

BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: INDIRECT BULLYING

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A story about indirect bullying in one of the schools.

There was a girl—Julie. No one ever laid a finger on her. No one messed with her stuff, called her names, or stole her lunch money. But Julie was still bullied. She was a victim of what's known as relational aggression or **indirect bullying**. In this type of bullying, the victim is deliberately left out of the group. The bully or bullies try to make her look bad to others and prevent her from interacting positively with them.

Julie was excited when Heather told everyone was inviting the whole class to her birthday party. Julie had been having a tough time making friends this year, and the party would give her a chance to get to know her classmates better. Heather talked about the party for days and even borrowed Julie's markers to make invitations.

The party was on Saturday night. Friday afternoon, Julie found her markers back in her desk. She searched the markers and the desk – no invitation for her. Would Heather really borrow her markers for the invitations and then not give her one? Hoping for the best, Julie waited patiently till the end of the day to hear from Heather.

Nothing. On Monday morning, the party was all anyone talked about, but Julie was left out of that conversation, too.

Examples of indirect bullying include:

- Eye rolling in response to something a person says or does
- Holding your nose when she walks by
- Getting up from a table when she sits down
- Spreading rumours about her
- Encouraging others not to be her friend
- Humiliating her with jokes or embarrassing stories about her

“It’s so subtle that it can be hard for kids to even bring this up to an adult,” says bullying expert Dr. Adrienne Nishina.

Are You a Bully?

Indirect bullying is pretty easy to get away with, but you should still think twice about doing it. Why? Studies show that it causes the same kind of harm as other types of bullying. So, while you may not actually be beating someone up every day, you’re inflicting just as much harm as if you were.



Look in the mirror. Are you really that person? Someone who profoundly harms others just because you don't like them? What if someone decides to try it on you? Your best friend? Your little brother?

Sometimes a bully really doesn't mean to be a bully, so think before you share an embarrassing story about another kid or brag about a party to those who aren't included.

Heather could have saved Julie a lot of heartache simply by quietly inviting her chosen friends to her party instead of bragging that she was inviting everyone (as if Julie somehow didn't count).

Are You Bullied?

If you're being bullied, you need to get an adult on your side, but it can be tough to explain to an adult just how painful indirect bullying is. They may tell you to just ignore the eye rolling, nose holding, and rumors.

If that's your problem, try showing them this article as well as information on indirect bullying.

Build up you allies.

Nurture the friendships you have. Talk to your parents. Find a trusted adult at school that you can go to like a teacher, librarian, or even a secretary. Work with your allies to figure out how best to stop your bullies. Sometimes a sit-down is all that's needed, but

other bullies need more pressure to stop.

Don't take on your school's bully problem by yourself.

Dr. Nishina says that the most effective anti-bullying programs involve improving the entire school environment, rather than focusing on one kid's problem. So, get your parents to talk to the school about developing an anti-bullying program. You can bet that if this is happening to you, other kids at your school are being bullied, too.

Remember, there's **nothing wrong with you**. You have nothing to be ashamed of. The problem lies with the behaviour of the bullies, **not with you**.

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