



Down
Syndrome
Ireland

National Leadership Local Support

I'm OK, You're Mean

Personal Stories
about Bullying.

Discussion Questions
for the Reader.

Tips and Strategies
to help Victims of
Bullying.



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INTRODUCTION

**We, the National Advisory Council of Down Syndrome Ireland decided to tell our experience of bullying.
We want this information to be available to parents, teachers and people with Down syndrome.**

In our group in Down Syndrome Ireland, we did personal development work.

This helped us talk about our experiences.

We read stories and discussed how the people in the stories were bullied.

This helped us to talk about our own experiences of bullying.

Talking about it with our friends really helped.

During a workshop a famous man called Dave Hingsburger suggested to us that when we meet a bully that we should say to ourselves 'I'm ok, you're mean'.

This is a great tip and we have found that it works really well.

It reminds us that the bully is the problem.

We role-played this during our personal development work in Down Syndrome Ireland.

We want everybody to understand that the problem of bullying is real.

We want to give you information about how to deal with the problem.

We know that this book cannot stop bullying from happening but we want other young people to understand that it is NOT acceptable to bully anybody.

We want them to know what to do if someone tries to bully them.

The bullying stories you read in this book happened in mainstream schools, special schools, on school buses and in nightclubs and pubs.

Having Down syndrome does not protect you from the bullies.

Like everyone we are happy when we are treated with dignity and respect.

Please listen to our voice.





SECTION 1

Information
about Bullying

What is Bullying?

Bullying is abuse.

A bully wants power over another person.

Bullying can be:

- name-calling
- teasing
- hitting
- hurting
- excluding
- frightening

Bullying can be:

- verbal
- physical
- mental
- cyber abuse



Verbal Bullying

Bullies scare and hurt their victims using words.

Verbal bullying is when someone talks to you in a mean way.

Calling you mean names is verbal bullying.

Making threats and saying things like "I'll get you" is verbal bullying.

A manager at work always criticising you is verbal bullying.



Physical Bullying

Sometimes bullies use force and body strength to hurt others.

Sometimes physical bullying is hitting, pinching or kicking.

Sometimes physical bullying is making you do things you do not want to do.

A bully might take your things and break them.



Mental Bullying

Bullies can make you feel bad about yourself.

When people stare at you in a bad way it is not nice.

People never giving you credit for things you do is mental bullying.

Not giving you enough work to do in your job is mental bullying.

Mental bullying can make you feel useless.



Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullies use phones, email and things like Facebook or Twitter to hurt you and make you feel bad.

Bullies might read your emails without your permission.

They might check your texts without asking you first.

They might send texts to scare you saying things like "I'll get you later".

Exclusion Bullying



Bullies try to make you feel bad.

They do not want to let you be in their group.

They try to keep you out.

They say things like you can't come with them or be part of their game.

They whisper to each other and don't tell you what they said.

Bullies are awful.



Questions for Discussion

What is bullying?

What is verbal bullying?

What is a physical bullying?

What is mental bullying?

What is cyber bullying?

What is exclusion bullying?



Who gets bullied?

Anybody can be bullied.

Why does a person get bullied?

There are many reasons why a person can be bullied.

Being different can mean you are a target to a bully.

Being smart can make a bully see you as different.

Wearing glasses or braces on your teeth can make a bully see you as different.

Being small can make a bully see you as different.

Having a disability can make a bully see you as different.

Where does bullying happen?

It can happen anywhere.

It can happen in schools especially when teachers are not there.

It can happen in work.

It can happen in clubs or groups when people won't talk to you or gather in groups and whisper about you.

It can happen on your phone, email, and Facebook.



What signs might you see in children who are bullied?

They might be afraid to walk home from school.

They might not want to take the school bus.

They might become very quiet and not be able to talk about what has happened.

They might cry a lot.

They might get nightmares and wake up in the middle of the night.



What advice would you give a child who is being bullied?

Tell your parents.

Tell your teacher.

Tell the Principal.

Tell your brother or sister.



What signs might you see in adults who are being bullied?

They might have a serious face or angry face.

They might cry sometimes.

They might not be able to concentrate.

They might stop talking.

They might stop eating or eat too much.

They might drink too much.

What advice would you give an adult who is being bullied?

Tell a friend.

Tell a brother or sister.

Tell your boss at work.

Tell your parents.





Questions for Discussion

Who gets bullied?

Why does a person get bullied?

What makes a person different?

How would you know a friend was being bullied?



The Bully

What does a bully look like?

Anybody can be a bully.

Bullying happens in many places and to many people.

The bully is the problem, not you.

Why do people bully others?

Bullies are unhappy people.

Bullies don't feel good about themselves.

They feel good when they make others feel bad.

When do bullies attack?

Bullies show off to their friends.

Bullies attack when you are not protected.



Questions for Discussion

Who is the problem, is it you or the bully?

Are bullies happy people?

Are bullies showing off?

Why do bullies act the way they do?



SECTION 2

Our Stories

Privacy Please

(This is a story from a member who is not serving on the National Advisory Council but who shared this story with our team and wanted it included here.)



“ My mother is driving me mad.

She comes into the bathroom when I am in the shower and checks my hair to see if I washed out the shampoo or if I have dried myself properly.

She won't give me my disability allowance.

She says I am no good with money.

I am 19 years old. She has been doing this all my life.

When is it going to stop? ”

How did this end?

I spoke to my Dad.

We decided to put a lock on the bathroom door so that we could have privacy.

I think she got the message.

I am working on the money issue.



Questions for Discussion

Why does his mother treat him like a baby?

Why will she not give him his money?

What can he do to show he is growing up?

Trouble on the Bus

“ I went to a special school and travelled to school on the bus every day.

One day I was sitting on the bus going home when this guy sitting beside me boxed me in the face.

He pushed my face against the window.



I started crying.

I didn't say anything to him.

I felt angry.

I wanted to smash his face but I didn't do it.

I told my teacher but she didn't understand me.

She did nothing about it.

I was mad that she didn't do anything.

He kept on pushing me and putting out his leg when I passed so I would trip over.

He was very dangerous and too strong for me.

I found another place to sit on my own because I wanted peace and quiet.

There was a lot of messing on the bus really.

Another day a girl put shampoo on my head and then kicked my head. I was crying and really mad.

I didn't tell anybody about this.

I just kept it a secret.

I decided to do this myself. ”



Questions for Discussion

How did he feel when he was bullied?

Why did he not tell his parents?

What else could he have done?

What is it like on your school bus?

How did this end?

I don't take the bus to school anymore.

I left school and went to work.

Now I would advise children to tell their parents if somebody is doing this to them.

They will do something about it and the children won't be scared.

If somebody tries to bully me I stand up for myself.

I tell them "you're mean, go away".

This makes me feel good and proud of myself.

Going-out for the Night

“ My sister asked me to stay for the weekend with her.
We were going out to her local night club.



When we got there the bouncer refused to let me in.

He said, “Where is your ID”.

My sister said he is 20 years old.

But the bouncer still said “you are not allowed in the nightclub”.

I felt very hurt and angry.

The bouncer did not ask my sister for ID or anybody else in the line.

I think the bouncer refused to let me in because I had Down syndrome.

This was discrimination.

It is my right to have a drink with my sister in peace. ”

How did this end?

A stranger in the line heard what was going on.

She complained to the manager.

My family rang and spoke to him also.

He said he was sorry.

He asked us to come for dinner in the restaurant.

He promised that it would never happen again to any other person with a disability.

I was really happy that they were sorry.

I was glad they listened to us.

I stood up for my rights on behalf of people with Down syndrome.

I hope people like me have ID cards when they go out at night time.

We should be having a great laugh with our friends and family members.

We don't want any more discrimination and bullying.



Questions for Discussion

Why did the bouncer refuse to let him in?

How did he feel at the time?

What is discrimination?

What is an ID?

Where do you get it?

Do you have an ID?

Blooming Awful

“

I was on my way to one of my classes.

I saw some students coming out of the men's toilet.

I guessed as much that they were probably smoking and mitching class.

I was just minding my own business walking past them.

I didn't mind them coming up to talk to me at first.

I thought they were just being friendly.

Then one of the boys came up behind me with a fire-extinguisher.

He squirted the foam onto my hair and down the back of my school uniform.

I didn't know what to say.

I was in shock and felt damn-right annoyed.

The other lads laughed at me as if it was just a blooming joke.

That really hurt my feelings.

I was ready to cry at that point, but I didn't want to show it in front of the boys in case they might call me a cry-baby.

Instead of saying anything to them, I just ran back to my class with the foam all over me and tears running down my face.

There was a look of horror on the teacher's face when she saw me with the foam all over me.

My friends were looking at me in horror as well.



The teacher took me out of the class and cleaned me down.

Ten minutes later I came back.

I was all cleaned up and grand again.

I explained everything to the tutor and my class-assistant.

Luckily, there were no stains or marks on my uniform.

I felt really relieved and my friends were really nice to me and looked after me. ”



Questions for Discussion

Where did this happen?

What had the bullies been up to?

Should they have been messing with the fire extinguisher?

Why didn't she cry when the boys laughed at her?

What did the teacher do to help her?

How did her friends help her?

How did this end?

The teachers said they would find out who the students were.

The teachers did find the bullies and gave the bullies detention for their rude actions.

Man Behaving Badly

“ When I was nineteen I went to an adult education service. Sometimes, I got bullied for nothing. There was a man who bullied me often. One day I was in the classroom doing work on the computer.



There were five or six people in the room.

The teacher was in a meeting.

This man wanted my chair.

He gave me a headlock and also called me names using very bad language.

He knocked me on the floor.

I felt very frightened.

I felt shocked that someone would bully me.

I told the teacher what happened in the class.

The other students said they heard a loud bang when I fell on the floor.

The two of us were taken to separate rooms to tell our story.



I think the teacher was wrong.

He gave me wrong advice.

He acted as if it was my fault.

He said that when I would not give up my chair that the other student was provoked.

He said I should make peace with the other student and go back to class and forget about it.

I was a bit confused.

I did not want to make trouble for the other student but I wanted it to be fair.

I wanted a bit of action to take place.

It was so wrong to do that kind of thing to me.

I wanted them to understand this. It was unfair to treat me like this. How could I forget about it? ”



Questions for Discussion

What kind of bullying was this?

When did the bullying happen?

What did the teacher do?

Was this fair?

How did the student feel when he was told to make peace?

How did this end?

I told my family what happened.

They believed me and knew something should be done.

My family could see how upset I was.

I was scared going in every day.

My Dad spoke to them and said I needed to be safe in that place.

They made sure I was not with that person again without a teacher present.

Because my Dad spoke to them I was safe from the bully. But I can speak for myself.

They needed to take me seriously.

Name-calling Bully



“ I was in school on my way to my class when a gang of students came up to me.

They were older students whom I did not know.

Three of the girls were friendly with me at first and we all got chatting!

It started off fine but when the lads came around, I was beginning to feel uncomfortable as they were looking down on me with a mean look on their faces.

One of the young men was leaning in on me a bit too close and called me the dirtiest, filthy name I've ever heard of at my face.

He was damn-right rude and called me a Mongolian arsehole.

I don't know where he got the Mongolian idea from, but to call somebody an arsehole is really, really offensive and hurtful.

I felt a lump in my throat.

I was almost crying but I gathered myself up.

I had dropped my bag when he had been so rude to me.
I couldn't bring myself to say anything even if I had wanted to.

I was too afraid that they would call me by another hurtful name.

I just walked away and ignored them.

I walked away and went to sit on the floor outside my English teacher's classroom at the end of the passageway.

I just sat there crying my eyes out.

I remembered how the young man looked down on me with a mean expression on his face.

He had made me feel as if I had done something wrong when I hadn't done anything.

He was over-powering me to make me feel less important.

He spat out those insulting words which made me feel horrible inside.

I cried even more just thinking about it. ”



Questions for Discussion

What kind of bullying was this?

What do you do when someone uses bad language and calls you a dirty name?

Do you call people rude names?

Why do you think the boys were so mean?

How did this end?

My English tutor overheard my crying from the classroom.

He wasn't teaching any class at the time so he took me in to have a talk about it.

I told him what the student actually said.

His jaw dropped open after he had heard what had happened.

He was concerned and understanding of the situation.

He said he would have a meeting with my classroom assistant.

He would arrange for an escort for me when changing classes if this ever happened again.

Luckily, this never happened and I was safe to find my own way to and from classes myself without any extra support.

I hope nobody else will encounter a bully with a foul-mouth like I did as you wouldn't like to be in that position.

That sort of behaviour from any bully is not acceptable to anyone. It is one of the many ways that a person with a disability can be discriminated against.

Bullying can affect people's education and it still happens a lot nowadays.

School Memories

“ There were many times when I was bullied in secondary school.

Boys from other schools had bullied me on the school bus for almost four years.

They called me mean names like retard , threw objects at me and made fun of me.

I was in 6th year getting ready for my Leaving Certificate.

I was studying in the dining hall when suddenly I started to cry.

I was very upset.

I could not take it anymore.

I could not concentrate on the work I needed to study.

I was in a bad mood all the time.

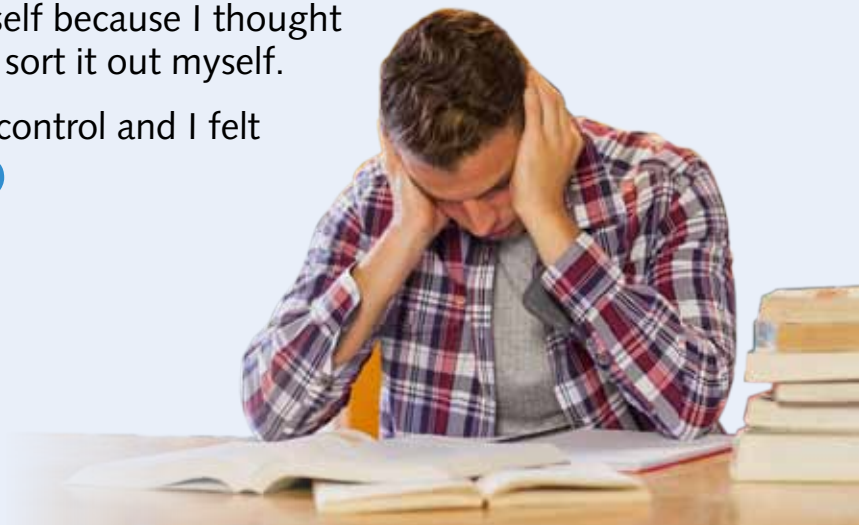
It was like I was having an anger tantrum.

I could not control myself and I did not know what else I could do.

When anybody tried to talk to me about it I would verbally lash out at them.

I kept it to myself because I thought I could try and sort it out myself.

It went out of control and I felt really bad. ”





Questions for Discussion

Why did she feel so bad?

How could she have stopped the bullying?

Who could have helped her?

Why was she angry?

Why was it hard to talk about it?



How did this end?

Eventually I told my sister.

She told me to talk to my parents.

I brought my father into another room and told him exactly what was going on.

I told him I was being bullied.

He told my mother.

They talked about it and then wrote a note to my teachers.

I brought the note to the Principal and reported it.

She contacted the other schools.

She told me the boys would be disciplined.

We had to sit in different seats in different areas on the bus.

Even then I could still hear them saying things behind my back about me.

I went back to my Principal and I told her what the boys were saying about me.

She met the Principals from their schools and came back to me with the news that the boys would get suspended.

The lesson I learned is that I should have told somebody in authority earlier and then this would not have been so bad.

All I Cared about was getting an Education



“

I started in a local primary school at the age of six. My first experience of bullying was on the bus.

I was called all types of hurtful names from “specky four eyes” to “handicapped”.

I was pushed.

On one occasion I had the buttons pulled from my shirt.

I do not know why I was bullied.

Maybe it was because I had Down syndrome.

My mum knew and spoke to the Principal about it.

He talked to the students.

It stopped for a while but it started up again after about two weeks. The name calling and pushing continued until I left primary school.

Then I went to a local secondary school.

The bullying started again.

I was trying to get to know my way around when I was pushed down a flight of stairs by a fifth year student.

I went straight to the Principal and reported the incident.

The student was punished.

I was often pushed as I walked down the hallway.

I never had to do anything to get this special treatment.

The bullying then started in my classroom with one of my classmates constantly calling me unkind names.

He said things to me I could never repeat.

Once in the class he lay on top of me.

I did report the bullying to a teacher and also to the Principal.

They tried to do something about it but I wasn't bullied when they were around.

I always ate my lunch on my own as I did not want to go outside for fear of meeting this person.

Then a teacher noticed this and talked to me.

She was very helpful.

She looked out for me and tried to protect me from the bullies. ”



Questions for Discussion

What kind of bullying was this?

Where did it happen?

When did it happen?

What did the student do to get help?

What else could he have done?

How did this end?

Things improved again for me in my fifth year as I was given a Special Needs Assistant who helped me in class.

I could forget about the bullying and focus on my education.

I did really well in my junior cert and leaving cert.

Now I think the main bully might have been a bit jealous of me as I was very good in school.

I loved school and regretted when the snow came and stopped me going.

I did not care about the bully.

All I cared about was getting an education.

This paid off for me as I now have a good job but the bully continued to get into trouble after he left school.

He often described himself as a friend but he wasn't much of a friend to bully me the way he did.

I don't have to worry about him anymore now.



SECTION 3

Freedom!

What we learned from these stories

Tell someone who can help if you are being bullied.

Know that it is not ok for anybody to call you names.

It is not ok for anybody to pinch, punch or hurt you.

It is not ok for anybody to put you down or make fun of you.

Remember the bully is the problem not you.

You have a right to be safe.

Be confident, walk tall, be proud.

Remember YOU are ok the bully is mean.



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National Leadership Local Support

Citylink Business Park,
Old Nass Road, Dublin 12.

T: 01 4266500 / 1890 374 374

E: info@downsyndrome.ie

www.downsyndrome.ie

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