situation worse and more unbearable. Stick with it and ride out the blow out and get it to stop. Once and for all.

Always remember, you are not the one with the problem. The person behaving badly is the one with the problem. Don't let them draw you into their drama. By practicing compassion, you will become fearless. By sticking with your non-reward strategy even during a blow out, you will not only get the bullying to stop, you will learn that you do indeed have what it takes to stand up for yourself. And, your life will be better. And just possibly, the life of the bully will too. Don't give up. Stay strong. Be fearless.