

Parents Beware
BULLYING CAN BE
ACTIVE OR
PASSIVE



Rude jokes or just laughing or loud– What makes someone a bully?

BY ONYINYE ODIH

Parents Beware

If you have never gotten a report of repeated, targeted and unfriendly behaviour by your child to another child, then maybe your child is not a bully, or are they?

Do you think of a bully as someone who sticks out their foot, deliberately causing a target to stumble and fall or as someone who makes rude jokes about other people? Well, let's meet Jessica.

"School had just become more fun for Jessica, she looked forward to going to school every day. There was so much energy in the room because one child was in the habit of making jokes; unfortunately, the said jokes were targeted at just one child.

No doubt these jokes were hilarious and that was what made school interesting for Jessica besides no one was getting hurt or at least so she thought -I mean no one was sticking out a foot for someone else to trip and fall.

Years later, she is more mature and realises that although there was no physical hurt, the person on the receiving end of the jokes was getting emotionally hurt and worse still she had participated by enjoying the jokes and laughing out loud with all her classmates".

I imagine the shame the child that was the subject of the rude jokes must have suffered; self-esteem issues and crazy thoughts going on in the child's mind.

Is your child a bully?

Is your child actively involved in bullying or like Jessica, passively involved in bullying?

While the active bully is usually the focus, sadly passively aiding the active bully, encourages them and gives them more power to continue the act.

Conversely, if there are no passive bullies then we can say that active bullying would be minimal as there would be nothing to fuel the excitement and satisfaction that a bully gets.

Jessica realised that although she was not the one emotionally abusing the other child she participated by laughing and not speaking up.

What might have happened if there was no intervention or some support for the child that was being bullied?

A while ago there were fewer records of children committing suicide over peer abuse, such as bullying; now we are more aware of children being affected even into their adult life by the actions of bullies.

Children that have been bullied have sometimes reported that other people just "watched, laughed, or did nothing". The negative effect of active bullying can be just as hurtful as seeing other people "watch, laugh or do nothing". Parents please be aware, teach your child not to be the "smart mouth or the swift feet", and help them to recognise when they are subtly encouraging a bully and hurting someone else.

I recommend watching the movie "wonder" (if age appropriate) as this will help as a good conversation starter.

Also, as parents we need to be attentive to things that are not very evident. Just like passive bullying, with activities moving swiftly online, online bullying is also something to keep an eye out for.

The values we instill in young age can actually save a life!

Recommended resources:

Wonder (Movie)

Big boys cry (book) <https://calgary.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S95C1265390>

Be kind (book) <https://calgary.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S95C1183134>

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She has a heart for families and believes that children are beautiful beings that families have a responsibility to nurture.

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