

# BOYS ON BULLYING

Discussion Guide



Mellon has long been committed to the communities it serves. We recognize the importance of supporting organizations and activities that improve quality of life and we believe that strong, ongoing relationships with our communities foster positive partnerships that benefit everyone.

To this end, Mellon is delighted to partner with Family Health Productions in their effort to reach out to young people and their families through *Boys on Bullying* and *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out*®. These powerful programs capture the stories of 10 young people who speak candidly and courageously about the many challenges they confront growing up today.

We believe you will find *Boys on Bullying* and *The Power of Girls: Inside and Out* to be inspirational and extraordinary resources.

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# About *Boys on Bullying*

*Boys on Bullying* profiles five boys who tell how bullying affected their lives, and how support from parents, other caring adults and friends made all the difference in how they coped.

As boys grow up, they can feel vulnerable and alone. We produced this program to let boys know it's O.K. to ask for help when they feel isolated or harassed. We also want to remind parents to help their boys make nurturing connections with their family, friends and community. These connections can help save lives.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanne Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jeanne Blake  
President, Family Health Productions

## Showing *Boys on Bullying*

*Boys on Bullying* is appropriate for groups of young people, for parents in the workplace, or at a community event. It can also be viewed, with this guide, by families at home.

*Note: Boys on Bullying includes copyrighted materials. Broadcast, cablecast, Internet, duplication or commercial use in trainings or presentations is prohibited. For further information contact Family Health Productions at 978.282.9970 or info@abouthealth.com.*

## **abouthealth.com** Family Health Productions Web Site

Read about the challenges young people face growing up. At abouthealth.com, young people and parents talk about a range of topics from bullying and sexual health to body image. Experts offer tips on family communication.

# Profiles

## Ernesto

Ernesto narrates the program. He was teased because of his culture and because he spoke with an accent. Ernesto responded by getting angry. His mentor helped him talk about his emotions and find new ways to deal with his feelings of frustration.

## Judd

Judd was teased by classmates about his weight. At the same time, his parents were getting divorced. Judd responded by withdrawing. Finally, with support from his dad, things slowly turned around for Judd.

## Wilson

Wilson says he was the neighborhood tough guy. Violence was a way of life. Then, his best friend was murdered. Wilson was depressed and withdrawn. Finally, he found out what it meant to have real friends.

## Jim

Jim seemed as though he had everything going for him. No one knew that a group of guys was harassing him. He felt isolated and unhappy. With support from his family he found new friends and is now considered a leader in school.

## Orondé

Orondé moved to a new school where he was rejected and bullied. His search for acceptance led to violence and drugs. With his parents support, Orondé turned his life around.

# Using This Guide

This guide is designed to help lead discussions with young people, parents, and other caregivers. Parents can use this guide to discuss the program with their children. Sets of questions are marked for:



young people



parents/caregivers

➤ Follow these arrows to proceed easily through the discussion.

## Impact on Participants

Participants may feel strong emotions as they hear the stories in the program. Within the audience, there may be someone who has experienced:

- Bullying
- Divorce
- Death of a friend or another loved one
- Rejection by classmates

You may want a counselor, advisor, or other adult support available for anyone seeking counsel.

## Before Viewing the Program

Prepare participants for viewing the program by asking the following questions:

### ➤ Ask participants

- What's the best part of growing up?
- What do you consider the most difficult parts of growing up?
- How does society expect boys to handle emotions such as sadness?
- What does it mean to be strong?

# Judd

## ➤ Introduction

In *Boys on Bullying* five boys talk about how bullying affected their lives. Let's watch Judd's story. His classmates teased him every day.

## View Judd's Story (Approximately 3 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



## ➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

Most people know someone who has been teased or picked on. Let's talk about how Judd felt when he was teased and what helped him cope.

## ➤ Ask young people

- How would you feel if you, like Judd, were teased?
- What are some reasons boys bully or put others down?
- If you saw someone teasing a classmate, what would you do?
- Why is it sometimes hard to defend someone you see being teased?
- What were some reasons Judd began to care less about what others thought?
- If someone can't talk with his parents, who are others he can turn to?
- Ernesto thought he could handle stress by himself. Why is it better to ask for help than to keep thoughts to yourself?

## ➤ Remind young people

Judd learned that people who tease others often are trying to feel more important. Someone who is mature treats others with respect.



### ➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

Judd was fortunate. His father paid attention to him and noticed something was wrong. As Ernesto says, you don't always have to try to fix a problem. Just listening can help. Letting a child know that he isn't alone, that you're paying attention and want to be involved in his life, can make a big difference.

### ➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- If your son was isolating himself from the family, how would you let him know you care about him?
- Describe ways you can show your son you're paying attention to him.
- Ernesto says his mentor taught him that it's O.K. to talk about his emotions. How do you show your son he can tell you how he feels?
- What other adult do you encourage your son to talk with for guidance?
- If you learned that your son was being bullied, what advice would you give him?
- Judd's dad encouraged him to get involved in activities such as sports and volunteer work. How can activities such as these help a child?

### ➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

It's important to remind children that asking for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.

Parents naturally want to fix a problem or make it go away. That's not always possible. What we can do is be with our children and share our knowledge, wisdom, and love. And listen to them.

# Wilson

## ➤ Introduction

Growing up, boys get a lot of messages that they're not supposed to show emotion. Let's watch Wilson's story and hear what happened when he kept his emotions inside.

## View Wilson's Story (Approximately 3 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



## ➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

As we grow up, we have experiences that make us feel sad. If we deal with our emotions in a positive way, it's easier to cope. Let's talk about how Wilson reacted to his friend's murder.

## ➤ Ask young people

- Wilson says that before his friend died, he was the neighborhood tough guy. Why do you think he acted that way?
- How did Wilson react when his friend died?
- Why can it be difficult to show emotions in a positive, open way?
- What happened when Wilson kept his emotions inside?
- What eventually helped Wilson to share his feelings?
- Wilson learned that his strength is in his words, not in his fists. What does this mean?
- What could you say to a friend you suspected was feeling sad?
- If you saw a friend bullying someone, what would you do?

## ➤ Remind young people

Emotions not dealt with in a positive way can build up. Without someone to talk with, you may feel alone. When emotions come out in negative ways, you or another person can get hurt.



### ➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

When a child keeps powerful emotions inside, they can hurt him or someone else. Let's discuss what Wilson learned about the importance of opening up with people he trusted.

### ➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- What would you do if you learned that your son was bullying someone?
- Wilson says that he couldn't talk with his parents. How would you feel if your son couldn't talk to you about something important?
- Young people often say that they can't talk with their parents because their parents don't listen. Why is it difficult sometimes to just listen?
- Keeping communication open with a child requires an ongoing effort. Name ways parents can keep communication open with their children.
- An advisor saw Wilson's anger and knew something was bothering him. Why was it important that someone recognized and responded to Wilson's anger?

### ➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

Growing up, boys get messages that they aren't supposed to cry or show vulnerability. It's important to let boys know that their feelings are real and can be expressed in a positive way. One way to do this is by example, by *modeling* that behavior for a child. When you share your emotions, you create the opportunity to ask your child how he feels.

# Jim

## ▶ Introduction

Everyone knows people who seem to “have it all” sometimes. Let’s watch Jim’s story, and hear how he handled feeling rejected.

## View Jim’s Story (Approximately 6 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



## ▶ Begin discussion for young people by saying

We never really know what someone else is feeling inside. Jim says that no one knew he was unhappy. Let’s talk about how Jim reacted to being rejected and how he stayed true to himself.

## ▶ Ask young people

- Why do you think Jim wanted to be accepted by the group even though they rejected him?
- Why do you think the group picked on Jim?
- Why do you think the boy Jim grabbed stopped picking on him, even though Jim hadn’t hurt him?
- When Jim confronted the boy who was picking on him, what did Jim learn?
- Jim says his inner faith helped him handle his loneliness. How do you think this helped?
- Why do you think Jim wouldn’t change and go along with the group?
- Jim encourages others to get involved in activities such as science club, band, or sports. How can that help?

## ▶ Remind young people

Don’t assume that someone who appears to “have it all” isn’t feeling pain. Growing up is challenging for most young people. That’s why it’s important to be kind and respectful of each other.



➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

Many people thought Jim had everything going for him. They didn't know a group of guys was harassing him. The support Jim got at home helped him stay strong. Let's talk about how supportive relationships help children make good choices.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- Jim says that at one point he cried every day after school. His parents never made him feel ashamed of showing his emotions. Why was that important?
- Jim's mother encouraged him to be true to himself. How can you encourage your child to be true to himself?
- Do you recall ever being made to feel ashamed of your behavior? What impact did that have on you?
- Jim's mom and dad told him it was better to walk away from a fight than get involved in one. They encouraged him to avoid a fight. How can you encourage your child to stand up for himself but avoid violence?

➤ **Remind parents or caregivers**

You can help your son by reassuring him that his feelings are not shameful. Let your children know that the decisions based on being true to themselves are the best decisions.

# Orondé

## ➤ Introduction

Sometimes when people are bullied or teased, they feel hurt but react with anger. Let's see what happened when Orondé was teased by classmates.

## View Orondé's Story (Approximately 5 Minutes)

Stop for discussion when screen momentarily goes black.



## ➤ Begin discussion for young people by saying

Sometimes when young people struggle, they run from their problems. When Orondé was rejected, he got involved in dangerous activities. Let's talk about how Orondé turned his life around.

## ➤ Ask young people

- When Orondé was running the streets, what was he looking for that he didn't get from peers at school?
- Orondé says that he started hanging out with guys who didn't have the "highest reputation." Why did this make him feel worse?
- Why do you think Orondé's mother was supportive, even after he told her many things that would upset her?
- Orondé says that his mom and dad help him set goals. Why are goals important?

## ➤ Remind young people

Alcohol and other drugs affect your ability to make good choices.



➤ **Begin discussion for parents or caregivers by saying**

Orondé says that he wouldn't be alive if his mother and father hadn't stood by him, even when he got involved in activities most parents would find difficult to tolerate. Let's talk about how Orondé turned his life around.

➤ **Ask parents or caregivers**

- When Orondé finally opened up to his mother, she didn't judge him or yell at him. How do you think you'd react to similar information from your son?
- When a parent judges or yells at a child how does that child usually respond?
- Orondé says with his parent's help, he continues to set goals. Why is helping your child to set goals important?

➤ **Remind parents**

Keeping communication open requires ongoing effort and patience. Critical comments can shut down communication.

# Role-Playing

Role-playing is an effective way to help young people and adults talk about important topics.



➤ **Set up a role-play situation for young people. It may include one of the following scenarios:**

- You see someone in your class being teased.
- A friend is feeling angry and doesn't want to talk about it because he doesn't think it's "manly."
- You feel sad but don't know how to tell anyone.
- You are being bullied but are afraid to tell anyone.



➤ **Set up a role-play situation for parents or caregivers to help them practice talking with their young people.**

- You just found out that your son is being teased at school. Practice that first conversation about this situation.
- You just received a phone call from another child's parent informing you that your son has been teasing their child. What do you say to your child?
- Your son seems down and is acting as if something is wrong. He doesn't want to talk about it. You are concerned. How do you approach him? What do you want to communicate?
- Your son is acting withdrawn. What activities can you plan together to show him you care about him and want to spend time with him?

# Activities

Writing and talking about personal experiences similar to those heard in the program is another way to reinforce positive messages.



➤ **Ask young people to write about a challenge they faced growing up. Topics may include:**

- What I consider the most difficult part of growing up. How I handled it.
- How I showed courage when pressured by peers.
- A time my parents supported me.
- How a volunteer or community activity helps me.



➤ **Ask parents or caregivers to share how they have successfully reached out to their young people. Topics may include:**

- How I helped my son open up about his emotions.
- How I listened to my son without showing judgement.
- How our family finds time to spend together.

## Family Health Productions

Family Health Productions produces programs, guides, training materials, and abouthealth.com to help families talk about the challenges young people face growing up.

Jeanne Blake is the producer of *Boys on Bullying* and the president of Family Health Productions. She is a television medical reporter and an affiliated faculty member of the Division on Addictions at Harvard Medical School. Blake speaks to parents at corporations, at health care organizations, and at schools, and consults nationally on family communication. She is also the president of Blake Works, Inc. and the author of the *Words Can Work™* series of books for parents.

### **abouthealth.com Family Health Productions Web Site**

Read about the challenges young people face growing up. At abouthealth.com, young people and parents talk about a range of topics from bullying and sexual health to body image. Experts offer tips on family communication.

## Also from Family Health Productions

### ***Alcohol: True Stories* hosted by Matt Damon**

Four young people tell how alcohol affected their lives. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people or parents. 20 minutes.

*Recommended for grades 5 & up, parents and other caregivers* 

### ***In Our Own Words®: Teens and AIDS***

Five young people tell about being infected with HIV as teens through unprotected sexual intercourse. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people. 20 minutes.

Available in Spanish.

*Recommended for grades 6 & up* 

### ***The Power of Girls: Inside and Out®***

Five girls talk about the challenges they faced growing up and how supportive relationships with friends, family, and community helped. Includes guide for leading discussions with young people or parents. 20 minutes.

*Recommended for grades 6 & up, parents and other caregivers* 

### ***Raising Healthy Kids®: Families Talk About Sexual Health***

Gives parents information and skills for talking with kids about sexual health. Includes discussion guides.

Program #1 *For parents of young children* Addresses setting limits, labeling body parts, how babies are made, self-touch, appropriate/inappropriate touch and more. 20 minutes.

Program #2 *For parents of preadolescents and adolescents* Addresses sharing values, keeping communication open, postponing sexual intercourse, avoiding absolutes, building strong relationships, and more. 20 minutes.

*Recommended for parents and other caregivers* 

### **To place an order or to ask about other resources contact:**

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