

**We Want You to Know**



**Kids Talk About Bullying**

**DEBORAH ELLIS**



# **We Want You To Know: KIDS TALK ABOUT BULLYING**

## **Workbook for Teachers and Students**

**By Deborah Ellis  
and  
Scot Cooper**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF *WE WANT YOU TO KNOW*

**Deborah Ellis** is the internationally acclaimed author of more than twenty books for children, including the *Breadwinner* trilogy; *The Heaven Shop*; *Lunch With Lenin and Other Stories*; *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees*; and *Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk About AIDS*. A peace activist and humanitarian, Deborah has won many national and international awards for her books, including the Governor General's Award, Sweden's Peter Pan Prize, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, and the Children's Africana Book Award Honour Book for Older Readers.

In February 2010, the Ontario Library Association recognized Deborah with its President's Award for Exceptional Achievement. The award acknowledges an outstanding action or contribution that has in a major or unique way enhanced or furthered librarianship in Ontario. Awards are only given if there is something of true historic significance to recognize.

The statement from OLA President Peggy Thomas reads:

*Deborah Ellis has been chosen for her commitment to informing, through her writing, a generation of children about the realities and experiences of children worldwide. But more significantly, she is receiving this award for also taking action on these passions and making real and meaningful contributions to our society in areas of social justice.*

*Her contributions to Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan and Street Kids International have made life-altering changes in Afghanistan and in the developing world, allowing for the building of women's centres and schools as well as creating educational and work opportunities where before none had existed. Her contributions to UNICEF have funded lifesaving care for those suffering from AIDS. Her writing and her generosity are inspirational, and this award is but a small acknowledgement of all that she has done.*

Deborah's books have been translated into eighteen languages and have been read by children all over the world. Deborah lives in Simcoe, Ontario.

**Scot Cooper**, co-author of this workbook, is the Supervisor Child Clinical Services/Brief Services, Haldimand-Norfolk REACH and co-author of the Name It 2 Change It Campaign website, [www.nameit2changeit.ca](http://www.nameit2changeit.ca)

## **WE WANT YOU TO KNOW: KIDS TALK ABOUT BULLYING**

*Bullying is not inevitable. It doesn't have to be a normal part of childhood. The more we talk with each other, share our stories, and listen—particularly to those whose voices aren't often heard—the closer we move toward a just society.*

—Deborah Ellis

*Bullying, occurs when one individual or a group targets another individual or group—often repeatedly over time—using physical, verbal, or psychological aggression to dominate the person.*

—Name It 2 Change It Campaign

# INTRODUCTION

## ACTIVITY: FIND OUT HOW MUCH BULLYING AFFECTS YOUR SCHOOL

In *We Want You to Know: Kids Talk about Bullying*, I conducted interviews in the Haldimand, Norfolk, and neighboring communities of Southern Ontario. I asked volunteer students some standard questions, such as, “What happened to you?” “How did you respond?” and “How did you feel?” But most of the interviews were directed by the individual students themselves. It took courage for them to talk about their experiences. But some students opened up about incidents that they later asked me to leave out of the book. Some asked me not to use their real names, and some did not want their photos included in the book. I respected their wishes. Speaking out about what they have done, or what has happened to them, could expose them to more ridicule.

Speaking about personal matters in class discussions can be difficult and even risky for some kids. The interviews in *We Want You to Know* are of such a variety that the discussions can be based around what the kids are dealing with and still be applicable to what students in your class are experiencing.

To open discussions in the classroom about bullying, you might find that a survey of your class, grade and school will be a useful starting point. The following survey is designed to reveal how much bullying is going on, where it happens the most, what form it takes, and how students view the efforts the administration makes in dealing with the issue. The survey can be copied and handed out, and if students are not obliged to sign them, they will feel freer to be honest about what they see and think.

# SCHOOL SURVEY ON BULLYING

What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you experience bullying? \_\_\_\_\_never \_\_\_\_\_sometimes \_\_\_\_\_often

What kind of bullying have you experienced? \_\_\_\_\_name calling \_\_\_\_\_threats  
\_\_\_\_\_property damage \_\_\_\_\_physical (shoving, hitting, kicking)  
\_\_\_\_\_harassment (on-going bothering) \_\_\_\_\_sexual harassment (comments, grabbing) \_\_\_\_\_rumors  
\_\_\_\_\_cyber (email, text, cell-phone) \_\_\_\_\_being excluded or ignored  
\_\_\_\_\_other \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you witness others being bullied? \_\_\_\_\_never \_\_\_\_\_sometimes \_\_\_\_\_often

What kind of bullying have you witnessed? \_\_\_\_\_name-calling \_\_\_\_\_threats \_\_\_\_\_property damage  
\_\_\_\_\_physical (shoving, hitting, kicking) \_\_\_\_\_harassment (on-going bothering)  
\_\_\_\_\_sexual harassment (comments, grabbing) \_\_\_\_\_rumors \_\_\_\_\_cyber (e-mail, text, cell-phone)  
\_\_\_\_\_being excluded \_\_\_\_\_other \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you bully others? \_\_\_\_\_never \_\_\_\_\_sometimes \_\_\_\_\_often

What kind of bullying do you do? \_\_\_\_\_name calling \_\_\_\_\_threats  
\_\_\_\_\_property damage \_\_\_\_\_physical (shoving, hitting, kicking)  
\_\_\_\_\_harassment (on-going bothering) \_\_\_\_\_sexual harassment (comments, grabbing)  
\_\_\_\_\_rumors \_\_\_\_\_cyber (email, text, cell-phone) \_\_\_\_\_excluding others  
\_\_\_\_\_other \_\_\_\_\_

Where does bullying mostly take place? \_\_\_\_\_schoolyard \_\_\_\_\_bus \_\_\_\_\_class  
\_\_\_\_\_gym \_\_\_\_\_cafeteria \_\_\_\_\_way to or from school  
\_\_\_\_\_other \_\_\_\_\_

What do teachers do to help? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What else could they do that would be helpful? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you think people bully others? \_\_\_\_\_ to be popular \_\_\_\_\_ they're bored  
\_\_\_\_\_ they have been bullied \_\_\_\_\_ they have family problems \_\_\_\_\_ they're angry  
\_\_\_\_\_ they want to be heard \_\_\_\_\_ they don't know how else to behave  
\_\_\_\_\_ they want to protect themselves  
\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

When you witness bullying, how often do you try to stop it? \_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes  
\_\_\_\_\_ often \_\_\_\_\_ always

When you don't help, what keeps you from trying to stop it? \_\_\_\_\_

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If you are someone who bullies others, how does it make you feel? \_\_\_\_\_ happy \_\_\_\_\_ sad  
\_\_\_\_\_ powerful \_\_\_\_\_ angry \_\_\_\_\_ afraid \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

What changes would you like to see in your school to make it safer and more welcoming for everyone?

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# NAME IT TO CHANGE IT

Bullying gets up to all kinds of tricks in the lives of people. It has developed many ways to stay around or go unnoticed by people who could make a difference. Ambiguous situations are the most difficult to sort out. Teachers have to become even better skilled at spotting and naming bullying.

## Prevention Tips for Teachers

- Be clear about what bullying is. It involves repetition. Bullying comes in many forms, including gossip, exclusion, intimidation, and censorship among the more commonly known tactics.
- Bullying can be direct or indirect: spreading rumors, excluding, or mocking others. Indirect bullying is as serious as direct bullying.
- All bullying is serious but it wants you to dismiss it as unimportant. The only judge of the seriousness of bullying is the victim. What we think is not serious could be huge to someone else. Check in with them.
- Be clear in ambiguous situations. Bullying thrives on ambiguity. If you are unsure if someone is being bullied, err on the side of safety and name it to change it. In an ambiguous situation, you can help students find common ground even if they have differing opinions and perceptions.
- Bullying keeps youth silent through fear of retaliation and worry about peer rejection. Build into your prevention plans steps to guard against retaliation or rejection in your classroom and school.

## ACTIVITY: MAKING BULLYING VISIBLE

Bullying often likes to get away unseen. It hides in secrecy and deception. One of the ways we can make it more visible is to unmask it, talk about it and how it works, and reveal where it happens and who it is happening to. We can name it to change it. Help make bullying visible and draw a picture of the problem called “Bullying.”

If you were to think of the problem of bullying as a living and thinking thing, what shape would it have? What color and textures? What powers would it possess? What kinds of things is it saying? What is it doing? After you have pictured the problem of bullying in your mind’s eye, draw it on the paper and make it VISIBLE.

## **PART ONE: YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH**

*Bullying Talks: I want kids to believe awful things about themselves. I want them to look at others and COMPARE themselves. Maybe their clothes aren't as good. Maybe they have cheaper sports equipment. Maybe they don't come from the best neighborhood in town. If I can get them to think they are alone and to begin to doubt themselves, that's when I have them. And if I can get the other kids to leave them out, ignore them and treat them differently, I become even stronger.*

### **ACTIVITY: INCLUDING NEWCOMERS**

It's hard to fit in when you are new. Can you make a list of ideas to help welcome and include new students to your school?

### **ACTIVITY: WHERE DOES IT SAY YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH?**

Where does the idea come from that one person is better than another?

Think about commercials on TV or ads in magazines. Find a commercial or ad that sends the message that you are better than others if you purchase their product. What other hidden messages can you find?

## PART TWO: YOU'RE TOO DIFFERENT

Bullying Talks: *I use differences between people, communities, cultures and countries as my ammunition. If I can exploit how someone is different, I can create fear thoughts, worry thoughts, or the belief that they aren't going to be accepted. Even the smallest differences give me an advantage. And in this world there are so many differences to exploit! If I can make them focus on what makes them different, I've got power over them!*

### ACTIVITY: INVENTING DIVERSITY IN SAMENESS

Bullying tries to use differences to keep people out or have them think they are less than others. Make a list of the things you have in common with your best friend and a list of how you are different. What do you appreciate the most about your friend?

How we are the same

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## ACTIVITY: JUDGMENT STATEMENTS

Judgment Habits are very popular in Western culture. We make a habit of critiquing, criticizing, and/or making evaluations of others and even of ourselves. Bullying will often amplify Judgment Habits to try to get kids to feel bad about themselves. Bullying wants kids to judge each other.

Try this experiment. For one day, listen closely to the conversations you have with your friends and parents. Make note of how many statements contain judgments about other people.

Judgment Statements I heard today:

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How do Judgment Habits have us acting towards each other?

Can you think of any popular television shows that are based on Judgment Habits?

Check through the stories in *We Want You to Know* and see if you can spot any positive or negative judgments the kids are making about themselves. Write them down.

Compare notes about judgment statements and discuss how to turn each negative comment into a positive statement instead.

## PART THREE: YOU'RE IT—JUST BECAUSE

*Bullying Talks: One of my favorite tactics is to focus attention on what the kid I'm after is doing wrong. I try to make them think they need to change. If they just wore different clothes, or were quieter, or blended into the crowd a bit more, they wouldn't have me in their life. As long as I can get the focus on THEM, then it's not on me. Adults really fall for this one. Sometimes they even tell the kid it's their own fault when I'm the one who needs to make changes.*

When we are being treated badly, we often try to find a reason behind it. We think that we are responsible for it, that we have somehow brought the bullying on ourselves. We think that if we can find that reason and correct it, the abuse will stop. We forget that bullying is the fault of the bully.

## **ACTIVITY: ARE YOU A TARGET?**

Sometimes bullying can be so tricky it can be hard to tell if it is happening to you. Remember, bullying wants you to think you deserve it or it's your fault, and these are the lies it tells. Here's a quick check to help you know if bullying is after you.

Are you hurt physically by other kids? Y/N

Are you called mean names and insulted by other kids repeatedly? Y/N

Is your stuff taken or wrecked by other kids? Y/N

Are hurtful messages about you shared electronically or posted on the Internet? Y/N

Are you left out of activities, groups, or play by other kids on purpose? Y/N

Do you think that you deserve these things happening to you? Y/N

Do you worry about going to school or out in the community? Y/N

Have you stopped doing what you like to do because of how other kids treat you? Y/N

Do you feel sadder or more upset than your peers? Y/N

Have you felt hurt or mad when someone offers you advice? Y/N

Have you felt mad or cried when someone has been mean to you? Y/N

If you answered YES to any of these statements you may have a bullying problem in your life. Sometimes adults are not too sure if bullying is happening or not. Show your list to an adult and tell them what you have been experiencing.

## **PART FOUR: WE WANT TO CRUSH YOU**

Bullying Talks: *I am relentless. I will take every opportunity to make you feel small. I will make you so afraid of me that even when I am ignoring you, you will feel bad. You will begin to believe the things I tell you about yourself, and you will think that you aren't worthy of safety or happiness. You will experience everything in your life through this cloud of bitterness, and I will move on, uncaring, to my next target.*

### **ACTIVITY: I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE**

Students who want to ask for help could be encouraged to fill out the following note in private, fold it, and leave it on your desk:

# I Can't Take it Anymore

I have a problem with bullying. I don't know how to make it stop. It has been going on for \_\_\_\_\_ (how long)

This is what is happening: \_\_\_\_\_

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This is how I feel when it happens: \_\_\_\_\_

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This is what I need: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ACTIVITY: BULLY MAP**

Draw a map of your school, the surrounding grounds, and the school buses. Color in the danger zones: red for where bullying happens often, yellow for sometimes, and green for safe.

## **PART FIVE: REDEMPTION**

*Bullying Talks: Redemption: that's not a word I like to hear. You think you can free your lives from me? Good luck trying. Well, okay maybe a lot of you do, but that's only because I was outed. I hate it when you kids see through my powers, lies and tricks, and turn a deaf ear to me. I hate it when you leave me and find friends, do activities, and find something good to think about yourselves. It's not fair I tell you!*

### **ACTIVITY: STEPPING IN**

Divide the class into small groups. Assign a bully and a victim in each group and let them create and enact their own scene. The remaining members of the group are the witnesses. Their role is to decide how to:

1. Tell the bully what they are witnessing.
2. Ask the bully to stop in a clear and respectful way.
3. Talk to the victim and let them know that they don't deserve what is happening.
4. Send someone to ask for help.

### **ACTIVITY: CREATE A BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Bullying is a community problem, and it has to have a community solution. Everyone has a part to play. This plan will outline each person's part and give dates for follow-up.

# My Own Bullying Prevention Plan

Beginning date: \_\_\_\_\_

The bullying problem is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## My Care Giver(s):

(Who) \_\_\_\_\_

will take steps by:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Teacher:

(Who) \_\_\_\_\_

will take steps by:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

**My Principal:**

(Who) \_\_\_\_\_

will take steps by:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

**My Best Friend:**

(Who) \_\_\_\_\_

will take steps by:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

**My Community Member will take steps by:**

(Who) \_\_\_\_\_

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

**My steps are to:**

((What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up:

(What) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Where) \_\_\_\_\_

(When) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

We will commit to reviewing this plan on: (day/time) \_\_\_\_\_

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ACTIVITY: MISSION STATEMENT**

Just as we sing a national anthem to remind us of what it means to be a good citizen, a school's Mission Statement can be repeated each day at morning exercises to remind students of what it means to be a citizen of their school. A committee of students can be struck, perhaps with classes voting for a representative, and they can come up with a brief statement of what your school is all about (i.e., gratitude, creating a better world, a place where we are all respected, etc.). Older students can present the statement to the younger grades.

## **BULLYING TALKS**

The following posters feature the bully statements found at the head of each section above.

# BULLYING SAYS: YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH

I want kids to believe awful things about themselves. I want them to look at others and COMPARE themselves. Maybe their clothes aren't as good. Maybe they have cheaper sports equipment. Maybe they don't come from the best neighborhood in town. If I can get them to think they are alone and to begin to doubt themselves, that's when I have them. And if I can get the other kids to leave them out, ignore them and treat them differently, I become even stronger.



*Photo by Julia McAlpine*

# BULLYING SAYS: YOU'RE TOO DIFFERENT

I use differences between people, communities, cultures and countries as my ammunition. If I can exploit how someone is different, I can create fear thoughts, worry thoughts, or the belief that they aren't going to be accepted. Even the smallest differences give me an advantage. And in this world there are so many differences to exploit! If I can make them focus on what makes them different, I've got power over them!



*Photo by Julia McAlpine*

# BULLYING SAYS: YOU'RE IT—JUST BECAUSE

One of my favorite tactics is to focus attention on what the kid I'm after is doing wrong. I try to make them think they need to change. If they just wore different clothes, or were quieter, or blended into the crowd a bit more, they wouldn't have me in their life. As long as I can get the focus on THEM, then it's not on me. Adults really fall for this one. Sometimes they even tell the kid it's their own fault when I'm the one who needs to make changes.



*Photo by Julia McAlpine*

# BULLYING SAYS: WE WANT TO CRUSH YOU

I am relentless. I will take every opportunity to make you feel small. I will make you so afraid of me that even when I am ignoring you, you will feel bad. You will begin to believe the things I tell you about yourself, and you will think that you aren't worthy of safety or happiness. You will experience everything in your life through this cloud of bitterness, and I will move on, uncaring, to my next target.



*Photo by Julia McAlpine*

# BULLYING TALKS ABOUT: REDEMPTION

Redemption: that's not a word I like to hear. You think you can free your lives from me? Good luck trying. Well, okay maybe a lot of you do, but that's only because I was outed. I hate it when you kids see through my powers, lies and tricks, and turn a deaf ear to me. I hate it when you leave me and find friends, do activities, and find something good to think about yourselves. It's not fair I tell you!



*Photo by Julia McAlpine*

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