

# Dealing with... Bullies

Growing up, we're encouraged by adults to be ourselves. Sure, that's a nice thought and we all want to feel special and unique but, being yourself isn't always the best advice when you're trying to survive junior high and high school. In fact, as teenagers, fitting in with the popular group can seem like the most important thing and making fun of those who stand out from the crowd is the best way to secure your own popularity. Strangely, being a jerk can sometimes make you cool.

Feeling rejected by peers is something we've all experienced. But usually, it's short-lived and within a couple of days you're best friends again. Sadly, this is not the case for everyone. Some youth experience rejection, threats, teasing, harassment and abuse on a daily basis.

The truth is that being yourself is not easy; especially when that means being different and risking other people not liking or accepting you. When you look and act like everyone else life may seem a lot easier, right? However, if you continually follow everyone else's lead, who are you?

There will always be people around you who think they are better than you. They make themselves feel good by making you feel crappy. Coping with these types of people is difficult but here are some ways that may help:

- Talk to someone you trust. As much as it might feel like you are alone, you are NOT. There are people who care and will help in whatever way they can.
- Become a member of a group that values your interests and uniqueness. Without a doubt, there are other people out there who will like you for all the reasons that others may not. Maybe even look beyond your own school and connect with likeminded people in your community.
- Write down your thoughts and feelings about your bully or bullies. If you feel comfortable, share what you wrote with someone you trust. Even though it's not a direct solution, trying to understand a problem from another point of view can sometimes make us feel better.
- Most importantly, be yourself. Bullies are insecure and they build up a false sense of power by criticizing others. Bullies are cowards. Do not allow your worth to be determined by these people.

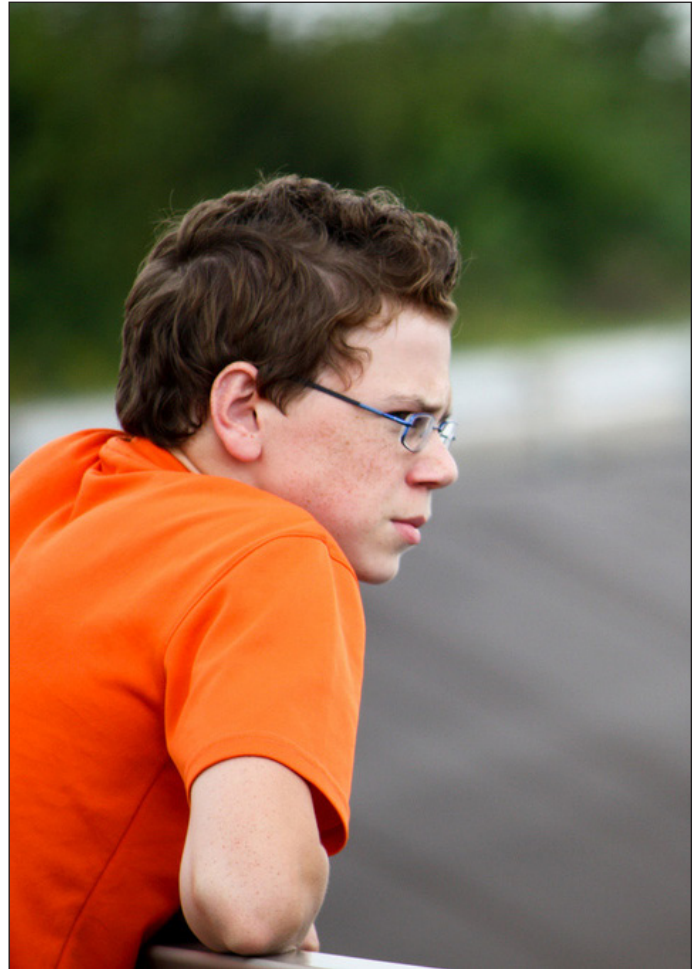


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**This Resilience Research Centre Youth Factsheet was written by Nicole Landry, MA, a project manager with the Resilience Research Centre. Her book, *The Mean Girl Motive: Negotiating Power and Femininity* is published by Fernwood Publishing Ltd.**

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