



A Read-Together Book for Adults & Children



Empower Kids to
Prevent Bullying!

I've Got Your Back

Help Children Say Hello to **Friends** & Goodbye to **Bullies**



Lorna Blumen, MS, MBA & Staci Schwartz, MD

*Authors of **Bullying Epidemic: Not Just Child's Play** & **Billy the Baaadly Behaving Bully Goat***

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LORNA BLUMEN, MS, MBA & STACI SCHWARTZ, MD



Camberley Press

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (US)

Names: Blumen, Lorna, author. | Schwartz, Staci, author.

Title: I've Got Your Back: Help Children Say Hello to Friends & Goodbye to Bullies / Lorna Blumen and Staci Schwartz

Description: Toronto, ON: Camberley Press Ltd, 2016. | Summary: Empower kids of all ages to stop bullying and let them know that caring adults will always have their backs. Age-appropriate children's stories and skill-building activities, along with adult-focused material, help parents and teachers guide children to build positive, respectful friendships, stick up for one another, and develop empathy and self-esteem. Developed for children ages 5-10. These skills and concepts apply for all ages requiring support and skill-building in bullying prevention and improving friendships.

ISBN 978-0-9810589-5-5 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Bullying. | Bullying in schools. | Parenting. | School environment. | Interpersonal relations.

BISAC: FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS / Bullying. | FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS / Conflict Resolution. | FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS / Friendship. | FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS / Parenting / General.

Classification: LCC: BF637.B85B576 2016 | DDC 302.343—dc23

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Blumen, Lorna, author. Schwartz, Staci, author.

I've Got Your Back: Help Children Say Hello to Friends & Goodbye to Bullies/ Lorna Blumen & Staci Schwartz

ISBN 978-0-9810589-5-5 (paperback)

1. Bullying in schools--Prevention. I. Schwartz, Staci II. Title.

LB3013.3.B58 2016 371.5'8 C2016-902936-0

For bulk purchase discounts, please contact CamberleyPress.com.

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All facts, figures, and websites were verified as of October 2015. If you find an error, please contact CamberleyPress.com.

Cover Design: Lisa Hochstein, Christine Magday

Interior Design and Layout: Christine Magday

Illustrations: Staci Schwartz

Photos: istockphoto.com

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America



Camberley Press Ltd

PO Box 74553

Toronto, ON, Canada M9A 3T0

CamberleyPress.com

Contents

| | | |
|------------------|--|----|
| Chapter 1 | Welcome to Parents | 1 |
| Chapter 2 | Bullying Essentials for Parents | 9 |
| Chapter 3 | How Do I Help My Child Avoid Being a Target? | 15 |
| Chapter 4 | What Kids Need to Know About Bullying | 23 |
| 4.1 | Welcome to Kids! | 25 |
| 4.2 | Addy's Playdate Surprise | 33 |
| 4.3 | The Alien from Planet PawPaw | 37 |
| 4.4 | Tyler Stands Up for a Friend | 41 |
| Chapter 5 | Skill-Building Activities for Adults & Kids | 49 |
| Chapter 6 | Going Forward: Skills for Life | 61 |
| Chapter 7 | Resources | 63 |

Welcome to Parents

For Adults

It's Back-to-School Time Again!

As we say goodbye to summer, most kids look forward to back-to-school shopping, seeing their friends, meeting new teachers, and being one of the “big kids” at school. It can be a time of great excitement. For some kids, however, going back to school brings feelings of dread: *Will I have friends? Will I be picked on (again) this year? Will I be excluded from the popular group? Will I be safe at recess? Did you notice that, Will I be great at math?* isn't on the list?

As you prepare your child for the new school year, remember that the most important supplies you can put in his or her backpack are your love and support. Let your child know you'll be there when he or she needs you—with schoolwork, making and keeping friends, trying new activities and sports—whatever the new year brings. **Let your child know you'll always have their back.**

You Asked, We Answered

This book is designed to answer the question parents and teachers ask us most often: *What can I do to protect my child (or a child in my class) from bullying?* As bullying prevention specialists with more than 30 years of experience, we want adults who love and work with kids to know that there are many easy things parents and teachers can do to build kids' social skills, self-esteem, and empathy. This solid foundation helps make kids bully-resistant.



Parents and teachers want results—fast! Kids do too. *I've Got Your Back* brings you up to speed quickly on the key bullying concepts and connections that adults need to know, translates them into imaginative stories for kids, with “Stop & Think” discussion points for kids and adults to discover, and helps parents and teachers strengthen children's social skills with fun, effective activities for home and classroom use. By design, the instructional components are short and easy-to-use so busy parents, teachers, and kids feel supported, not overwhelmed.

This quick-start action guide can be used by all adults who work with kids, including parents, teachers, teaching assistants, guidance counselors, coaches, mental health professionals, family physicians, and pediatricians. The beginning of school is the ideal time to establish bullying prevention guidelines, but it's never too late to press the reset button.

Why is Bullying Prevention So Important?

How we treat other people and how we are treated by other people has a profound influence on our hearts and minds. These social interactions determine our view of the world. When we (as children or adults) feel happy, safe, and trust that we will be treated with respect, kindness, and fairness (for the most part), our self-esteem is boosted and we are more likely to treat others that way, too. When something unfair happens, we are resilient enough to heal the hurt and move on.

The reverse is true, too. If our self-esteem is shaky and we expect to be treated badly, our vision narrows to focus on those negative experiences, giving them more weight than they deserve and coloring our future expectations. We feel defensive and we might treat others badly right from the start, in a misguided attempt to protect ourselves from further hurt. When we teach kids the skills to resolve conflicts and treat one another with respect and empathy, they will be better able to handle life's ups and downs.

Bullying prevention is about much more than children's school-based bullying. It's about inclusivity at every level of society—how to welcome newcomers into our increasingly complex, multicultural neighborhoods, how to relate positively with others at school and at work, despite differences in experience and opinion, and how to persist and solve international conflicts before they explode into human tragedy and crisis. It's an interconnected web. You may think you're only focusing on the piece marked "kids' bullying prevention," but you quickly see it's only a few links away from every other social issue. It's so much easier to build healthy coping skills when kids are young to prevent or soften these impossible-to-solve adult problems.

How to Use This Book



I've Got Your Back is primarily geared for parents and children ages 5–10. Teachers and other professionals will also find this book useful. Chapters 1, 2, and 3, written for adults, are for parents and teachers to read on their own. These chapters discuss the key issues and challenges with children's friendships and bullying. Chapter 4, written for children, contains stories of friendship and bullying. Adults and children should read this chapter together. Chapter 5 contains activities for parents and children, or teachers and students, to enjoy together. Chapter 6, written for adults, outlines future steps for building an enduring culture of kindness. Finally, Chapter 7 contains resources for further learning.

The one-on-one parent-child activities can be scaled to include an entire class, depending on the needs and strengths of the students and the specific bullying prevention issues you're working to prevent or resolve. Older and younger children can also benefit from these ideas and activities.

Bullying: It's a Fact of Life (For Now)

Bullying affects adults and children of all ages, genders, races, religious and cultural backgrounds, appearances, abilities, and income levels. Bullying of and by children is an infectious, damaging, and sometimes deadly problem that must be controlled. There's an epidemic of unkind treatment in schools set within a social culture of cruelty. Humiliation is now a form of entertainment, on TV and in person. Peers often don't help, and adults rarely get involved until there's a serious problem and damage has already been done.

The statistics on kids' bullying are disheartening. In a recent national survey, 16% of kids in grades 3–12 reported being bullied, while another 14% fear being bullied. Approximately 16% of girls and 17% of boys revealed that they were verbally bullied at least 2–3 times a month. Fifty-one percent of targeted students said they had been bullied for six months or more, and 39% said that the bullying lasted for a year or longer.¹ Bullying may still be underreported—the definitions continue to change and kids are often discouraged from reporting bullying.

Cyberbullying: A 24/7 Problem

That's not all. In the days before technology put smartphones in our hands, targets of school yard bullying found peace and safety at home. Today, bullying starts at school and continues after school and online. Targeted kids can receive thousands of hurtful messages via social media. Bullying is now 24/7, with a dangerous downside.

Cyberbullying is a hot topic, for good reason. A recent review found 23% of children ages 12–18 reported being cyberbullied.² Kids' cyberbullying typically remains hidden much longer than other types of bullying, coming into adult awareness as a full-blown emergency with full media attention. While we certainly need to jump into protective action at the first sign of crisis, adults must understand bullying's building blocks to prevent future life-threatening crises.

Cyberbullying is often treated as a stand-alone entity, ignoring its crucial connection to face-to-face bullying. If adults have not set—and enforced—consistent behavioral limits for how kids treat one another in person, behavior will only get worse online due to the lack of adult supervision and kids' false sense of online anonymity.³

Vulnerable teens have committed suicide when unable to cope with the overwhelming exposure to negative comments, taunts, and threats. And while that may seem unimaginably far from where your young children are today, that path is paved day-by-day and step-by-step by allowing meanness and humiliation to be acceptable in our interactions with other human beings.

Bullying Hurts Everyone, Not Just the Target

Everyone is damaged by bullying—bullies, targets, and bystanders (both adults and kids). School-wide academic performance suffers and we now know that the damage to kids can last far beyond a single incident or school year. The damage to hearts and brains can last for a lifetime.

Being a bullied target or a frequent bystander to bullying is a lonely and frightening experience for kids. Bullying is also upsetting to parents. For too many children and parents, fear is a daily ingredient of school life. For these kids, it's less about preparing for a math test and more about surviving the day without experiencing name-calling, shaming, physical interference, or exclusion from peer groups of *frenemies*.

Once a bullying problem surfaces, parents and adults at school are inconsistently successful at stopping it, often unsure when to intervene. Some schools are more responsive than others, but it takes a committed effort by every staff person to be on the lookout for bullying. Bullying prevention needs an “all hands on deck” approach. Each day's incidents must be addressed with both short- and long-term follow-up.

Prevention is the key. While adults must help kids deal with bullying when it happens, the only real solution is to stop bullying before it starts. We can encourage kids to form positive friendships, develop relationships with children outside of school (camps, clubs, hobby groups, church/synagogue/mosque youth groups), and feel empowered and less isolated by focusing on their talents and strengths.

Parents must be involved from the beginning and work at home to change behavior and connect with our kids. Schools need to pay attention consistently once a bullying problem surfaces. Addressing it once won't resolve the issue. Even a bullying episode which has been "handled" still requires ongoing low-level monitoring, at school and at home, to be alert to recurrences. Kids will get the message that adults are serious about bullying prevention.

Children's bullying prevention is everybody's responsibility. Kids must have resilience, and there will be ups and downs in life, but we can no longer afford to think that bullying is a normal part of growing up.

The Good News

It's not all bad news. We can turn this around.

Adults must do a better job standing up to protect kids, unwaveringly insisting on kindhearted, respectful behavior between kids and their peers and between adults and kids—in all directions.

Far better outcomes occur, with much less damage, if we intervene at the first signs of bullying and work harder on prevention than on punishment. Bullying's daily building-block behaviors are often accepted or ignored. The downside of looking the other way is costly.



Teaching kids the skills of friendship, even and *especially* during conflict, is necessary to change the lives and outcomes for bullies, targets, and bystanders. When adults take the lead, kids will step up and become outspoken *upstanders*—learning to protect their friends and stand up for the rights of those with less power, skill, or ability. From this perspective, they will be more likely to welcome newcomers, take responsibility for mistakes, and work to change their schools, communities, and the world.

Children and their parents need to feel secure in the knowledge that kids will be cherished and cared for in schools that safeguard every child's right to learn in a school environment of emotional and physical safety. **We want children to know that parents and teachers have their backs.**

The Importance of Positive Friendships

Positive friendships protect and insulate kids from many issues, including bullying. Kids need kind, respectful, empathic friends who know how to have fun, tease (not taunt or bully), share confidences, support dreams, and provide comfort and encouragement. Having friends creates a sense of belonging. Having peers to talk to helps kids rebound more quickly from stress and bumps in the road.

Our children's friends have a huge impact on their behavior, self-esteem, values, goals, and big life choices right from the early years. If children learn how to identify positive relationships and build self-esteem when they're young, the chances of kids gravitating toward destructive relationships later in life will be minimized.⁴⁵

Bullying Prevention Can Be Simple

In an ideal world, as soon as a bullying problem arose, adults would jump to attention and say: *OMG, we had no idea! Thanks for letting us know. We're so glad we caught this early. The adults at home and school will work together on this. We're going to remind the children of our values, our expectations for their behavior, and model positive behavior for them. We will do a more consistent job of monitoring the kids and intervening at the first sign*

of additional mistakes. The adults would then keep their word, correct the immediate situation, and monitor the children's interactions at a low level for the next several months to make sure the problem doesn't recur.

How often do you recall a bullying problem being solved that early? Or simply?

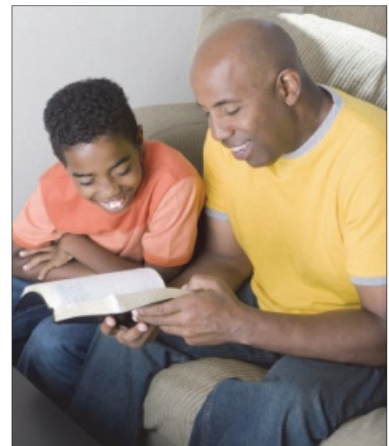
In the early stages, bullying prevention is straightforward. At the first sign of unkindness or bullying behavior, an adult should encourage the misbehaving child to choose different words or behavior: *We treat everyone with respect. Can you please say that in a nicer way?* Speak to the child with a smile or a neutral face, not with a scowl or in anger. The goal is to give the child a chance to improve under the watchful and helpful eyes of an adult.

The bottom line in bullying prevention is actually pretty simple: You don't have to love everybody and you don't have to be everyone's best friend, but you MUST make a place for everyone and treat everyone with respect, even and especially during conflict.

Bullying: Whose Problem Is It?

The responsibility for decreasing children's bullying should be shared by all. Adults, however, have the primary responsibility for prevention, control, and monitoring, making sure that kids operate within the boundaries consistently. Children absolutely have roles and responsibilities in bullying prevention, but children cannot do their jobs if adults don't do ours.

Please remember: The ONLY solution to bullying is prevention. Realistically, it's not possible to eliminate bullying completely. Instead, we must focus on early intervention, setting boundaries, and minimizing the negative effects. Preventive, low-level behavior monitoring is a permanent responsibility for all adults who work or live with kids. Yes, mistakes will be made and they must be handled. Genuine apologies and repairs must be offered when someone gets hurt—even when the hurt was unintentional. Every mistake is a strong reminder to increase our prevention efforts. Failing to respond sows the seeds of the next crisis.



Adults Also Suffer When Kids Are Bullied

Parents worry when they see their children excluded from playdates and birthday parties, cut off from friendships, and fearful of going to school. As the problem worsens, parents become concerned for their children's safety and mental health.

Teachers' stress rises when working in bullying environments. Entire classrooms can be disrupted. Teachers are distracted by numerous discipline problems and must focus on mediating relationships between students instead of teaching. Students fall behind academically.

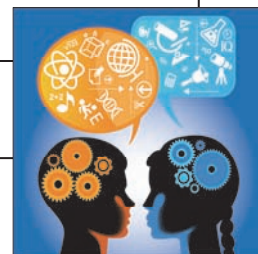
When a school has a kids' bullying problem, there's a good chance there's also workplace bullying among the staff. Adults dread going to work in environments like this. Reducing bullying benefits everyone.

My Child is Already Being Bullied. Is it Too Late?

It's never too late to stop or repair a bullying situation. It's much easier to prevent or catch it early, but kids need help all the way through. While the start of a new school year is the perfect time to set ground rules to prevent

Common Problems That Make Kids Vulnerable to Bullying

- **Problem: Your child is new to the school, community, or country.** New kids tend to have fewer friends and be less “embedded” in the school community (they lack multiple, strong relationships). There’s often a language barrier, too.
- **Solution: Adults must set the tone, connecting the newcomer to rotating “buddies” or “ambassadors” for the first 2–3 months** (yes, months). With adult supervision, peers can be assigned to help the new child find her way around school. Ask the teacher to introduce her to peers and adults in the school, tell her about school rules and procedures, and facilitate her inclusion at lunch, recess, and other in- and after-school social activities. Having someone to sit with eases entry into the social system. Invite your child’s classmates to your home for after-school activities. Ask the teacher to identify kids who walk home on the same route or travel on the same bus and can walk or sit with your child. We’ll talk about this in more depth in Chapter 5.



- **Problem: Children who are different in some way, including:**
 - **Age:** Old or young for their grade.
 - **Size:** Big or small, thin or overweight. Overweight kids are disproportionately targeted.¹²
 - **Disabilities:** Especially physical or observable disabilities.
 - **Intellectual differences:** Learning disabled or gifted (especially once labeled by the school), or gifted + learning disabled (these characteristics often coexist, making a child doubly vulnerable to bullying).
 - **LGBT:** As kids become aware of their sexuality and sexual orientation, kids who are—or suspect they may be—LGBT kids experience a significantly greater risk of being bullied.¹³
- **Solution: Adults must take the lead, clearly stating and demonstrating that we accept everyone’s differences.** Some strengths and weaknesses are more visible than others. We should be able to get support when we need it and give support when we can. Adults must monitor kids’ social interactions closely, catching mistakes and missteps. Kids need to know we mean it—nobody should be left out or excluded.

- **Problem: Insecure body language.** When a child has insecure body language, he looks vulnerable—like an easy target.
- **Solution: Teach stronger, more positive body language.** Demonstrate good posture—how to make direct eye contact, smile, walk, and move with confidence.

- **Problem: Lack of or awkward social skills.** Kids acquire smooth social skills at different ages. Some are socially comfortable at amazingly young ages; many are still awkward in high school. Many adults have not fully acquired graceful social skills either!
- **Solution: Help your child learn the skills of friendship.** For kids lacking social finesse, parents and teachers can teach some useful skills: how to make friends, how to maintain friendships, how to “break the ice” when entering an established group, how to tell a joke, etc. Adults can share tips that will help a kid feel more socially confident and secure.

Teach your child to be a good friend. Help her learn to become a good listener, ask questions to draw out conversation, be friendly and helpful, and avoid gossiping. Coach your child to respect physical boundaries (keep her hands to herself, be aware of other people’s personal space, don’t stand too close or laugh too loud in someone’s face, and learn to read body language so she’ll know if she’s bothering someone).¹⁴ Point out good and bad friendship skills on TV. For a list of our favorite books about friendship for younger children, see Chapter 5, Activity 7.



- **Problem: Cultural Differences.** Taunting because of cultural differences still occurs and has increased since the September 11, 2001, US terrorist attacks. Sometimes the taunting is overt, but more likely, it is covert: *Your lunch smells funny* or *What’s in your hair?* (said with a sneer, not curiosity).
- **Solution: Create environments where we—and our kids—celebrate diversity and learn about one another’s different backgrounds.** Multicultural lunches or dinners, where students and their families bring food to school for all to share (always be careful about allergies), can showcase the varying ways different cultures might use the same ingredient, for example.

Welcome to Kids!

For Adults & Kids

It's Back-to-School Time!

Wait! Is summer over already? It went so fast! I don't want to go back to school yet! Did you know that many kids feel this way? To be fair, there are some really great things about starting a new school year. You'll learn something new every day in school. You might become a better reader, writer, artist, or musician. You can learn to speak Spanish, French, or Mandarin. You'll explore Math, Science, Social Studies, and many other subjects.

It's fun to gather your school supplies for the new year. Maybe you'll be in a new classroom. You might be in a new school, or a different part of your old school. You could have a cubby or locker for the first time. Maybe you'll get assigned to your own desk!

Some kids look forward to seeing their friends from last year or friends from their neighborhood. Other kids can't wait to take the bus by themselves.

Even with all the exciting things to look forward to, some kids are a little nervous about going back to school: *What if I don't know anyone? Will anyone sit with me at lunch? Will I have friends to play with at recess? What if my friends from last year aren't in my class this year?*



Some kids are more than a little nervous about the new school year—they're downright scared: *Will that kid who was mean to me last year be in my class this year? Will my friend's older brother pick on me on the playground? What if the tough kids in gym class make fun of me again this year?*

Guess what? It's perfectly normal to be a little nervous. You're probably having the same thoughts as many of your classmates. If you're *more* than a little nervous, you should talk to someone who can help: your mom or dad, grandparent, older brother or sister, your favorite teacher, or your guidance counselor. If you're worried about being bullied, please let a grown-up know so that, together, you can make a plan to prevent it from happening. Everyone deserves to feel safe at school and while traveling to and from school.

Start the year with a smile! A smile sends the message that you're friendly. Make friends with kids who are nice to you and nice to others. Get involved in activities outside of school, too! Soccer, baseball, karate, ballet—whatever interests you. Find friends who like those hobbies, too.

You are a good person, and you deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.

Read this book with your mom or dad (or both), your grandparent, or caregiver to learn some tips that will help you make good friends and avoid bullies.

Have a great year in school!

Him or Her?

You will notice that when we talk about kids, sometimes we use “him” and sometimes we use “her.” We do this on purpose so you will remember that kids who act like bullies can be either boys or girls. Children who get picked on can also be boys or girls. Whether we use “him” or “her” in a sentence, we are really talking about both boys and girls.

We know that kids who act like bullies can change their behavior. So can kids who are targets. That is why we try—and we ask you to try—not to label any kid as a “bully” or a “target.” Instead of saying, *Will's a bully*, try saying, *Will acted like a bully when he pushed me*. We will still use the words “bully” and “target” to explain these ideas to you, but we're not calling any children by those names.

Making Friends

Whether you have lots of friends or only one or two, it's important to find other kids who share your interests. Find friends who like the same sports, video games, cartoons, or books as you do. When you talk to a new person, you're sure to find something in common. Maybe you both have older or younger brothers and sisters. Look for friends who are kind and accept you as you are.

If a friend constantly says mean things to you, makes fun of you or other people, hurts your feelings, breaks rules, or puts you in uncomfortable situations, sometimes you can get him to stop by telling him how you feel. Sometimes you will have to find other friends who treat you nicely. Friendship takes work. Friends stick up for one another and care about each other's feelings.

The stories and ideas in this chapter are about how kids can prevent and deal with bullying. Read the stories to your parent, if you can. Ask for help with any words or ideas you don't understand.

How Can I Avoid Being a Target of Bullying?

Many kids who get picked on think that it happens because they are doing something wrong. Most of the time, that's just not true. Kids who act like bullies look for targets with very specific characteristics. Why? Bullies like to feel they are more powerful than their targets. That's why bullies often pick on kids who are smaller, weaker, younger, or different from other kids in some way. They're looking for someone who will be hurt or upset by what they say or do—and who won't fight back.



The top three things that bullies look for in a target are:

1. Someone who is different in some way.
2. Someone who can be made to feel bad about herself.
3. Someone who doesn't have any friends or is alone most of the time.

Addy's Playdate Surprise



For Adults & Kids

One Saturday morning in late August, Addy's mom invited a girl named Maya to their house for a playdate. Maya and her family had just moved to Addy's neighborhood, and Addy's mom thought it would be nice for the girls to get to know each other before school started, because they would be in the same class. Addy was excited to meet someone new. She hoped Maya liked to play with dolls and stuffed animals.

Maya rang the doorbell. Addy's mom opened the door and said, *Maya! It's so nice to meet you! My name is Mrs. Thomas and this is my daughter, Addy. She is six years old, just like you.*

Hi, Maya said, smiling shyly.

Let's go play in my room! said Addy.

I'll make lunch in about 30 minutes, said Mrs. Thomas. *Enjoy yourselves, girls!*



Addy ran up the steps and Maya followed her into a bright pink room. Dolls and toys were scattered all over the floor, and a beautiful dollhouse stood next to the bed. Maya sat on the floor and picked up Addy's favorite doll.

Her name's Sarah, Addy said proudly.

Only babies play with dolls, said Maya.

I'm not a baby, said Addy, shocked by what Maya said.

Why is your room so pink? asked Maya, sneering.

Because pink is my favorite color, answered Addy.

Purple's a better color than pink. This room looks stupid, said Maya. *I don't want to play with someone who likes pink and plays with dolls.*

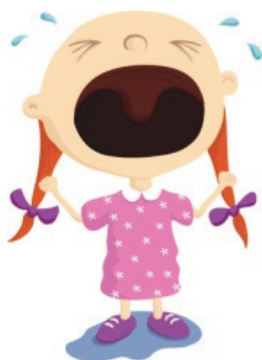
Addy didn't know what to do. Maya was really hurting her feelings. Should she say something mean back to Maya? Should she go and get her mom? Was Maya right? Was purple better than pink? Were dolls just for babies?



STOP & THINK

Parents: Ask your child what she would do if Maya said those mean things to her.

Remind your child that it's OK for people to like different things, and friends should respect each other's choices. Stress that it's not a good solution to be mean to someone who's acting like a bully. Let your child know that she can always come to you for help and that you'll always have her back.



Addy felt her eyes start to tear up. Then she remembered something she learned in kindergarten last year. Her teacher, Miss Plum, told the class that all people are different and that it's OK to like different things. She also taught them that if anyone ever said or did something mean to them, the first thing they should say to themselves is, *I am a good person, and I deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.* That means that everyone deserves to be treated nicely and everyone's feelings are important. Quietly, Addy repeated the sentence to herself two times. She felt a little bit better.



Activity 6

New Kids at School: Special Tips for Teachers

While we're on the topic, let's focus in on the important role teachers and schools play in helping new students fit in, make friends, and be protected from bullying. Most schools have some procedures for new students—invite the new student to stand up and introduce herself to the class, and assign classmate buddies to make sure the new child finds her way to class, lunch, and recess.

Buddies, ambassadors, and pals are all excellent, but our efforts to support new children need to last far beyond the first week of school. It can take 3–6 months for a child to feel completely settled in her new school. Assign rotating ambassadors for 3–5 days until the new child has had a chance to buddy up with everyone in the class and be introduced to numerous circles of friends. Teachers can gently monitor the new friendships. Some schools have created inventive games for the new child to hunt for “treasures” (a new pencil) by finding and speaking to certain teachers, the librarian, the school secretary, and other adults around the school. Adding fun and playfulness can ease the transition and help a child build secure friendships in her new environment. The time spent doing this pays big dividends in classroom behavior. We're developing a cohesive class and teaching our values of making a place for and helping one another.



Activity 7

Recognizing & Choosing Positive Friendships

Read children's books with themes about friendship, empathy, respect, and bullying prevention. Don't be afraid to pick short books with simple stories, even for older children. Choose from this list of our favorite children's books, or find your own books about these important topics:

- *The Best Friends Book* by Todd Parr (Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2000).
- *Billy the Baaadly Behaving Bully Goat* by Staci Schwartz (ComteQ Publishing, 2012).
- *Chester's Way* by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books, 1988).
- *Feelings* by Aliko (Greenwillow Books, 1986).



- *Frog and Toad Are Friends* by Arnold Lobel (HarperCollins, 2003).
- *How to Be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends and Keeping Them* by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown (Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2001).
- *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes (HMH Books for Young Readers, 2004).
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2013).
- *The New Bear on the Block* by Staci Schwartz (ComteQ Publishing, 2006).
- *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1961).
- *Stand in My Shoes: Kids Learning About Empathy* by Bob Sornson (Love and Logic Press, 2013).
- *Toot & Puddle: You Are My Sunshine* by Holly Hobbie (Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2010).
- *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Raschka (Scholastic, 2007).

Parents: Read any of these books with your child.

Teachers & Classes: Create groups of 3–4 students and assign one book to each group. Make sure there's at least one capable reader in the group. This activity provides a perfect opportunity to bring older children to your classroom as "book buddies," to read to the younger students.

Parents & Teachers: Discuss and evaluate the story's friendships and relationships. Here are some ideas:

- Discuss each character in the story. Which characters are good friends? Why? Are any of the characters not acting like good friends? Why?
- Ask your child or students to make a list of five things that make someone a good friend. How do good friends make you feel? What would you do if a friend hurt your feelings? What do the faces of friends look like when they are play or talking? How do they talk to one another? Do good friends have to like all the same things? Do they ever fight? If they do, how do they solve the problem?
- If one of the books has a character who acts like a bully, ask your child or students to identify the bad or mean behavior. How do the other characters handle the situation? Do they stick up for the target and act like upstanders, or do they say nothing or encourage the bully by being bystanders?
- Discuss the bullying behavior of the characters. Take turns guessing why that character might be behaving that way. Remind your child or students not to be mean to, or exclude, bullies. Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, even while they are working to change their behavior. Don't bully the bully—it's easier for someone to change when they feel accepted.
- Ask your child or students what they would do if someone acting like a bully picked on them. What would they do if they saw one of their friends being picked on?

In the future, as you read other books with your child or class, take some time to focus on the feelings of the characters. How does the action of the story make the characters feel? How does it make the reader feel? Learn to identify the characters' facial expressions and emotions from illustrations to enhance emotional knowledge and empathy.



I've Got Your Back

Help Children Say Hello to **Friends** & Goodbye to **Bullies**

Empower children of all ages to stop bullying in its tracks, and let them know that caring adults will always have their backs! *I've Got Your Back: Help Children Say Hello to Friends & Goodbye to Bullies* will guide adults as they help kids build positive, respectful friendships, stick up for one another, and develop empathy and self-esteem.

I've Got Your Back's unique format delivers key information for kids ages 5-10 and adults, in separate and read-together chapters. Now bedtime reading can equip children with lifelong relationship skills!

What's inside?

- ★ Bullying essentials—what kids, parents, and teachers *really* need to know
- ★ Engaging children's stories that offer action-oriented bullying prevention strategies
- ★ Skill-building activities that help kids strengthen their ability to make friends, navigate social situations, and stop bullying

Teachers will also love *I've Got Your Back*. All activities can easily be adapted for classroom use.

Adults must set the tone for kids' bullying prevention. *I've Got Your Back* will inspire adults and children to become bully-resistant upstanders!



LORNA BLUMEN, MS, MBA is a children's and adult workplace bullying prevention specialist. She is the author of five books, including *Bullying Epidemic: Not Just Child's Play* and *Girls' Respect Groups: No More Mean Girls!* She is the lead developer of the Girls' Respect Groups Program, used in over 130 countries. She has appeared on Canadian and US television and radio and spoken at numerous international conferences.



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ISBN 978-0-9810589-5-5



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