



# Look Strategically...What YOU Can Do

## Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

**Bullying can be seen as a destructive game, devised by the bully. The rules are simple:**

- The bully decides when to start the game, where it will be played, and who is allowed to watch.
- The bully picks the players.
- The bully sets the stakes: He or she can demand to control territory, objects, or privileges. But the real “fun” comes from showing that he or she has the power to control the people around him or her.
- Bystanders must accept or encourage what the bully does.
- The first round of the game is over when the bully wins. Then the bully can play again.
- The bully can play the game as often as he or she likes, for as long as the fun lasts.

**These are the bully’s rules. But what if you don’t follow them? The bully doesn’t have a game—unless you play it.**

## What Would Happen *If*?

**Bullies like to set the rules and they expect them to be followed. But what would happen if the rules changed: if a victim didn’t accept his or her punishment, or a bystander did more than stand by?**

This activity is designed to help both victims and bystanders end the bullying game, by finding new ways to respond to the bully. It empowers children to change the rules, see available options, and appreciate how their actions can make a difference.

- 1** Pick the story (on next two pages) that is most appropriate for your group.
- 2** Read it aloud.
- 3** Ask children to discuss *What would happen if... ?*

**This activity will help children...**

**Realize that behaviors involved in bullying are largely predictable**

**See how their actions can either encourage or stop bullying**

**Think of specific ways to change the bullying game, in particular situations**

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### STEVEN'S STORY

Steven wasn't enjoying overnight camp. He wasn't very good at the camp activities and he missed his friends from home. At first, the boys in his bunk mostly ignored him. Then Jesse, one of the older boys, discovered Steven's stuffed bear. After that, things really went downhill. Jesse made fun of him for bringing the bear to camp. He started calling him "Baby Stevie" and the other boys soon followed. One counselor heard them and told them to cut it out, but that just made things worse. Steven counted the days until he'd be able to go home.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Steven attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Jesse?
- Steven stood tall and told Jesse to stop calling him names?
- The other boys in the bunk didn't follow Jesse's lead?
- One of the boys stood up for Jesse and told the other kids to stop?
- The counselor followed up by talking with the group about teasing?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?



### CARINA'S STORY

Carina didn't understand why Nel had suddenly become so mean. They used to be best friends, but now Nel barely spoke to her. Even worse, Carina knew Nel talked about her because she often saw Nel whispering to her new friends whenever Carina walked by. Yesterday, during soccer, none of the girls passed the ball to Carina. The coach didn't seem to notice. Carina found out later that Nel had told them not to. Nel said it would be funny.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Carina attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Nel?
- Carina ignored Nel's whispers?
- The other girls didn't whisper with Nel about Carina?
- One of the other girls passed the ball to Carina anyway?
- The coach noticed Carina was being excluded and asked the girls what was going on?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?



### DANIEL'S STORY

Daniel and Gabe were playing catch when Alex walked over. Alex was two years older. "Give me the ball," Alex demanded. Daniel held on to the ball: It was his; he'd brought it from home. Alex hadn't returned the ball he took from Daniel last week. "Give it to me!" Alex demanded again. "We need a ball for our game!" Daniel looked across the field where a group of boys waited for Alex to return. He looked toward the school where the afterschool teachers were deep in conversation. Daniel handed his ball to Alex. He knew he wouldn't see it again.

**Who is the Bully? Who is the Victim? Who are the Child Bystanders?  
Who are the Adult Bystanders?**

**What would happen if . . .**

- Daniel attempted to fight back by threatening or hitting Alex?
- Daniel stood tall and told Alex he couldn't have the ball?
- Gabe told Alex to leave Daniel alone?
- The boys on the field hadn't been waiting for Alex to return with the ball?
- The afterschool teachers had been supervising the playground more closely?
- What else could the Bully, Victim, or Bystanders have done?

**Understanding options for changing the bullying game  
is critical to bullying prevention.**