

Dr. B Speaks!



Stand Up for the Person Being Bullied

By Samuel Betances November 11, 2018

When someone gets bullied, you can be one of three types of onlookers that witness the act - the *bystander*, the *sidewinder* or an *upstander*. Which type of role you choose determines whether you become part of the problem or part of the solution.

Bullying occurs, when people who are strong or have power decide to hurt or disrespect those who are more vulnerable or weak. This practice is prevalent throughout society in different social contexts but is becoming alarmingly commonplace among youth in school settings. The culprits often act out in plain sight. They crave the attention they undeservingly get by wreaking havoc and tormenting their prey.

Victims are targeted by bullies for no other reason than that they are perceived to be powerless or helpless. Someone who might fight back is not viewed as a good choice. Nor is someone who might have friends or influential family members who can intervene. Bullies get a high by thrashing the defenseless, proving that they are cowards. So, let's consider the ways we can respond when we notice someone bullying another person.

The Bystander

First, we can remain silent as a *bystander*. A passerby may stumble upon a crowd witnessing a struggle. The rules of civility are being torn apart. Raw emotion and struggle between a predator and their game are on display. Adrenalin spikes, and the *bystander*, with a front row seat, is captivated by the excitement. Scenes from a violent movie, some video games or horrendous news stories are like that. Outrage is check-mated by perverse curiosity. The *bystander* serves as an accomplice by benign association. Doing nothing endorses bullying.

The Sidewinder

The *sidewinder* plays a different role. Like a snake, this type of person slides sideways to get closer to the action. The bullying event becomes an opportunity to profit from by getting the best video possible to circulate on social media. Never mind that a member of the community is getting pummeled. The goal is to capture the gory details on camera. The opportunistic *sidewinder* seeks vicarious recognition. *Sidewinders* help bullies establish their depraved reputations. In fact, there is a symbiotic relationship between them and the bullies they promote. Both profit from abuse.

The Upstander

Enter the *upstander*. Upon noticing the crowd, hearing the shouts and noting the absence of responsible adults, *upstanders* spring into action. Someone is in trouble! Compassion fuels their quest for justice. Quickly locating an adult that can help is their first step. Next, observing closely who is causing the trouble and who the victim is, responsible witnesses take careful note. Bullies must not get a free pass. *Upstanders* demonstrate courage and character by reporting what took place, while being careful not to be targeted by the bully. "Reporting" is not the same as "ratting." Ratting is accusing someone of something to get them in trouble. Reporting is done to protect persons from bullies, hence the slogan, "if you see something, say something."

Bullies require discipline and counseling, perhaps more than expulsion from school or detention at DYA. Professionals must see to that. But their victims will need friends, positive attachments and support. *Upstanders* can be part of the healing process. They help make places of learning safer and focused on the mission of teaching and learning. The next time you see bullying, choose to stand up for the person being bullied. Become an *upstander*.