

Lisa E. Cohen, MSW, LSWAIC

Middle School Lesson Guide • For Grades 5-8



Natasha as a middle-schooler.

For too long, we have failed to recognize that youth who bully others are in need of intervention just as much as their targets, and until we understand the motives undergirding perpetrators' actions, the efficacy of our interventions will always be limited. *The Confessions of a Social Bully* program refreshingly and effectively addresses this gap. Its message will resonate with middle school youth.

— *Dorothy L. Espelage, PhD*

*William C. Friday Distinguished Professor  
of Education, University of North Carolina  
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# Confessions of a Social Bully

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Middle School Lesson Guide  
Grades 5-8

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## **CONFESSIONS OF A SOCIAL BULLY CAST**

Natasha as herself

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There are countless reasons why some students engage in bullying behaviors, most of which have nothing to do with those they target.

# Introduction

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## About the Program

*Confessions of a Social Bully* is the first film dedicated to humanizing a perpetrator of school bullying. Most films about bullying examine the issue from the perspective of the target and/or the bystander. As a society, we tend to show more compassion for the targets of bullying, but all students involved in this complicated dynamic need support and guidance from the adults in their lives. Targets need our compassion and advocacy for being the focus of unwanted and unnecessary aggression. Bystanders need our encouragement because they are key to creating an environment of care and respect. And perpetrators need our attention because their actions often indicate deeper problems that have little to do with those they target.

To help students develop a broader, more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of bullying, this Lesson Guide asks students to consider the experiences of everyone caught in the bullying cycle, including the target, the bystander, and the perpetrator. Discussion questions and activities are intended to encourage students to build better relationship skills through self-awareness, empathy, and compassion. When we raise awareness of what motivates our actions, we learn to analyze our motives more objectively and become more open to changing negative behaviors.

If your school has a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum in place, the *Confessions of a Social Bully* film and Lesson Guide will be meaningful additions to what your students are currently learning. If your school does not have an established SEL program, or has not included SEL skill-building practice into its curriculum, the *Confessions of a Social Bully* program will provide an excellent opportunity for students to develop fundamental interpersonal and social-awareness skills that will benefit them throughout middle school and for the rest of their lives.

In addition to supporting your students as they examine their motivations and develop curiosity about what influences others' behavior, it is important to reflect upon how your school's broader social environment affects student responses to bullying. Sample considerations:

- **What action does your school take to prevent aggression and promote pro-social behavior?**
- **What efforts do teachers make to promote the emotional well-being of their students?**
- **Do students feel comfortable reporting bullying incidents to teachers and other staff members?**
- **What types of disciplinary action does your school take when students engage in bullying, aggression, or violence?**

At schools in which teachers and staff members demonstrate a commitment to preventing bullying and establishing supportive, caring relationships with their students, students report fewer incidents of bullying and are more likely to seek help when bullying occurs.<sup>1</sup> As you watch the film and guide students through the exercises, consider the role your school's social culture plays in the experiences of students involved in dynamics similar to those between Natasha and Jane, or for students who may be involved in more direct forms of aggression. Just as you ask your students to examine their relationships with one another, ask yourself how you can help students continue building their SEL skills beyond these lessons. How can you become a trusted resource for students both in and outside the classroom?

I hope this program inspires students' curiosity and reflection as they analyze the film, themselves, and your school's social environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Eliot et al.

## About the Film

### Synopsis

Natasha and Jane became fast friends before sixth grade started, but things quickly changed within the first few weeks of school. Jane proved to be a good student and a talented actor, the only sixth-grader to earn a major role in the school play. Natasha grew intensely jealous of Jane and increasingly insecure about her own abilities.

The only area in which Natasha was more successful than Jane was in her social savvy. As Natasha climbed the social ladder, she decided to use her power against Jane in an effort to boost her own self-esteem. By the middle of sixth grade, Natasha had embarked upon a campaign to punish Jane socially

while still basking in her own popularity. Natasha's powerful position in the popular group enabled her to control Jane's status as class outcast for most of her time in middle school.

Things changed at the end of eighth grade, when Jane bravely confronted her entire cohort about their cruelty, forcing Natasha to begin a years-long journey of self-examination. Along the way, Natasha grew to understand her actions and the motivations behind them, and she discovered the true meaning of compassion.

### Running Time

15:30



Natasha used her social power to exclude Jane.



## Director's Statement

*Confessions of a Social Bully* is the first film about bullying told solely from the perspective of the perpetrator. Most media portray kids who engage in bullying behaviors as cruel, one-dimensional monsters. But kids who bully bring a complex range of personal, family, and social experiences to every social encounter, and those experiences contribute to the ways in which they behave toward others.

I made *Confessions of a Social Bully* to bring the perpetrator's voice into the public discussion on bullying. Without this "missing voice," how can we have truly meaningful discussions about the dynamics of bullying, and especially about bullying prevention?

Understanding what causes some kids to bully others is essential to our ability to recognize the signs of potential or building aggression so that we can intervene in bullying incidents armed with knowledge and empathy for all parties involved. Only when we learn to address the needs of all kids in the bullying cycle will we be able to provide effective and comprehensive bullying-prevention efforts.

I have played every role in the bullying cycle—the target, the bystander, and for one regrettable summer between Grades 7 and 8, I joined a group of girls in bullying a peer. When I first envisioned this film, I had forgotten the details of that summer. But as soon as I began my research, memories of what I had done came flooding back, and I felt deeply ashamed of my role in harming a girl who did not deserve to be treated so cruelly. I realized that with some help from a perceptive adult, I might have learned to reflect on the circumstances that fed my motivation to bully, and perhaps this awareness would have empowered me to walk away from my co-perpetrators—or better yet—to influence them to stop the bullying along with me.

But that did not happen, and the shame of those memories are part of what prompted me to create a film meant to speak directly to kids who have bullied or are contemplating bullying others, in order to encourage them to evaluate the reasons behind their actions.



Photo: Kim Preston

There have been two unexpected outcomes of making *Confessions*. The first is that the film has played to more young audience members than I had ever imagined, reaching students in film festivals and classrooms around the world. After a two-year festival run, *Confessions* has enjoyed repeat screenings throughout the US, in Greece, and in classrooms all across India.

The second unexpected outcome of making *Confessions* is that I became so inspired by the prospect of bringing its message to young audiences that I decided to deepen my knowledge about bullying, child development, and psychology. The year I completed the film, I enrolled in the University of Washington School of Social Work master's program, where I focused my studies on school bullying and SEL programing. After earning my MSW, I began using *Confessions* and my newly acquired skills in Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) to conduct anti-bullying workshops in middle schools. I am pleased to have found a way to combine my love of filmmaking and my passion for SEL in creating this program!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'JSD' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

### **With Special Thanks to Natasha**

When I met Natasha, she was 20 years old and had had several years to reflect on her time in middle school. I was immediately impressed by her willingness to take an honest look at why she had bullied Jane for nearly three years. I wanted our film to shed light on Natasha's insecurities so that audiences would see her as an adolescent who was trying to make sense of her life and give herself what she needed emotionally, but who lacked the proper tools to do so in a healthier and more responsible way. Fortunately, both for me as the filmmaker, and for the film's viewers, Natasha agreed.

It is not easy to admit to having purposely hurt another person. It is even harder to go in front of a camera and talk about how and why you did so. But Natasha had done enough soul searching to know that telling her story could help others in similar situations. To date, over 10,000 audience members around the world have seen *Confessions of a Social Bully*, and I hope that with the addition of this Lesson Guide, countless more will be inspired by Natasha to examine their own social environments and the roles they play in them. Thank you, Natasha, for your candor, vulnerability, and bravery!



By the time she was 20, Natasha had spent years reflecting on her middle school experience.

# Information About Bullying

## Definitions

*Bullying* is unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious lasting problems.<sup>2</sup>

Three defining characteristics of bullying are:

- **Intention:** one party chooses to target another
- **Imbalance of power:** one party has more physical or social power than another
- **Repeated over time:** the behavior persists, with the more powerful party always in the role of the aggressor

*Conflict* is a disagreement, an argument, or a struggle between opposing parties. It is common for students to engage in conflict. Most of the time, conflicts between students can be resolved by the students coming to mutual understanding on their own or with the help of an intermediary (student or adult) in a process known as *relationship repair* or *restorative conversation*.

The chart below illustrates important distinctions between *bullying* and *conflict*.

	BULLYING	CONFLICT
INTENTION	one-sided intent to harm on the part of the aggressor	intention focuses on emphasizing one's agenda rather than harming one another
POWER	an imbalance of power (social and/or physical), with the aggressor holding more power than the target	both parties have equal social or physical power
FREQUENCY	behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time	can happen one time or more than once

## Roles People Play in the Bullying Cycle

Bullying roles include:

- **Perpetrator:** a person who engages in bullying behaviors
- **Target:** a person toward whom bullying behaviors are directed
- **Bystander:** a person who witnesses bullying and does not stand up to stop it
- **Upstander:** a person who witnesses bullying and does something to stop it, either in the moment or after a bullying incident has occurred

## Categories of Bullying

The four primary categories of bullying are:

- **Physical:** hurting a person's body or possessions
- **Verbal:** saying cruel things directly to a person
- **Cyber:** using any digital means to harm a person (social media, texting, emailing)
- **Social/relational aggression:** harming a person's reputation or relationships with others

<sup>2</sup> StopBullying.gov

## BULLYING-FACTS & STATISTICS

Kids who bully fall into two categories:<sup>3</sup>

- Well connected, have social power, are overly concerned about popularity.
- Socially isolated, may be depressed or anxious, have low self-esteem, are less involved in school.

Involvement in bullying peaks in middle school.<sup>5</sup>

Only 20% of school bullying incidents are reported.<sup>6</sup>

Risk factors for bullying perpetration:<sup>9</sup>

easily frustrated view aggressive think violence difficulty badly of in a following others positive rules less parental involvement have friends who bully issues at home others

Risk factors for bullying victimization:<sup>4</sup>

"different"  
low self-esteem  
depressed anxious  
uncool  
less weak  
popular

Approximately 20% of students ages 12-18 nationwide report being bullied at school.<sup>7</sup>

LGBTQ youth are at increased risk of being bullied.<sup>8</sup>

Students who perceive teachers and school staff as supportive are more likely to seek help for bullying.<sup>10</sup>

## Alignment to SEL Educational Standards

The *Confessions of a Social Bully* Lesson Guide aligns to the CASEL Core Competencies.

### Definition of SEL

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), social emotional learning (SEL) is “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”<sup>11</sup>

The past two decades have seen a steady increase in the number of SEL curricula created for K–12 students. Studies have shown that consistent SEL integration into a school’s curriculum results in increases in student academic performance, emotional well-being, and social behavior; and decreases in aggressive behavior.<sup>12</sup>

For more information on SEL, please see **Recommended Resources** on page 31.

### The CASEL Core Competencies (or “The CASEL 5”)<sup>13</sup>

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”
- **Self-Management:** The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations—effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- **Social Awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship Skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

### State-Specific SEL Guidelines

To access the specific SEL guidelines for your state, visit CASEL’s “State Scan” page:

<https://casel.org/state-scan-scorecard-project-2>

<sup>3</sup> StopBullying.gov, “Who Is at Risk”

<sup>4</sup> StopBullying.gov, “Who Is at Risk”

<sup>5</sup> Espelage, Van Ryzin, and Holt

<sup>6</sup> StopBullying.gov, “Warning Signs for Bullying”

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Education

<sup>8</sup> StopBullying.gov, “LGBTQ Youth”

<sup>9</sup> StopBullying.gov, “Who Is at Risk”

<sup>10</sup> Espelage, Polanin, and Low

<sup>11</sup> Casel.org

<sup>12</sup> Casel.org

<sup>13</sup> Casel.org

# Lesson Guide

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## Core Lessons

The following core lessons were created to help students get the most out of *Confessions of a Social Bully* by exploring key issues in the film and encouraging them to draw parallels between the film and their own experiences.



Beneath the facade of popularity, Natasha struggled with feelings of insecurity.

**Lesson 1** includes a definition and four main categories of *bullying*. Whether this information is new to students or a review of what they have previously learned, working through the lesson's content will help them identify important themes from the film. Students will then engage in self-reflection, participate in whole-class or small-group discussions, and reflect on what they have learned.

**Lesson 2** helps students relate issues raised in the film to their own lives by teaching them to recognize the motivations behind their actions and the actions of others. This lesson raises self-awareness and builds empathy skills, both of which help students feel more grounded, better prepared to engage in healthy relationships, and better able to manage conflict when it arises.<sup>14</sup>

**Extended Learning** is an optional exercise students can engage in after completing Lessons 1 and 2 to deepen their understanding of how thoughts and feelings affect peoples' behavior.

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<sup>14</sup> Borba, UnSelfie

# Understanding the Bullying Cycle from All Perspectives

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will consider the root causes of Natasha's actions by analyzing the reasons behind her motivations for bullying Jane. They will trace Natasha's emotional growth from attempting to serve her own needs through bullying to her understanding of what it means to be compassionate.

## SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- self-awareness
- self-management
- social awareness



It took years for Natasha to truly understand the effect she had had on Jane.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

1. Pass out the *Bullying Definition, Roles, and Categories* sheet, Handout A (see page 24).
2. Review the definition of *bullying* and how it differs from *conflict*.

First, ask students what they know about bullying. Then develop a class definition of *bullying*, being sure to include the following:

- Unwanted aggressive behavior
- Intention: one person/group chooses to target another
- Imbalance of power: one party has more physical or social power than the other
- Repeated over time: the behavior persists, with the more powerful party always in the role of the aggressor

Now compare *bullying* with *conflict*, which occurs when people disagree, argue, or struggle but without intent to harm, an imbalance of power, or repeated aggression.

Have students privately reflect on a time when they think they have experienced bullying. Then ask them to reconsider whether it was bullying or conflict.

3. Review the roles people play in the bullying cycle.

Ask students to privately reflect on which roles, if any, they may have played in a bullying incident.

4. Review the four main categories of bullying.

Prior to watching the video, ask students to privately reflect on whether they have experienced any of those bullying types.

5. Watch *Confessions of a Social Bully*.

Explain to students that they will be watching a film about bullying and prompt them to pay attention to how each person feels throughout the film.

Show the film.

## Understanding the Bullying Cycle from All Perspectives

### 6. Discuss key issues in the film.

This can be done as a class, in small groups, or in pairs. If time allows, replay the scenes referenced.

#### ■ Self-Esteem

Natasha states that although she appeared happy throughout middle school, she was struggling beneath the surface.

- What are some examples of her feelings about herself?
- What did Natasha hope to gain from bullying Jane?

#### ■ 05:44–06:17 Always Being Mean ■◀

Natasha discusses that she and her friends were “always” being mean to Jane but that they tried to use subtle methods so the adults didn’t notice.

- What is *social bullying* or *relational aggression*?
- What are some examples of how Natasha used relational aggression against Jane?
- What are some other examples of relational aggression?

#### ■ 06:55–07:19 Me, Me, Me ■◀

Natasha states that she did not consider how the bullying was affecting Jane. All she cared about was what it was doing for her.

- What need did Natasha think bullying Jane would fulfill?
- How do you think Natasha felt after a bullying incident?
- Do you think her feelings were different depending on whether she was alone or with one or more friends? Why or why not?
- What do you think Natasha could have done to feel better about herself without resorting to bullying Jane?

#### ■ 03:58–04:43 Car and Pedestal ■◀

Natasha’s father praises Jane and tries to persuade Natasha to befriend her. Natasha thinks her father puts Jane on a pedestal, which makes Natasha feel angry and jealous.

- What did Natasha need from her father?
- How could she have communicated her feelings about herself, Jane, and the whole situation to him?

#### ■ 12:48–14:15 Compassion ■◀

*Compassion* is kindness and caring for a person who is struggling or in distress. Natasha says she did not know how to be compassionate toward others because she did not know how to be compassionate toward herself.

- What does Natasha mean when she talks about the difference between being compassionate toward yourself and feeling sorry for yourself?

#### ■ What does *compassion* mean to you?

Share examples of acts of compassion you have engaged in or witnessed.

- What are some examples of having compassion for yourself?

### 7. Extend the discussion.

If time allows, refer to the theme-based discussion questions in the Extension Activities section (pages 14–23).

### 8. Reflect and connect.

Have students write a short reflection or draw a picture about what they have learned from this lesson and how they might relate to Natasha, Jane, or the students who participated in or witnessed what was going on between them.

Ask students to consider the following:

- Have you experienced some of the feelings Natasha felt in middle school?
- Have you experienced some of the things Jane experienced in the film?
- Have you participated in, or witnessed, any incidents similar to the ones in the film? For example, in the lunchroom? In class? In after-school activities?



# Unpacking Our Actions with the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will explore the link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—both for Natasha and for themselves.

## SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- self-awareness
- social awareness

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based psychotherapeutic technique used by mental health professionals to treat a wide range of mental health conditions. CBT focuses on changing the negative or unhelpful thoughts that influence destructive behavior by increasing self-awareness and insight into how such thoughts produce particular feelings and lead to certain actions. While teachers are not therapists, they may unknowingly use many CBT techniques in their classrooms.



Jane asks Natasha for permission to buy the same shoes Natasha has.

Lesson 2 is based on CBT's fundamental theory that our behavior is a reaction to our thoughts and feelings. That is, in any given situation, our thoughts create feelings, which cause us to act in certain ways.

This lesson teaches students how to recognize the connection between their thoughts, feelings and behavior to help them develop insight into their motivations and the motivations of others. By exploring this connection, students build greater self-awareness and empathy for others.

**Note:** *This unit does NOT claim to be a comprehensive lesson on CBT and should NOT be considered as such. The intention here is simply to help students begin to recognize the relationship between their thoughts, feelings, and behavior to promote curiosity about the motivations behind their actions and the actions of others. For more information about CBT, please refer to the Bibliography on page 33.*

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

### 1. Teach the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle.

Explain to students that in any given situation, we have thoughts and feelings about the situation that influence us to act in certain ways.

That is, before we say or do something, we have a thought about it. That thought produces a feeling, and then we say or do something based on that feeling. The process goes like this:

*We are in a situation (conversation in the hallway, classroom, lunchroom, playground).*

1. *We think something about the situation.*
2. *Our thought produces a feeling.*
3. *This feeling causes us to act (to say or do something).*

## Unpacking Our Actions with the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle

Help students understand that we may not be aware of what we are thinking and feeling in the moment, but that later, with some self-reflection, we can start to become aware of what was going on inside of us before we acted.

Discuss hypothetical examples or a particular thought and feeling that could lead to a bullying incident.

### 2. Apply the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle to the film. Use Handout B (see pages 25–26).

Replay this scene:

#### ■ 01:57–02:34 Strike 2: New Shoes ■

Natasha is proud of her new shoes and becomes annoyed when Jane wants to buy the same ones.

Fill out the New Shoes Triangle as a class.

**Helpful hint:** *It is often easier to remember the behavior (what a person said or did) before you remember the thought and feeling that led to that behavior. Encourage students to work backward on the triangle, filling in the behavior first, then the thought and feeling that preceded it.*

Discuss the New Shoes Triangle. Then replay the following scene.

#### ■ 05:05–05:43 BOOM ■

Natasha talks about how jealous she was of Jane and that the solution to her jealousy was to “take [Jane] down.”

Have students fill out the BOOM Triangle on their own. Remind them that it is OK to fill it out in reverse order—filling in the behavior first and working backward—since it may be easier to remember that way. The important thing is that they recognize the link between their thoughts, feelings, and behavior and how their thoughts and feelings influenced their behavior.

Discuss the BOOM Triangle as a class, in small groups, or in pairs.

### 3. Ask students to apply the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle to their own lives.

Have students fill out the triangles based on experiences they have had.

#### ■ Kind Behavior Triangle

Think of a time when you did something nice for someone. Imagine yourself in that situation again. What were you thinking just before you took action? What were you feeling just before you took action? Reflect on how your thoughts, feelings, and behavior were related. Why did you do what you did?

#### ■ Unkind Behavior Triangle

Think of a time when you did something unkind to someone. Imagine yourself in that situation again. What were you thinking just before you took action? What were you feeling just before you took action? Why do you think your thought led to your feeling, which then led to your action?

**Note:** *If students do not remember what they were thinking and feeling, that is OK. Have them imagine what they might have been thinking and feeling before they acted. The important thing is to emphasize the link between our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Learning to recognize this link helps students increase self-awareness and build empathy skills.*

### 4. Share and reflect.

First, ask students to choose one of their personal triangles to share with a partner, in small groups, or with the class.

Then have students write a short (1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection on what they learned about how *thoughts*, *feelings*, and *behavior* are related.

## EXTENDED LEARNING

# Diary Exercise (Optional)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will deepen their learning by using the Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangle to write a diary entry from the perspective of a student who intentionally causes harm to a fellow classmate.

### SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- self-awareness
- social awareness

### INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

#### 1. Complete a writing preparation exercise using Handout C (see page 27).

Have students create a Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior triangle for a fictional character who is intentionally mean to a classmate.

Instruct students to use the space below the triangle and on the back of the handout to write as many details as possible about their character's life (family, school, friends,

interests) and how those things might have contributed to the way they approached the situation.

#### 2. Write the Diary Entry.

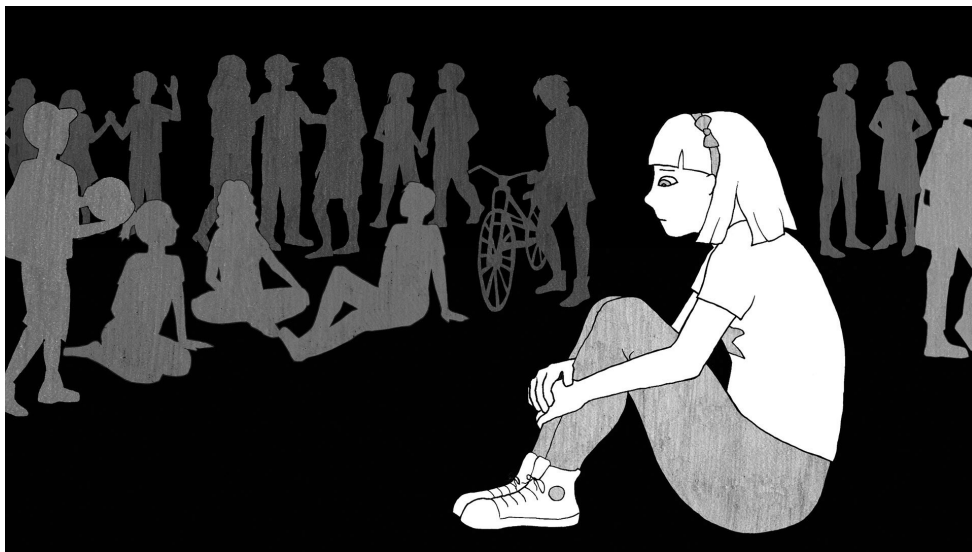
Have students use the triangle and notes they created to write their character's diary entry.

Students should include as much detail as possible about what their character was thinking and feeling before they acted, and what they thought hurting someone else would do for them.

A student's character should reflect on how their actions made them feel, both during the incident and afterward. Encourage students to be honest about their character's feelings and motivations; if hurting someone made them feel good, relieved, or powerful, they should explain why.

#### 3. Share and reflect.

Have students share their diary entries in small groups or with the whole class. Conduct a brief Q&A between each reading.



Natasha was neither aware of how her thoughts and feelings about *herself* led her to bully Jane, nor did she consider how her actions affected Jane's self-esteem.

## Extension Activities

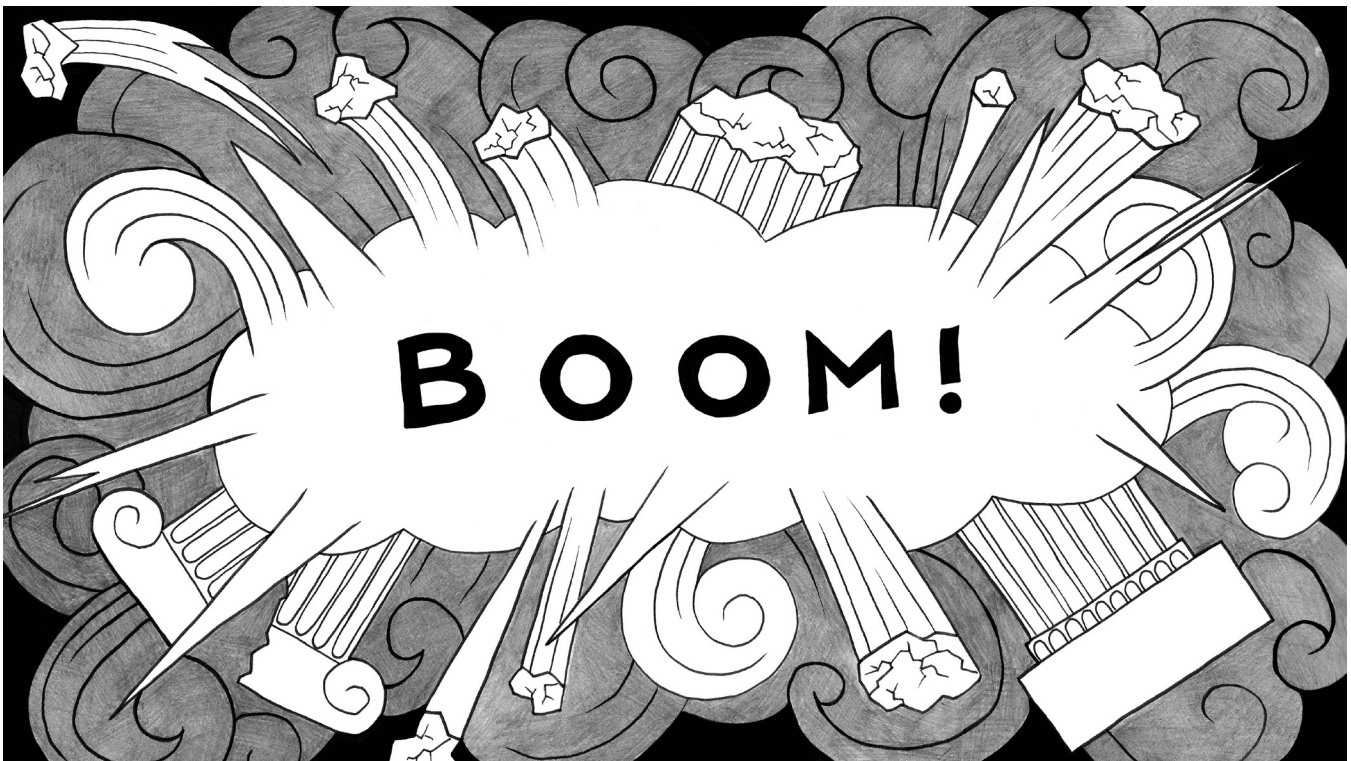
This section examines four common themes in bullying relationships, as explored in the film:

- **Social Power**
- **Standing Up**
- **Differences and Similarities**
- **Assumptions—Stories We Tell Ourselves**

Each theme focuses on one or more of the role(s) people play in the bullying cycle. This helps students build awareness of what each person may be experiencing during a bullying incident, and it encourages them to consider factors that may contribute to their actions.

Choose one or more theme(s) to delve into with your class. After reviewing the background information and how the theme shows up in the film, use the questions to start your discussion. To deepen your students' learning, engage them in the additional theme-based activities provided.

If you are not able to explore the themed lessons in full, you can pick and choose the parts that fit into your class period. Or you can select discussion questions from any theme to expand Core Lesson 1 or use at another convenient time.



When students misuse their social power, make false assumptions about others, or do not stand up for those being targeted, their school's social environment suffers.

# Social Power

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will review what social power is, how it is used, and the important role it plays in the dynamics of bullying relationships.

## SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- self-awareness
- self-management
- social awareness
- relationship skills
- responsible decision-making

## BACKGROUND

The term *social power* refers to a person's capacity to influence their peers, and potentially, the broader social environment. Students with social power tend to be popular or have friends in popular groups. They can be quiet or outgoing, and they come from all backgrounds.

Natasha had a lot of social power within her middle school cohort. She was popular, had lots of friends, and knew how to influence her peers. Jane, on the other hand, had virtually no social power. With few friends and little influence on her peers, Jane was an easy target for Natasha.

Natasha used her social power against Jane through *relational aggression*. *Relational aggression*, or *social bullying*, is the intent to harm someone by damaging their relationships with others. It includes ignoring, spreading rumors, excluding, and withholding friendship. It is the most difficult type of bullying to detect; for this reason, it is sometimes called *silent bullying*.

Students who engage in relational aggression do so for a variety of reasons: to prevent others from gaining popularity, which they may find threatening; to meet a need that is not being met in a healthier or more appropriate manner; or, in Natasha's case, out of jealousy and a desire to feel competent in

areas in which she lacked confidence. Some students misuse their social power simply to experiment with what it feels like to have control over another person. Whatever the reason, using social power against someone can result in emotional injury—not just in the moment, but for days, weeks, and even years into the future.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

### 1. Discuss the theme of social power in the film and ask students to reflect on their experiences with social power.

Replay the following scene.

#### ■ 02:36–03:38 Strike 3: School Play ■

Natasha expects to land a big part in the school play, but Jane gets the biggest role in their grade. Natasha is jealous and angry. She tells her friends, and they all decide to turn against Jane. Natasha says, “That was just, sort of, it.”

Ask students these questions about social power:

- Why do you think Natasha's friends went along with Natasha in deciding they “didn't like” Jane?
- What does Natasha mean when she says, “That was just, sort of, it.”?
- Did Jane do anything to deserve being bullied by Natasha and her friends?
- What could Natasha's friends have said or done to persuade Natasha that she should not take out her jealousy on Jane?
- What is *social power*?
- Where does social power occur?
- How did Natasha use her social power against Jane?
- Why did Natasha use her social power against Jane?
- What did Natasha gain from bullying Jane? What need was she trying to meet?
- How can someone use their social power for good?
- Have you ever used your social power, or witnessed someone else using their social power, to help someone? How?

## Social Power

- **Have you ever used your social power to harm someone? What did you do and why? How did you feel (physically, emotionally) about your actions? Did your behavior make you feel good? Bad? Both? Explain.**
- **Have you ever witnessed someone else using their social power to harm someone? What did they do and why do you think they did it? How do you think it made them feel? Good? Bad? Both? Explain.**

### 2. Choose any or all of the following activities for deeper learning.

#### ■ Comic Strip

Have students draw a comic strip about a student who intentionally uses their social power against another student during recess. Use Handout D (see page 28).

- **Ask students these questions to help them prepare their work:**
- **What does the main character say and do? Why?**
- **Who is the target?**
- **Who are the other characters? What do they do?**

Have students share their work in small groups or with the whole class.

#### ■ Fictional Story

Have students write a story about a student who misuses their social power. Students can use the comic strip they made in the previous exercise as an outline.

If you do *not* assign the comic strip exercise first, ask students to consider the following questions:

- **What will the main character do and why?**
- **Who will they choose to target and why?**
- **What will their actions give them that they think they need?**
- **How will their actions make them feel?**
- **What consequences will they experience?**
- **How will they react to those consequences?**

#### ■ Role-Play

In small groups, have students create skits in which one character uses their social power against another.

Have each group perform its skit for the class. After each performance, ask students to identify each character's role (perpetrator, target, bystander, upstander) and possible reasons for their actions.

#### ■ Personal Essay

Have students write an essay about a time when they misused their social power.

Ask students to consider the following questions:

- **What did you do and why?**
- **What did your actions give you that you needed?**
- **How did your actions make you feel?**
- **What are some ways in which you could have fulfilled that need differently or in a way that did not hurt someone else?**

#### ■ Reflection

Have students write a short (1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection about what they have learned about social power, how and why it gets misused, and some ways in which it can be used for good.



Natasha gossiped about Jane to influence others and maintain her superior social status.

# Standing Up

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will consider reasons why bystanders may be reluctant to stand up to a bullying incident and brainstorm effective ways a bystander can help a target.

## SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- self-awareness
- self-management
- social awareness
- relationship skills
- responsible decision-making

## BACKGROUND

Bystanders to bullying incidents can play different roles, most of which encourage the bullying to continue. Some bystanders join in a bullying incident initiated by another student or group of students. Others provide reinforcement by laughing at or cheering on bullying incidents. Often, bystanders watch the bullying incident and do not say or do anything to support either side, which conveys tolerance without the threat of consequences.

The bystanders to Natasha's bullying of Jane played every role—they joined in, supported, or simply watched and remained silent. Perhaps they joined in to feed their own insecurities. Perhaps they reacted supportively because they wanted to be accepted by a popular girl. Or perhaps they kept quiet because they were afraid of facing repercussions if they stood up to Natasha. Whatever the reason, the bystanders in Natasha and Jane's story made it possible for Natasha to continue bullying Jane for almost three years.

Students who step in to defend or comfort a target are sometimes called *upstanders*. Upstanders can play a key role in reshaping an environment that may be permissive to bullying into one that does not allow bullying to occur unchallenged.

By simultaneously considering the wide range of experiences that can influence people to engage in bullying and exploring how to safely come to the aid of someone who is being targeted, students develop empathy for all parties involved in any given bullying incident.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

### 1. Discuss the experiences of the bystanders in the film and ask students to reflect on their experiences with witnessing bullying.

Replay the following scene.

#### ■ 06:18–06:43 Habit ■

Natasha talks about how she and her friends bullied Jane so much that it became a daily habit.

Ask students these questions about standing up:

- **What could have helped Natasha and her friends break their habit of gossiping about Jane?**
- **What are some of the reasons why Natasha's friends and classmates joined Natasha in bullying Jane?**
- **What feelings do you think the bystanders experienced about the bullying?**
- **What do you think the bystanders could have done to intervene, either during a bullying incident or afterward? How could the bystanders have encouraged Natasha to stop bullying Jane?**
- **What are some ways in which the bystanders could have supported Jane, either during a bullying incident or afterward?**
- **Have you ever witnessed a bullying incident and joined in? Have you supported the bullying by laughing or cheering? Or watched and remained silent? What are some ways in which you could have stood up, either in the moment or after the incident?**
- **What are some reasons why it can be difficult to intervene in a bullying incident, either in the moment or after it is over?**

## Standing Up

- **In what ways do you think a school environment can influence whether a student stands up to bullying? Do you feel supported by the adults (teachers, staff, administrators) in your school? Would you feel comfortable reporting a bullying incident?**
- **What are some things you learned from the movie and our discussion that you will keep in mind the next time you witness a bullying incident, taking both the perpetrator's and target's perspectives into consideration?**

### 2. Choose any or all of the following activities for deeper learning.

#### ■ Word Cloud or Cut-Paper Collage

Have students create a digital word cloud or a cut-paper collage representing some ways in which Natasha's friends could have recognized that her behavior toward Jane stemmed from her own insecurities.

Ask students to include ideas for disrupting Natasha's bullying behavior and ways to help her address her feelings without hurting Jane.

#### ■ Fictional Story

Have students write a story about a student who witnesses a bullying incident or the ongoing bullying of a peer over time. They can use their word cloud or cut-paper collage as a guide. Ask:

- **What happens?**
- **How does the perpetrator feel about themselves and why?**
- **How does the target feel about themselves and why?**
- **Does the bystander join the perpetrator, support the bullying by laughing or cheering, watch and remain silent, or stand up to help?**

Encourage students to consider what the perpetrator might have been thinking and feeling just before the bullying incident.

- **What might have been happening in other areas of their life that were unrelated to the incident but that may have**

**contributed to their desire to act out against the person they targeted?**

- **What might they have experienced earlier that day related to other ongoing issues?**

#### ■ Role-Play

Have students work in small groups to create skits in which one student stands up for another student who is being targeted by bullying.

Have each group perform its skit for the class.

After each performance, ask students to identify each character's role (perpetrator, target, bystander, upstander) and list some possible reasons for their actions.

#### ■ Personal Essay

Have students write an essay about a time when they witnessed a bullying incident. Ask:

- **What did you do and why?**
- **How did you feel when you were witnessing the incident?**
- **Did you join in?**
- **Did you support the bullying by laughing, cheering, or encouraging in some other way?**
- **Did you watch and remain silent?**
- **Did you interrupt the incident or report it later?**
- **How did you feel afterward?**
- **Was the situation resolved? If so, how?**

#### ■ Reflection

Have students write a short (1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection about what they have learned about standing up to bullying.

Ask them to include some thoughts about what a target might be feeling during a bullying incident as well as what a perpetrator might have thought, felt, and experienced before the incident.



## Differences and Similarities

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will explore how differences can increase one's risk of being targeted by bullying, and will practice recognizing the many similarities people share.

### SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- **self-awareness**
- **self-management**
- **social awareness**
- **relationship skills**
- **responsible decision-making**

### BACKGROUND

Differences come in many forms—some that you can see and hear, and some you cannot. Students with physical, developmental, intellectual, emotional, or sensory challenges are at higher risk of being bullied, as are students of color, immigrants, and those who identify as LGBTQ.<sup>15</sup>

While Natasha does not explicitly identify a difference she saw in Jane, she admits that she refused to get to know Jane beyond the surface of their initial friendship. That made it easier for Natasha to reject Jane and ultimately consider her different from the other girls in the group.

This theme explores the experience of a student who looks, acts, or feels different from their peers in some way, as well as the experience of a student who feels uncomfortable with what makes another person seem different.

The discussion questions below encourage students to consider the similarities they share with others, whether those are seen and heard or unseen and unheard. Exploring similarities allows students to find ways to relate to *all* of their peers, no matter how distinct others' differences may seem.

<sup>15</sup> Goldman, Bullied

### INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

1. **Discuss the theme of differences and similarities in the film and ask students to reflect on their personal experiences with this theme.**

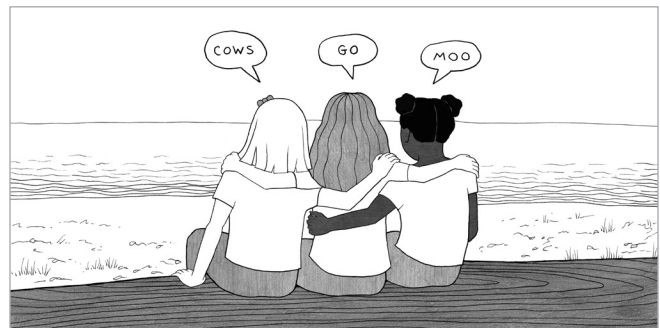
Replay this scene:

- **00:50–01:50 Strike 1: Cows Go Moo** 🎬

Natasha talks about being friends with Jane at the beginning of sixth grade and starting a club with Jane and another girl. When Jane invites a fourth girl into the club, Natasha gets angry.

Ask the following questions about differences and similarities:

- **Why do you think Natasha was angry about Jane inviting a fourth girl into the Cows Go Moo club?**
- **What are some things (race, religion, accent, physical disability, clothing, hairstyle) that make people seem different in ways you can see or hear?**
- **What are some things (religion, learning challenges, other disabilities) that make people seem different in ways you cannot see or hear?**
- **What are some similarities that people who appear *different* from one another share?**
- **What are some differences that people who appear *similar* to one another might have?**
- **Do you think Natasha felt different from her classmates? If so, how?**



Natasha and Jane initially became friends because they had similar interests.

## Differences and Similarities

- In what ways did Natasha and her friends perceive Jane as different from them?
- What similarities did Natasha and Jane share?
- When you meet someone new, what are some things about them that make you want to get to know them? What are some things that might keep you from wanting to get to know them? Explain.
- What are some ways in which you feel different from your peers?
- What are some ways in which you feel similar to your peers?

### 2. Choose any or all of the following activities.

#### ■ Differences and Similarities

Have students fill out the **Differences and Similarities** chart as a class, in small groups, or individually. Use Handout E (see page 29).

#### ■ Explain:

In the “Differences” column, make a list of three ways in which people seem different from their peers.

In the “Similarities” column, make a list of three ways in which people with the differences in the first column share similarities with the same people.

After you have written a few pairs of differences and similarities, write three more pairs in reverse order: start with a list of similarities and then fill out a difference for each one.

#### ■ Role-Play

Have students work in small groups to create skits in which one student bullies another student who is different from them in some way.

Have each group perform its skit for the class.

After each performance, ask students to identify each character’s role (perpetrator, target, bystander, upstander) and possible reasons for their actions.

#### ■ Personal Essay

Have students write about a difference they have and how others have treated them because of that difference.

Ask:

- Have you been hurt or bullied because of it?
- Has your difference been honored by others?
- Have you received assistance from family members? Friends? Teachers or other adults?
- What are some ways you cope with or compensate for your difference?

#### ■ Fictional Story

Have students write a story about a student character who feels uncomfortable about a classmate’s difference they can see or hear (race, gender, physical disability, religion, accent).

Ask:

- What makes your main character uncomfortable?
- How does that discomfort affect the way your main character treats this classmate?
- What are some of the ways in which the two characters are similar?
- Does your main character come to realize the similarities they share, or is something holding them back from doing so?
- What are some things they could do to become more comfortable with their classmate’s difference?

#### ■ Reflection

Have students write a short (1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection about what they have learned about differences—those you can see or hear and those you cannot see or hear.

Encourage students to include thoughts on the kinds of similarities they share with others they consider different from them in some way.

## Assumptions—Stories We Tell Ourselves

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will learn how to recognize and reevaluate the assumptions we make about each other, and they will reflect on the unnecessary harm those assumptions can create.

### SEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Core CASEL Competencies:

- **self-awareness**
- **self-management**
- **social awareness**
- **relationship skills**
- **responsible decision-making**

### BACKGROUND

It is easy to make snap judgments about people based on what we first notice. Natasha states that she did not truly get

to know Jane until high school. Even though Natasha saw Jane every day throughout middle school, she made no effort to get to know her beyond her surface impressions. Instead, Natasha made assumptions about Jane—that Jane was not cool or interesting or fun—because Natasha needed to justify her bullying behavior to herself and to her friends. Natasha told herself the story that Jane was not worth including in her group of friends so that she could have someone to blame for her own shortcomings.

This theme encourages students to examine the assumptions they make about others and to ask themselves why they make those assumptions. By exploring the layers beneath our surface impressions, students increase self-awareness and develop greater understanding toward others. When we reconsider our immediate reactions, we develop curiosity about what others might really be like.



When Natasha finally allowed herself to look beyond the assumptions she had made about Jane, she realized what an interesting person Jane was.

## Assumptions—Stories We Tell Ourselves

### INSTRUCTIONAL OUTLINE

#### 1. Discuss the theme of assumptions in the film and ask students to reflect on their personal experiences with this theme.

Replay the following scenes.

##### ■ 10:02–10:36 High School Hallway ■

When Jane ignores Natasha in the hallway, Natasha feels ashamed, but she understands. She decides to get to know Jane, which she admits she “never really did” in middle school.

##### ■ 11:05–11:40 Getting to Know Jane ■

When Natasha finally gets to know Jane in high school, she realizes what a “really great person” Jane is.

Ask the following questions about assumptions:

- **What assumptions did Natasha make about Jane?**
- **Why did Natasha accept the story she told herself about Jane? What did she gain from that story?**
- **How did that story fill a need in Natasha?**
- **How did Natasha’s public image differ from the way she was feeling inside?**
- **Natasha states that in high school she finally “made an effort” to get to know Jane. Why do you think she did not want to get to know Jane in middle school?**
- **Think of a time when you assumed something about someone you did not know. What were those assumptions based on? What was the story you told yourself that you did not really know or could not prove? What did your story give you that you felt you needed?**
- **What are some general assumptions you make about people who are different from you in race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, or other ways?**

#### 2. Choose any or all of the following activities.

##### ■ Assumptions

Have students fill in the **Assumptions** chart on Handout F (see page 30).



Natasha had assumed Jane was not strong enough to reveal how badly her classmates had treated her, and was surprised when Jane finally stood up for herself.

## Assumptions—Stories We Tell Ourselves

Explain:

In the “Characteristics” column, create a list of characteristics about a person (tall, short, athletic, studious).

In the “Negative Assumptions” column, write a negative assumption someone might make based on that characteristic.

In the “Positive Assumptions” column, write a positive assumption someone might make based on that same characteristic.

Have students discuss their work in small groups or with the whole class, keeping in mind these questions:

- **How do your assumptions about others affect the way you behave toward them?**
- **What are some things you can do to evaluate whether or not your assumptions are true?**
- **What would you recommend others do to explore their assumptions?**

### ■ Role-Play

Have students work in small groups to create skits in which one student makes a false assumption about another student based on first impressions.

Ask students:

- **What happens?**
- **How does the truth get revealed?**
- **Have each group perform its skit for the class.**

After each performance, discuss what led to the false assumption and how it could have been avoided.

Then suggest ways to make amends for feelings that were hurt because of the false assumption.

### ■ Personal Essay

Have students write an essay about a time when they made a snap judgment about someone they did not know.

Ask:

- **What assumptions did you make (positive or negative)?**
- **What were those assumptions based on?**
- **What was the story you told yourself that you did not know or could not prove?**
- **Did you end up getting to know that person?**
- **In what ways were they different from what you had assumed they would be like?**

### ■ Fictional Story

Have students write a story about the first morning a new student enters a classroom in the middle of the school year.

Ask:

- **What does the new student look like?**
- **How do they dress?**
- **Do they come from another country or culture than the majority of the students in the class?**
- **Do they speak with an accent?**
- **Do they have a physical challenge?**

Now have students pretend their main character is a student in the class, and ask:

- **What assumptions does your main character make about the new student based on their appearance?**
- **How does the story your main character tells themselves affect the way they behave toward the new student?**
- **What happens that day in the lunchroom?**

### ■ Reflection

Have students write a short (1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection about what they have learned about how and why people make assumptions about others based on first impressions and how those assumptions affect their behavior.

## Bullying Definition, Roles, and Categories

### Definition of *Bullying* and How Bullying Differs from Conflict

*Bullying* is unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.<sup>16</sup>

Three defining characteristics of bullying are:

- **Intention:** one party chooses to target another
- **Imbalance of power:** one party has more physical or social power than another
- **Repeated over time:** the behavior persists, with the more powerful party always in the role of the aggressor

*Conflict* is a disagreement, an argument, or a struggle between opposing parties. It is common for students to engage in conflict. Most of the time, conflicts between students can be resolved by the students coming to mutual understanding on their own or with the help of an intermediary (student or adult).

The chart below illustrates the important ways in which *bullying* differs from *conflict*.

	BULLYING	CONFLICT
INTENTION	one-sided intent to harm on the part of the aggressor	intention focuses on emphasizing one's agenda rather than harming one another
POWER	an imbalance of power (social and/or physical), with the aggressor holding more power than the target	both parties have equal social or physical power
FREQUENCY	behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time	can happen one time or more than once

### Roles People Play in the Bullying Cycle

Bullying roles include:

- **Perpetrator:** a person who engages in bullying behaviors
- **Target:** a person toward whom bullying behaviors are directed
- **Bystander:** a person who witnesses bullying and does not stand up to stop it
- **Upstander:** a person who witnesses bullying and does something to stop it, either in the moment or after a bullying incident has occurred.

### Categories of Bullying

The four primary bullying categories are:

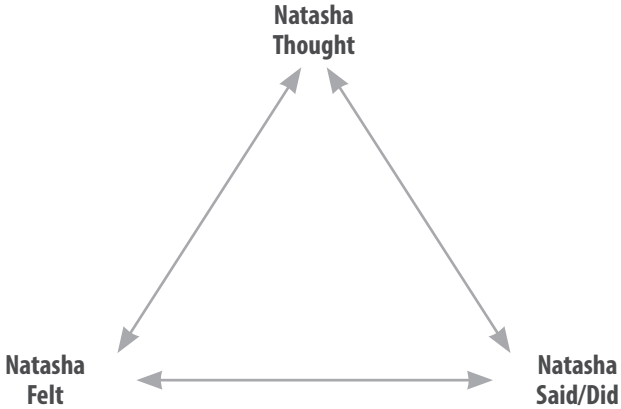
- **Physical:** hurting a person's body or possessions
- **Verbal:** saying cruel things directly to a person
- **Cyber:** using any digital means to harm a person (social media, texting, emailing)
- **Social/relational aggression:** harming a person's reputation or relationships with others

<sup>16</sup> StopBullying.gov

# Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangles—Natasha Triangles

## New Shoes

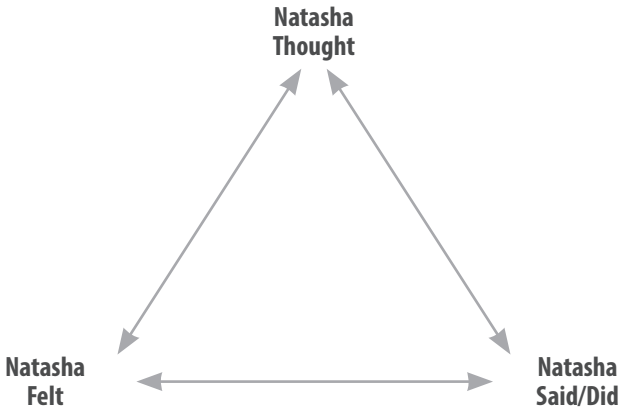
SITUATION: \_\_\_\_\_



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## BOOM

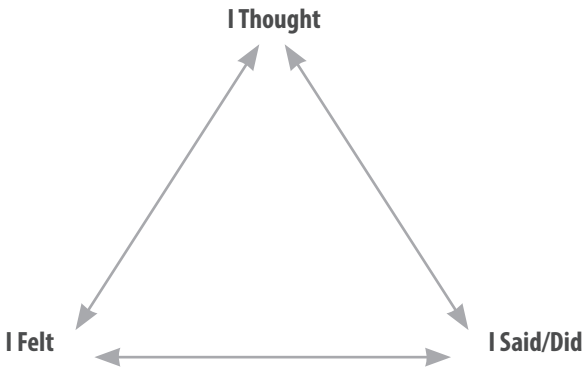
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# Thoughts/Feelings/Behavior Triangles—Student Triangles

## Kind Behavior

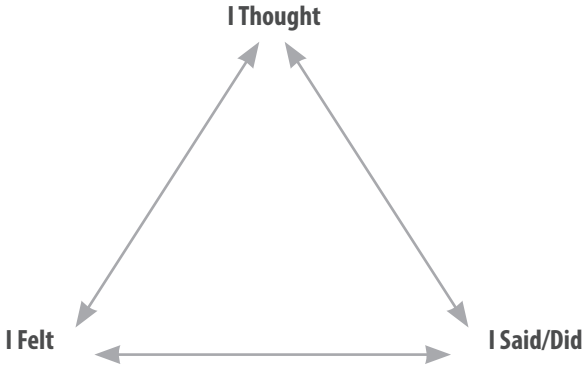
SITUATION: \_\_\_\_\_



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## Unkind Behavior

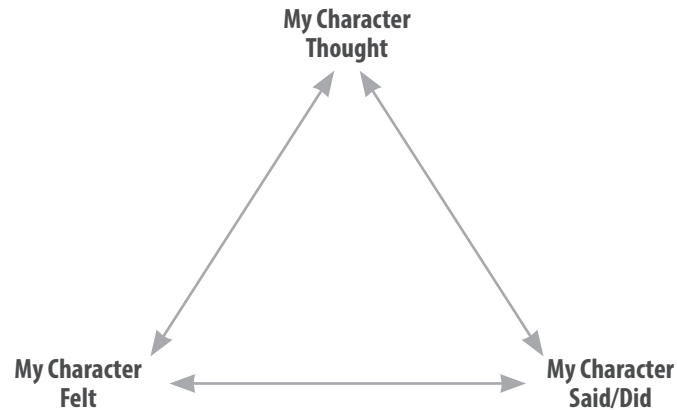
SITUATION: \_\_\_\_\_





# Diary Entry

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_



## Notes and Background Details

Use this area to write as many details as you can about your character and what may have led to their actions. Feel free to use the back of this page if you need more space. Here are some questions to consider:

**What is your character's name?**

**Who is in their family?**

**Where do they live?**

**Who are their friends?**

**What grade are they in?**

**What is their school like?**

**What are their interests and hobbies?**

**What makes them happy? Sad? Frustrated? Angry?**

# Comic Strip

The form consists of eight empty rectangular panels arranged in four rows. Each row contains two panels of equal size. The panels are intended for drawing and writing a story.

# Differences and Similarities

DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES

# Assumptions

CHARACTERISTIC	NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS	POSITIVE ASSUMPTIONS

# Recommended Resources

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## Social and Emotional Learning

**The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)** is a comprehensive resource on evidence-based SEL programing and policy.

[casel.org](http://casel.org)

**Committee for Children** is a leading creator of research- and evidence-based SEL programs.

[cfchildren.org](http://cfchildren.org)

**Roots of Empathy** is an empathy-building program that brings infants into classrooms to teach students empathy skills.

[rootsofempathy.org](http://rootsofempathy.org)

**StopBullying.gov**, managed by the US Department of Health and Human Services, is an excellent source for facts about bullying.

[stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)

**Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence** conducts research and offers professional trainings on emotional intelligence. They created the Recognizing-Understanding-Labeling-Expressing-Regulating (RULER) approach to school-wide SEL implementation.

[ycei.org](http://ycei.org)

## Books for Educators

***UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*** by Michele Borba, EdD. New York: Touchstone, 2016.

***The Bully, the Bullied, and the Not-So-Innocent Bystander*** by Barbara Coloroso. New York: Harper Collins, 2016.

***Bullied: What Every Parent, Teacher, and Kid Needs to Know About Ending the Cycle of Fear*** by Carrie Goldman. New York: Harper Collins, 2012.

***Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*** by Daniel Goleman. New York: Bantam Dell, 2005 (10th-anniversary edition).

***Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*** by Dan Kindlon, PhD and Michael Thompson, PhD. New York: Ballantine Books, 1999.

***Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*** by Daniel J. Siegel, MD. New York: Penguin, 2013.

***Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*** by Rachel Simmons. Boston: Mariner Books, 2011.

***Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and the New Realities of Girl World*** by Rosalind Wiseman. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009.

## Recommended Resources, continued

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### Books for Young Readers

**Blubber** by Judy Blume. New York: Atheneum, 2014 (40th-anniversary reissue). This book examines the complexities of bullying through the eyes of the main character, Jill, whose experience spans every role in the bullying cycle. Bullying categories include verbal, physical, and social. Ages 8–14.

**Out of My Mind** by Sharon M. Draper. New York: Atheneum, 2010. Born with cerebral palsy, Melody is trapped inside her body. This harrowing and inspiring story portrays how others disregard Melody because of her physical differences, and how she fights to be seen for her exceptional abilities. Bullying categories include verbal and social. Ages 10+.

**The Hundred Dresses** by Eleanor Estes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014 (60th-anniversary reissue). In this classic story, Wanda suffers social rejection at school because her family is poor and new to this country. Told from the perspective of Maggie, a bystander/accomplice to the social bullying of Wanda. Bullying categories include verbal and social. Ages 6–10.

**The Julian Chapter** by R. J. Palacio. New York: Knopf, 2014 (digital edition). This novella takes a deep dive into the life of Julian, Auggie’s main perpetrator in the book *Wonder*, examining the many outside factors that have led Julian to treat Auggie with contempt. Bullying categories include verbal and social. Ages 8–12.

**Wonder** by R. J. Palacio. New York: Knopf, 2012. The story of Auggie—a boy whose facial anomalies make him stand out from his peers—is told from multiple characters’ perspectives, allowing the reader a full range of insight into his journey to become accepted at school. Bullying categories include physical, verbal, and social. Ages 8–12.

**Stargirl** by Jerry Spinelli. New York: Knopf, 2000. The story of the social isolation of a magical girl named Stargirl, who does not conform to conventional high school norms and expectations. Told from the perspective of Leo, Stargirl’s friend and silent bystander to the bullying. Bullying categories include verbal and social. Ages 12+.



Gossiping about Jane became a daily habit for Natasha and her friends. Targeted students often report that lunch is the most difficult period of their school day.

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## Books

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I didn't feel like I knew how to be compassionate... I realized that I wasn't really [being] compassionate toward myself so how could I be compassionate toward anybody else? When you're compassionate toward yourself you're able to understand and look at why you do the negative things you do and how those things negatively affect you. And [then you can] start to work toward moving through that.

— *Natasha*



